

### **Information note: Protect the human rights of all migrants**

An estimated 214 million people currently live outside their country of origin. While for some migration is a positive and empowering experience, far too many migrants have to endure human rights violations, discrimination, and exploitation. Irregular migrants are particularly vulnerable, and their invisibility in society often means that they are unable to report such abuses.

“The protection of migrants is an urgent and growing human rights challenge. Governments have obligations to ensure that xenophobic violence, racism and related intolerance against migrants and their communities have no place in their societies,” says High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

As strangers to a society, migrants are frequently unfamiliar with the national language, laws and practice, and may lack social networks to rely on. This makes them less able than others to know and assert their rights. Human rights violations against migrants, including denial of access to fundamental economic and social rights such as the right to education or the right to health, are often closely linked to discriminatory laws and practice, and to deep-seated attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia against migrants.

### **Implement a human rights approach**

There is an increasing global trend to frame migration policies solely within a security and border control framework. This is exacerbated by policies which criminalise irregular migrants, and subject them to administrative detention regimes which are punitive in nature and often lack adequate safeguards. Vulnerable migrants can be detained for months and even years in immigration detention, in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

Yet, migrants contribute to economic growth and human development in both home and host countries and enrich societies through cultural diversity. The High Commissioner urges governments and all concerned to “implement a human rights approach to migration, and to recognise the positive contributions of migrants, protect their human rights in law and practice, and facilitate their integration into host societies.”

A [new study](#) by the United Nations Human Rights office (OHCHR) shows that the protection of the rights of migrant children is a matter of urgent importance. Children are locked up in immigration detention centres, denied access to essential services because of their or their parents' legal status, and subject to the same regimes of criminalisation as adult migrants, says the study, which will be considered by the Human Rights Council in September. Inadequate child protection systems and lack of effective implementation of the existing normative framework are resulting in serious protection gaps for migrant children in every region of the world.

Further information is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/migration/taskforce/index.htm>

### **Global Migration Group**

OHCHR chairs the inter-agency Global Migration Group (GMG) in the second half of 2010. Established in 2006, the GMG brings together 14 agencies working on migration issues, including UN agencies, the World Bank, and the International Organization for Migration. Through its involvement with the GMG, OHCHR seeks to promote and mainstream a human rights approach to migration within the United Nations system. On 7-11 November, OHCHR will lead the GMG interaction with the fourth annual Global Forum on Migration and Development in Mexico.

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