



Standing with Migrants

Support through Direct Services, Community Engagement, Partnerships, and Advocacy



About CWS

Church World Service (CWS) is a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement, and disaster. Our vision is a world where all have food, voice, and a safe place to call home.

Safety, Dignity and Human Rights for People on the Move

CWS has a long history of working for the safety, dignity, and human rights of people on the move. For more than 75 years, we have extended welcome to refugees who resettle to the US, while also responding globally to the needs of displaced persons who lack access to resettlement or other durable solutions.

Today, violence and persecution forces people to leave their homes in record numbers, while climate change and other injustices are increasingly compelling migration both within countries and across borders. CWS continues to build and expand programmatic approaches that reflect national and international commitments to the human rights of people on the move, as well as local community participation in extending care and welcome. We contribute to the realization of key global goals – such as the implementation of the [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) and [Global Compact](#)

[for Migration \(GCM\)](#) -- through safeguarding the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in vulnerable situations, in ways that benefit communities who welcome newcomers.

Our vision and mission reflect a commitment to the full and equal respect for the rights of all individuals, regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, social, religious, or other background. This includes prioritizing and working in partnership with people who experience social and economic marginalization and discrimination, and applying intersectional lenses to activity design, implementation, and evaluation – including principles of racial, gender, and intergenerational justice. We particularly recognize that children can often be in the most precarious situations and are disproportionately affected by threats and risks in all phases of migration and displacement.

Global Migration Landscape

According to the [UN's 2022 World Migration Report](#), an estimated 281 million people are international migrants, making up 3.6 percent of the world's population – a 25% increase compared to 20 years ago. In the US, [net international migration](#) increased in 2022 for the first time in six years. Internal migration within countries, including migration from rural areas to towns and cities, is estimated at 763 million people, or about three times the number of international migrants. Migration has a significant economic role in the lives of migrants, in communities where migrants live and work, and for families and communities in places of origin.

Many people are moving through [mixed migration](#) corridors, meaning, that people fleeing violence and conflict are migrating alongside people who seek better lives and economic opportunities, family reunification, or safety in the face of climate change or environmental disasters. Communities in the US are part of a migration corridor that extends through Mexico and Central America, into South America and beyond.

There could be multiple factors that compel an individual or family to migrate across borders, including circumstances of internal displacement that precede cross-border movement. Often, irregular channels are the only ones that exist. Depending on a person's individual circumstances and where they are in a migration corridor, they may be eligible to apply for refugee status, humanitarian visas, or other migration statuses that offer some stability and protection. For many, though, there are no options available for regularization.

Increased Risk for Migrant Children & Young Adults

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) face heightened risks of abduction, trafficking, exploitation, and illegal adoption; sexual exploitation and abuse; physical violence and harmful practices, including child marriage; sexual violence; detention; child labor; recruitment by armed forces and armed groups; and lack of access to asylum procedures. UASC with disabilities may be even more vulnerable to these harms. People over the age of 18, who are or become young adults as migrants or refugees, also experience conflict, danger, and loss that can affect their development. Migrant and refugee young adults may experience many of the heightened vulnerabilities that affect children, such as neglect, extreme poverty and food insecurity, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking, torture, and violence. They may also miss out on opportunities to prepare for an engaged and productive adulthood.

Source: [Upphard and Birnbaum 2017](#)

CWS Responds to Situations of Vulnerability throughout Migration Experiences

CWS recognizes the human rights threats that exist throughout migration corridors, and the urgency to extend essential care and protection to all persons in need. Alongside ensuring that migrants of all statuses have access to basic rights, we assess whether someone's circumstances might allow them to access legal protections, including regularization, under a country's immigration laws; and we provide or connect them with legal support. CWS takes this approach, for example, in its work along the US-Mexico border and in extending timely and accurate information to persons seeking asylum and family reunification in other parts of the US.



Through our direct services and partnerships, CWS reaches people across all migration phases, including pre-decision and pre-departure; during migration journeys; at points of reception; and during return migration and in reintegration. We give particular attention to individuals, families and communities that face vulnerable situations in migration:

Vulnerability from circumstances that compel a person to leave their country of origin	Vulnerability from situations encountered in transit, at destinations, or during return	Vulnerability related to a person's individual characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence, conflict, or persecution • Disasters, adverse effects of climate change, or environmental degradation • Gender inequalities or gender-based violence • Separation from family • Lack of access to adequate food, healthcare social protection, decent work, land, and/or water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of smugglers or dangerous forms of transport • Border closures or arbitrary rejection at borders • Violence by state or non-state actors • Inhumane detention conditions • Denial of access to humanitarian assistance • Physical and health threats faced in migration routes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • Sexual orientation • Gender identity • Race • Religion • Nationality • Disability • Physical and mental health conditions • Migration status

Our programs' theories of change reflect the importance of creating and strengthening relationships and social bonds between people on the move and host community institutions. CWS connects migrants and refugees with neighborhood faith and community groups, public sector and civic institutions, and local businesses and commercial networks. This approach builds the social capital of people on the move, which in turn increases their ability to become economically self-reliant, implement self-protection strategies or access human rights from duty bearers, and live safely and with dignity.

