



# MIGRANTS REFUGEES

## RESPONDING TO REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

### TWENTY PASTORAL ACTION POINTS

Global migration is a major challenge for much of today's world and a priority for the Catholic Church. In words and deeds, Pope Francis repeatedly shows his deep compassion for all who are displaced. Witness his encounters with migrants and refugees on the Islands of Lampedusa and Lesbos. Witness his call for their full embrace: *to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate* migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the Holy Father is guiding the Church to assist the world community in systematically improving its responses to the displaced. For the international political community has launched a multilateral process of consultations and negotiations with the goal of adopting two Global Compacts by the end of 2018, one on international migrants and the other on refugees.

The Church has already taken a stand on many of the issues which will be included in the Global Compacts and, drawing on its varied and longstanding pastoral experience, would like to contribute actively to this process. To support this contribution, the Vatican's Section on Migrants & Refugees (Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development), consulting with various Bishops' Conferences and Catholic NGOs, has prepared the following **Twenty Action Points** on migrants and refugees. They do not exhaust the Church's teaching on migrants and refugees, but provide useful considerations which Catholic advocates can use, add to and develop in their dialogue with governments towards the Global Compacts. The 20 Points are grounded on migrants' and refugees' needs identified at the grassroots level and on the Church's best practices. The Points have been approved by the Holy Father.

The Migrants & Refugees Section, guided by the Holy Father, urges the Bishops' Conferences to explain the Compacts and the Points to their parishes and Church organizations, with the hope of fostering more effective solidarity with migrants and refugees. Given the great range of issues covered in the Points, each Bishops' Conference should select the most relevant points for their national situation and bring them to their Government's attention, specifically the Ministers responsible for the country's negotiations on the Global Compacts. Each country has already begun to prepare its position, and the negotiations will take place during the first six or eight months of 2018. The same Points in more formal language, for use in advocacy, may be found in the document *Global Compacts 20 Points political version*.

Though grounded in the Church's experience and reflection, the **20 Points** are offered as valuable considerations to all people of good will who might be willing to implement them and advocate their inclusion in their country's negotiations. Leaders and members of all faiths, and organizations of civil society, are welcome to join in this effort. Let us unite *to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate* people obliged to leave their home and seeking a new one among us.

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<sup>1</sup> *Address to participants in the International Forum on "Migration and Peace", 21 February 2017.*

## **Welcoming: Increasing Safe and Legal Routes for Migrants and Refugees**

The decision to emigrate should be made freely and voluntarily. Migration should be an orderly process which respects the laws of each country involved. To this end, the following points are to be considered:

1. The collective or arbitrary expulsion of migrants and refugees should be avoided. The principle of non-refoulement should always be respected: migrants and refugees must never be returned to a country which has been deemed unsafe. The application of this principle should be based on the level of safety effectively afforded to each individual, rather than on a summary evaluation of a country's general state of security. The routine application of a list of "safe countries" often fails to consider the real security needs of particular refugees; they must be treated on an individual basis.
2. Legal routes for safe and voluntary migration or relocation should be multiplied. This can be achieved by granting more humanitarian visas, visas for students and apprentices, family reunification visas (including siblings, grandparents and grandchildren), and temporary visas for people fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries; by creating humanitarian corridors for the most vulnerable; and by launching private and community sponsorship programmes, programmes for relocating refugees in communities rather than concentrating them in holding facilities.
3. The value of each person's safety – rooted in a profound respect for the inalienable rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees – should be correctly balanced with national security concerns. This can be achieved through appropriate training for border agents; by ensuring that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have access to basic services, including legal services; by ensuring protection for anyone fleeing war and violence; and by seeking alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorisation.

## **Protecting: Defending the Rights and Dignity of Migrants and Refugees**

The Church has repeatedly underlined the need for an integral approach to the issue of migration, in profound respect for each person's dignity and rights and in consideration of the multiple dimensions of each individual. The right to life is the most fundamental of all rights, and cannot depend on a person's legal status. To this end, the following points are suggested:

4. Emigrants must be protected by their countries of origin. Authorities in these countries should offer reliable information before departure; should ensure that all channels of emigration are legalised and certified; should create a government department for the diaspora; and should offer consular assistance and protection abroad.
5. Immigrants must be protected by their countries of arrival, in order to prevent exploitation, forced labour and human trafficking. This can be achieved by prohibiting employers from withholding employees' documents; by ensuring access to justice for all migrants, independently of their legal status and without negative repercussions on their right to remain; by ensuring that all immigrants can open a personal bank account; by establishing a minimum wage applicable to all workers; and by ensuring that wages are paid at least once a month.
6. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees must be empowered to leverage their skills and competencies in order to improve their own wellbeing and the prosperity of their communities. This can be achieved by guaranteeing in-country freedom of movement and permission to return after work abroad; by providing ample access to the means of communication; by involving local communities in the integration of asylum seekers; and by developing programmes of professional and social reintegration for anyone who chooses to return to their home country.

