

## Mediterranean Exchange of Best Practices

*Sharing best practices and strengthening network on social inclusion,  
migration and employment programs*

### **Summary**

Implementing the outcomes of the Dubrovnik Declaration which stems from the XI Red Cross and Red Crescent Mediterranean Conference, the Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean in collaboration with the Social Intervention Department of the Spanish Red Cross is organizing a Mediterranean Exchange on Social Inclusion programs.

The exchange will be held in Madrid and Valencia (Spain) at the end of November 2010 and it aims to offer a platform of discussion and sharing of best practices on social inclusion that will help increase awareness and patterns of participation, focus on related responsibilities and foster the humanitarian values throughout the Mediterranean area.

The best practices exchange will focus on five fields of actions: **Migrants, Employment, Gender, Childhood and the Elderly**, considering *community participation* as the fundamental cross-cutting element.

The Exchange will be carried out through a series of activities and visits foreseen in a period of a week and it will be opened to the 25 Mediterranean RC/RC National Societies, addressed to social intervention officers and youth coordinators.

### **Context**

*"Social exclusion is a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live"<sup>1</sup>.*

Talking about social exclusion is not simply a matter of defining a position in the social scale. First of all it is a matter of being within society, or out of it, marking the distance between those who benefit from its dynamics and those who are parted from -and because of - these same dynamics. The poor, the marginalized and the excluded ones become the faces of a society that is damaged and ill.

Constantly, due to economic, demographic and climate changes, environmental degradation, urbanization, violence, forced migrations, limited access to food, water

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<sup>1</sup> Hilary Silver, "Social Exclusion: Comparative Analysis of Europe and Middle East Youth," Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper (September 2007), p. 15

and other natural resources as well as the spread of old diseases and the appearance of new ones, further vulnerabilities emerge every day from patterns of marginalization, impoverishment and insecurity.

All these forms of exclusion are elements of a triple rupture: economic, social and vital, all related to the convergence of three main factors that are structural (building an excluding structure); social (that crystallize in disabling contexts) and subjective (the lack of motivation that affects a lively dynamism).

The structural factor will therefore concern the access to the labour market and all the consequences its restrictions might have, being the community built around access to employment and all the benefits that such a system includes. Outcomes of this are, for instance, isolation from the welfare state and its social services and structures and inequalities in health care services.

On the social aspect, culture, at community level, used to be the tie inside social groups but such disappearing dynamic, on a larger scale in the era of globalization, affects much wider sectors of society. Moreover, cultural exclusion will affect both schooling and the whole educational systems, limiting the access to the same kind of opportunities.

On a subjective or personal level, exclusion patterns have dire consequences on the lack of self esteem, control on their lives, communication and expectations for the future.

All the components and consequences of social exclusion are worsened by the current economic crisis that weakens and widens existing vulnerable groups, compromising their fundamental human rights. Such groups include, among others, the elderly, children and migrants.

The relationship among patterns of marginalization and social exclusion becomes especially clear when analyzing the issue of migration and employment. The global financial crisis accentuated the conditions which motivate migration in poorer countries. Yet it has also been demonstrated that the loss of jobs in host countries has led to the increase in social tension. This situation, compounded with some messages in the media and political strategies, contributes to increased discrimination and is the breeding ground for attitudes such as intolerance, racism, and xenophobia. A key element therefore is to increase opportunities when aiming to reduce social exclusion. As the migration issue affects from 10 to 15 million people in the Mediterranean it is mandatory to work together for solutions to these heavy humanitarian challenges.

Cross-cutting elements such as *employment, gender and discrimination* are fundamental issues to address the problem of social exclusion, all them referring to **participation** as the main focus of action, able to give back a "voice" to vulnerable groups, thus restoring self esteem, leadership and social identity.

***Why to organize this exchange?***

The need for the exchange on best practices of social inclusion meets the challenges defined in the frame of international initiatives, both at the RC/RC International Movement and international context level.

Of the three main aims of the IFRC Strategy 2020 adopted in November 2009 under the motto 'saving lives, changing minds', the third one, focuses on promoting social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace. It is the basis on which the CCM carries out its initiative in order to foster community participation programmes and activities, building partnership and networks throughout the Mediterranean region.