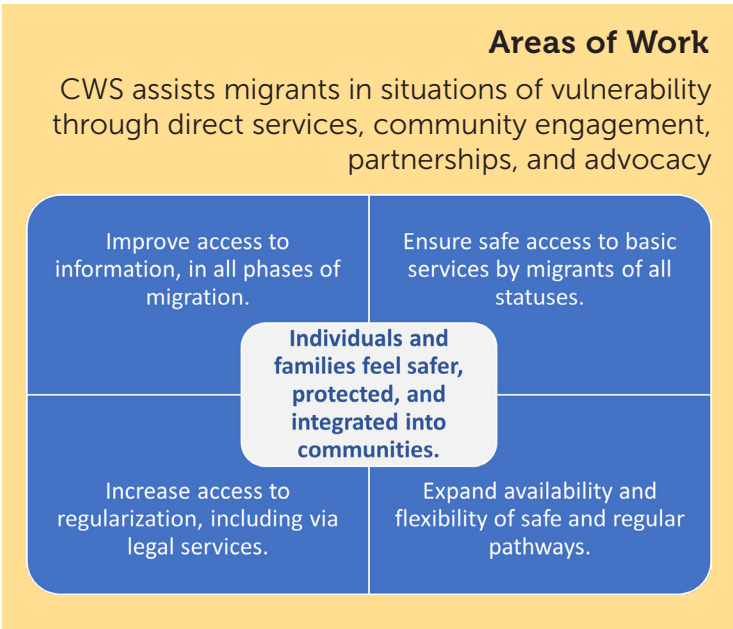
Gender Identity & Vulnerability

Displaced persons and migrants in vulnerable situations may experience exploitation and abuse differently, depending on gendered social norms and their gender identities. Women and girls often face more acute disempowerment; but all persons, including men and boys, may face specific risks because of their gender, sexual orientation, and/or gender expression. Gender inequality can be compounded by discrimination based on race, ethnicity, immigration status or socioeconomic status, creating a multiplier effect in terms of threats that migrants and refugees face. Gender equality assessments, Age, Gender, and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) frameworks, and other related tools can assist in evaluating the specific risks faced by women, men, boys, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals, especially along migration routes and in places of destination.

Core Areas of CWS Migration Programming

In the past decade, CWS has expanded its migration programming globally, building on its long experience and proven community-based approaches of providing direct services to refugee and migrant communities in the US. This work contributes to several global targets for safe international migration.¹ More recently, CWS has begun responding to vulnerabilities faced in internal or in-country displacement and migration, particularly in the context of climate-induced displacement risks.

CWS gives special attention to cross-cutting themes in migration responses: child protection; gender-based violence; climate action; gender and racial justice.



Areas of Work & CWS Migration Program Activities

Improve Access to Information, In All Phases of Migration

- CWS provides public information on safer migration in **Cambodia**, to improve knowledge about requirements for regular migration and risks of human trafficking in communities where cross-border labor migration to Thailand is common and increasingly related to climate change impacts.
- In **Georgia**, CWS partners with national and local organizations to operate Migration Information and Support Services desks, which provide information and individualized advice on planned relocation from areas that face high and increasing climate and environmental risks, and which share requirements for international labor migration.
- In rural communities in **Vietnam** that experience high levels of internal labor migration, CWS provides training and information-sharing on life skills for safer work migration, including on safe use of the internet and social networks for young people considering migration to towns and cities.
- In more than **30 countries in Africa**, CWS provides [cultural orientation for refugees](#) who are preparing to resettle to the United States, including information on housing, employment, education, health and hygiene, and civic rights and responsibilities.
- Throughout the **US**, CWS provides information and community orientation to newly arrived refugees and immigrants, including on personal safety, accessing public services, budgeting and financial management, and digital literacy.
- CWS works with a network of migrant shelters on the **US-Mexico border** to provide a toll-free phone number that asylum seekers can use to access accurate and timely information, during onward migration and while waiting for their cases to be reviewed by immigration courts.