7. The vulnerability of unaccompanied minors and minors separated from their families must be tackled in accordance with the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. This can be achieved by seeking alternative solutions to detention for legally underage migrants who enter a country without authorisation; by offering temporary custody or foster homes for unaccompanied or separated minors; and by setting up separate centres for the identification and processing of minors, adults and families.
8. All underage migrants must be protected in accordance with the international Convention on the Rights of the Child. This can be achieved through the compulsory registration of all births and by ensuring that underage migrants do not become illegal when they reach adulthood and that they can continue their education.
9. Access to education should be assured to all underage migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, so that they have access to primary and secondary schooling at the same standard as citizens and independently of their legal status.
10. Access to welfare should be assured to all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, respecting their right to health and basic healthcare independently of legal status, and ensuring access to national pension schemes and the transferability of benefits in case of moving to another country.
11. Migrants should never become a-national or stateless, in accordance to the right to nationality stated by international conventions, and citizenship should be recognized at birth (*jus soli*).

### **Promoting: Fostering the Integral Human Development of Migrants and Refugees**

The Church has repeatedly emphasised the need to promote integral human development for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees alongside local residents. Countries should include migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in their plan for national development. To this end, the following points are to be considered:

12. The competencies of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be valued and developed in countries of arrival by guaranteeing equal access to higher education, specialization courses, apprenticeships and internships, and by validating qualifications obtained elsewhere.
13. The social and professional inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees within local communities should be supported by recognising their freedom of movement and their right to choose where to live; by making information available in their languages of origin; by offering language classes and courses on local customs and culture; and by granting asylum seekers and refugees the right to work.
14. The integrity and well-being of the family should always be protected and promoted, independently of legal status. This can be achieved by embracing broader family reunification (grandparents, grandchildren and siblings) independently of financial requirements; by allowing reunified family members to work; by undertaking the search for lost family members; by combating the exploitation of minors; and by ensuring that, if employed, their work does not adversely affect their health or their right to education.
15. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees with special needs are to be treated just like citizens with the same conditions, guaranteeing access to disability benefits independently of legal status, and enrolling unaccompanied or separated minors with disabilities in special education programmes.
16. The funds for international development and humanitarian support, sent to countries which receive a significant influx of refugees and migrants fleeing from armed conflict, should be increased, ensuring that the needs of both newcomer and resident populations can be met. This can be achieved by funding the establishment and development of institutions for medical,

educational and social care in countries of arrival, and by extending financial help and assistance programmes to local families in situations of vulnerability.

17. The right to religious freedom – in terms of both belief and practice – should be assured to all migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, independently of legal status.

### **Integrating: Greater Participation of Migrants and Refugees to Enrich Local Communities**

The arrival of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees represents an opportunity for growth as much for local communities as for the newcomers. The encounter of different cultures is a source of mutual enrichment, since inclusion and participation contribute to the development of societies. To this end the following points are to be implemented:

18. Integration, as a two-directional process which acknowledges and values the riches of both cultures, should be promoted. This can be achieved by recognising citizenship at birth (*jus soli*); by rapidly extending nationality to all refugees, independently of financial requirements or linguistic knowledge (at least for over-50s); by promoting family reunification; and by declaring a one-off period of amnesty and legalisation for migrants who have lived in a country for a considerable amount of time.
19. A positive narrative of solidarity towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be promoted. This can be achieved by funding intercultural exchange projects; by supporting integration programmes in local communities; by documenting and disseminating good practices in integration; and by ensuring that public announcements are translated into the languages spoken by larger numbers of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
20. Those who are forced to flee humanitarian crises and are subsequently evacuated or enrolled in assisted repatriation programmes must be ensured appropriate conditions for reintegration in their countries of origin. This can be achieved by increasing the funds assigned to temporary assistance for those affected by humanitarian crises and by developing infrastructure in countries of return, by validating educational and professional qualifications obtained abroad, and by encouraging the rapid reintegration of workers in their countries of origin.