Prevent and combat xenophobia at the national level

Practical measures which can be implemented in order to combat xenophobia at the national level include:

1. *Ratify international and regional human rights instruments* and implement relevant standards which protect the human rights of all persons at risk of xenophobia.

2. *Elaborate and implement legal measures, in conformity with international and regional human rights standards, that prevent and address xenophobia,* e.g. by enacting anti-discrimination provisions.

3. *Strengthen law enforcement and criminal justice responses to xenophobia,* including through adequate training and resourcing.

4. *Enable victims and communities at risk of xenophobia to access justice,* including through accessible complaints mechanisms, and ensuring remedies for victims.

5. *Reach out and build links with communities and individuals affected by xenophobia,* including through the provision of legal, medical and psychological assistance.

6. *Collect data on xenophobic crimes* and improve the quality of such data-collection systems.

7. *Take measures to promote tolerance and respect for diversity and challenge prejudice and negative stereotypes in the media,* including through social media and the internet.

8. *Encourage political leaders to speak out against xenophobia* and promote respect for all.

9. *Develop and launch awareness raising initiatives, focusing on inclusiveness and diversity and human rights,* including through campaigns that recognize the rights and contributions of migrants and other marginalised groups to society.

10. *Create adequate institutions and mechanisms to monitor and report on xenophobia,* e.g. by creating specialized national bodies and by building networks with civil society.

Adopting a human rights-based approach

A human rights-based approach is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed at promoting and protecting human rights. It is founded on the interrelated principles of non-discrimination, meaningful participation, empowerment, and accountability; and aims to analyse inequalities and redress discriminatory practices and human rights violations. It constitutes a framework of action, as well as a set of guidelines and tools for policy-makers. A rights-based approach develops the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations at the same time as it enables rights holders to claim their rights.
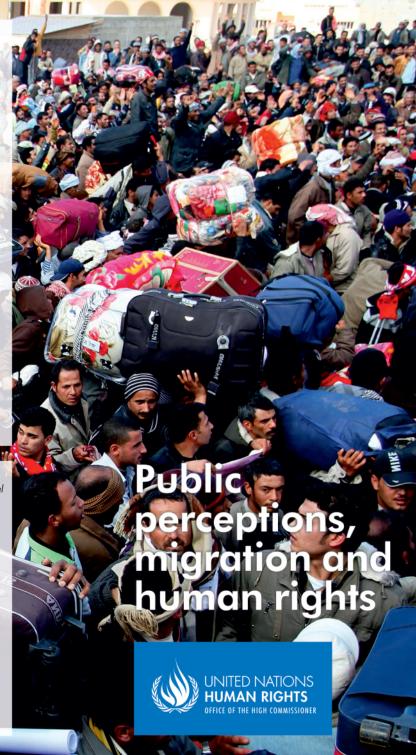
Using a human rights-based approach to address xenophobia will enable policy-makers to identify who within their society are the most vulnerable groups to manifestations of xenophobia, and to target their policy actions towards alleviating vulnerability, supporting full and effective participation, and promoting empowerment, including through ensuring that remedies and redress mechanisms are equally available. All public policies which operate in the context of xenophobia should recognise people as key actors rather than passive recipients. The full and effective participation of migrants and their advocates should therefore be ensured in the design, implementation and monitoring of such policy tools.

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- GMG-UNESCO, Fact-Sheet on the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Discrimination and Xenophobia, October 2009, available at **http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org**

Please visit the OHCHR Migration and Human Rights page at: **www.ohchr.org**

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Background picture credits:
Thousands restless to leave Libya. At the Tunisia-Libya border, thousands of people anxious to leave violence and insecurity in Libya gathered in a no-man's land on the Libyan side of the border. Most were young men, principally migrant workers from Tunisia and Egypt. Libya. March, 2011. © UN Photo/UNHCR/A Duclos

Public perceptions, migration and human rights

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

UNITED NATIONS

Xenophobia on the rise

"Xenophobia is the intense dislike or fear of strangers or people from other countries".

ILO, IOM, OHCHR, in consultation with UNHCR, *International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia*, August 2001

"Xenophobia consists of highly negative perceptions and practices that discriminate against non-citizen groups on the basis of their foreign origin or nationality (...) Acts of violence, aggression and brutality towards migrant groups represent extreme and escalated forms of xenophobia".

UNDP, Human Development Research Paper 2009/47, *Xenophobia, International Migration and Human Development*, September 2009

Since the events of 11 September 2001, an increasing message of xenophobia has permeated political movements in many countries and resulted in a climate of exclusion and rising violence against migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons, fuelled in several cases by government policies and practices. Rising anxieties and fears about foreigners have also been exacerbated in recent years by the financial and economic crises and the deteriorating political and social environment.

Widespread misperceptions about the scale and nature of migration can contribute to prejudice and xenophobia. The fact that today South-South migration is almost as common as South-North migration, and that roughly one-third of all migrants originate from and are living in the global South, seldom makes it to the front pages of newspapers. On the other hand, surveys of public opinion have found a consistent over-estimation of the absolute numbers of migrants in many destination societies.

"A major issue is how to confront widespread adverse public perceptions, opinions and resentment and xenophobia against foreigners, particularly migrant workers, especially where they are commonly portrayed as unfairly competing for scarce employment and housing, unjustly or illegally drawing on public welfare resources, and associated with criminality".

The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Doc.A/63/48, para. 13.

Xenophobia is usually the outcome of public discourse that is hostile to foreigners. In countries and communities around the world, migrants have been made into scapegoats and associated with criminality, disease, unemployment and other social problems.
The criminalization of irregular migration can fuel negative perceptions and stereotypes and can lead to discrimination, harassment and violence. A mutually reinforcing relationship often develops between rhetoric and policy on migration. Public expressions of xenophobia can be used by governments to justify increasing restrictions in relation to migration, closing down on legal channels to entry, and stepping up policies of expulsion.

"The protection of migrants is an urgent and growing human right challenge. Governments have an obligation to ensure that xenophobic violence, racism and related intolerance against migrants and their communities have no place in their societies".

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay. See:
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Migration/Pages/MigrationAndHumanRightsIndex.aspx

Migrants in an irregular situation are disproportionately vulnerable to xenophobia. Without a legal status, the migrant can be "invisible" to the welfare, police, judicial, healthcare and other agencies of the state, heightening their risks of exploitation and discrimination. Many will not report xenophobic crimes to the authorities due to fear of detection and deportation. Such fears are exacerbated by official policies in some countries which oblige public officials, such as the police or healthcare workers, to denounce to the immigration authorities the presence of irregularly present migrants. Where fear of xenophobic violence leads families to shut themselves off from the wider community, children may be prevented from attending mainstream educational institutions or public health services.

The media is a powerful actor in the context of perceptions and xenophobia. When the media portrays migrants in negative terms, using inaccurate information and misinformed stereotypes, it can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of hostility and prejudice. The media can conversely contribute to preventing xenophobia when it presents a balanced and contextualized image of migrants and other groups at risk of xenophobia.