Ensure Safe Access to Basic Services by Migrants of All Statuses

- In **Bosnia**, CWS engages unaccompanied children to identify strategies for safe access to rights and services, including obstacles that prevent refugee and migrant youth from accessing existing services and enjoying legally established rights.
- CWS works with community partners in **Serbia** to provide comprehensive services to undocumented migrants and refugees and migrants who are outside the official protection system, including legal assistance and a drop-in shelter for new arrivals.
- In **Moldova**, CWS works with local partner Memoria to serve Ukrainian refugees and Moldovan survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) to access life-saving medical and psychosocial support.
- In the **US**, CWS provides direct services and referrals for immigrants in otherwise underserved communities, to address barriers to economic self-sufficiency. This includes individualized planning for career or academic pathways with immigrant youth in schools with high attrition rates.
- CWS equips refugee and immigrant young women to improve digital literacy and pursue study and work in STEM fields, through local chapters of Girls Who Code.
- CWS works with refugees, asylum seekers and other economically vulnerable community members in **South Africa** to expand SMEs and increase income, while also encouraging social cohesion and safety for migrant and refugee entrepreneurs.
- In **Indonesia**, CWS reinforces the capacity of [refugee-led organizations and local community organizations](#) to provide safe and inclusive education services and learning opportunities for refugees.
- CWS coordinates [Refugee Housing Solutions](#) in the **US**, which works with landlords, service providers, and refugee community groups to increase the availability and affordability of housing,

1 These include Objective 3 (provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration), Objective 5 (enhance availability and flexibility of regular migration pathways), and Objective 15 (provide access to basic services for migrants) in the Global Compact for Migration.

both for refugees and immigrants and for unhoused host community members. **Globally**, CWS also does this through the Refugee Accommodations working group of UNHCR's Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways forum.

- CWS Safe Space activities in **Kenya** and **South Africa** encourage knowledge, attitude and practice shifts that ensure safe and welcoming environments for LGBTQI+ refugees and migrants.
- In **Egypt**, CWS works together with StARS, a refugee-led service provider, on locally led GBV responses including the development specialized GBV services with refugee community organizations.

Increase Access to Regularization, Including via Legal Services

- Throughout the **US**, the CWS network provides affordable legal services to refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. Its dedicated legal teams help people to apply for regular migration status, including legal permanent residency, temporary protected status, [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#), and asylum protection.
- CWS supports pro bono legal aid in **Serbia** through which eligible undocumented migrants and refugees can access protected regular status.
- After Hurricane Dorian struck **the Bahamas**, CWS worked with IOM and Haitian migrant community leaders to assist impacted community members to apply for regular migration status, including through financial and logistical support in obtaining documentation required for immigration applications.

Expand Availability and Flexibility of Safe and Regular Pathways

- In the **US**, CWS advocates for increased federal resources toward existing regularization programs, so that eligible migrants in vulnerable situations, such as [children with Special Immigrant Juvenile Status](#), can access safety. CWS calls on national lawmakers to create new regular pathways for persons fleeing humanitarian emergencies and migrating in response to climate-related disasters. CWS also advocates at state and local levels for more assistance to immigrants in accessing legal support to apply for regular migration statuses.
- Through the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) program, CWS assists individuals and families evacuating from Afghanistan to receive temporary regular status and expedited work authorization, and to access essential services during their first three months in the **US**.
- CWS advocates for the human rights of Black immigrants and asylum seekers in migration corridors in the **Americas**, including protections from deportation, expulsion, and family separation in the **US** and in **Mexico**.
- In **Georgia**, CWS provides technical assistance to national partners in strengthening internal planned relocation mechanisms, including through direct input by communities facing increasing displacement risks from sudden disasters and slow-onset climate change impacts.
- CWS participated in a [CMDP-FES global delegation](#) to the 2023 UN Climate Change Conference and Human Rights Council, which highlighted gaps in national and regional climate mobility policies, and called on governments and UN agencies to establish safe and regular pathways for people at risk of climate displacement.

Adding Value Through Collaboration and Local, Regional, and Global Networks

CWS's roots are in collaboration, so that through working together with partners, we accomplish more and better results than could be done alone. We participate in coalitions that advocate for the human rights of people on the move, at local, national, and global levels. Our approaches build and emphasize the leadership of directly impacted communities, including through [community organizing and advocacy led](#)

[by refugees and asylum seekers](#). Our funding partners and base of individual and community supporters provide financial resources, serve as volunteers, and expend other support for our work with migrants in vulnerable situations.



MIGRANT SERVICES, SERBIA

Resources

For more information, the following documents and pages can be useful:

- [The Path to Safety | CWS \(cwsglobal.org\)](#)
- [Children Services | CWS \(cwsglobal.org\)](#)
- [Moving Towards Resilience: A Study of Climate Change, Adaption and Migration | CWS \(cwsglobal.org\)](#)
- [Home - Refugee Housing Solutions](#)
- [Migrants in vulnerable situations | OHCHR](#)
- [Guidance Note: Regular Pathways for Admission and Stay for Migrants in Situations of Vulnerability | United Nations Network on Migration](#)
- [Unaccompanied and Seperated Children](#)
- [What is Protection and How Do We Do It? Connecting CWS's Work to Global Concepts of Protection](#)

CWS Technical Program Notes describe CWS's approach to a particular technical area or sector and situate it within existing global frameworks, standards, or best practices.

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