Within the region, special mention is to be made to the **RC/RC Mediterranean Conference** set up by 25 National Societies and creating a link between countries of Europe, Middle East and Northern Africa. The outcome of the last Conference was the ***Dubrovnik Declaration***, through which the participant National Societies agree upon, and commit to establish partnerships within the Movement, governments, but also with governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as other specialized agencies; strengthen the dialogue with governments and to promote humanitarian diplomacy and advocacy in favour of changing mentalities towards a **more encompassing social inclusion of those who are the most vulnerable**; involving young people and consolidating their role as agents of behavioural change (YABC).

On the international level, the **2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion** has also proven to be a relevant framework where to promote and carry out significant initiatives. The issues tackled, among others, concern employment, minorities and all marginalized groups, with special regards to gender equality issues. One of the latest and noteworthy initiatives is the **Women's Charter**, a political declaration setting out several key areas of action and commits the Commission to building a gender perspective into all its policies for the next five years, while taking specific measures to promote equality.

### ***Why Spanish Red Cross?***

In the frame of such initiatives, on a country level, the **Spanish Red Cross** has the mission of 'contributing to the social inclusion of the most vulnerable, working on the various dimensions of the social exclusion phenomenon through a comprehensive approach'.

It carries out this objective mainly through the technical advice of the **Social Intervention Department** that is implementing a **strategy for inclusion** that includes two Plans of Action (Social Intervention and Employment for vulnerable groups) and a series of cross-cutting focuses such as gender, an intercultural perspective, proximity, volunteering, the inter-generational perspective and the promotion of social participation.

The social realities with whom the Spanish Red Cross works, and on whom it carries out dynamics of change, include a wide range of groups such as migrants, elderly,

childhood, refugees, prisoners, disabled people, gender equality, drug addiction and people affected by HIV-AIDS.

A key factor to be highlighted in SRC programmes regarding social inclusion remains **social participation**. The activities being developed by the SRC are aimed at combating social exclusion through providing capacity building, giving voice and allowing participation to all the beneficiaries of its programmes, as well as volunteers involved at community level.

Such multi-dimensional strategy is being implemented through the regional and local branches within their daily work with the community, as in the case for the Autonomic Valencia Assembly, which deserves special mention for its implication in all areas of action related to social inclusion.

The SRC is ready to share the results of its work and best practices toolkits and programmes and at the same considers that having this exchange is a great opportunity to receive information of valuable experiences from other National Societies along the region.

### ***Why organized by the CCM?***

As the Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean, created in 2005, is hosting the Permanent Office of the Mediterranean Conference, it has the mission of facilitating follow-up of the resolutions of the Mediterranean Conference and promote partnership between National Societies of the Mediterranean, and the **exchange and sharing of experiences** contributing to the fulfillment of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement purposes.

In this context, the CCM has carried out various initiatives to tackle the issue of social inclusion. Amongst the most relevant noteworthy are the 'Seminar on social inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market', organized together with the Tunisia Red Crescent, the 'Seminar on social inclusion of youth in the labour market' co-organized with the Algerian Red Crescent, "Seminar on current challenges of Migration", co-organised with the Spanish Red Cross and the Youth Camp Atlantis VI focussed on Social Inclusion, co-organised with the French Red Cross.

### ***Objective***

To enhance the knowledge of RC/RC program coordinators on different skills related to the starting up of favourable policies towards migration and employment issues, thereby contributing to social inclusion of vulnerable categories, which can improve the implementation of good practices as well as intensify their capacity building.

### ***Format Methodology***

The exchange will be developed throughout 5 days of dynamic and technical workshops and visits to programmes and to the Headquarters of the Spanish Red Cross in Madrid and its territorial branches in Valencia.

**Two persons from each Mediterranean National Society are invited (including one from Youth section).** The organisation will cover accommodation and internal transports. For any other assistance, please contact the Centre for the Cooperation in the Mediterranean (Ariana Potrafki [apotrafki@cruzroja.es](mailto:apotrafki@cruzroja.es)).

As a result of the exchange a document of conclusions and recommendations will be prepared as a shared best practices working document.

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