

Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia – 'Not Alone' Migration Video

The Red Cross of the Republic of North Macedonia created a video story of Hazrat, who became a Red Cross member of staff supporting the National Society's work in Migration.

Introduction

- This case study was collected in North Macedonia in March 2024
- The Red Cross of North Macedonia (RCNM) has been running a Humanitarian Service Point (HSP) in Lojane since August 2016, when the Society opened its first office along the border with Serbia, offering humanitarian assistance to people on the move. Seven years later, what was initially a pilot project has turned out to be a very successful long-term activity.
- In 2023 RCNM developed a short video about migration in the country emphasising the humanity of migrants and refugees seeking safety or a more secure life. The video encouraged viewers to recognise people who are migrants as fellow human beings and to accept and support them. The video also sought to demonstrate to people who are migrants or asylum seekers that North Macedonia can be a safe and welcoming country.

Video – Not alone – Hazrat's story

In October 2023, the IFRC Migration and Communication teams held a training about support to Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs), for the National Societies from the Central and South East Europe Country Cluster. The training included teaching communications and migration officers how to record videos and conduct interviews with people accessing the HSPs. The training took place in Sutomore, Montenegro, over three days covering very concrete, practical topics such as how to create content, video production, and creative ways to tell people's real-life stories of migration. By the end of the training, participants had the tools to create high-quality, compelling content. The next step for participants from North Macedonia was to produce two video stories related to their work with migrants.

As soon as we got back home, we started brainstorming ideas and everybody was telling us about their work and what they thought should be included in the videos. We had long discussions and decided to create a story about our HSP since we have a lot of experience with that. People are crossing the border daily and the National Society has an HSP close by, along with a mobile team that operates there, reaching out to people on the move.



Hazrat (right) on his way to the HSP, accompanied by Dr. Omar Yassin from Jordan.

Throughout the whole process we discussed how we could promote the Humanitarian Service Point, which has been operating since August 2016, to show who we are supporting and how, to highlight how important it is to involve people from affected communities - both from the local host communities, but also people on the move - in our work to be able to achieve great results and gain access in different areas, and particularly to share Hazrat's story. Originally from Afghanistan, he has been working for the Red Cross for the last three years now.

Hazrat left his country and family several years ago. A talented linguist, when he arrived in North Macedonia, Hazrat learned the language in just a few months – in addition to the Turkish, Pushto, Farci, Dari, Greek, Kurdish, and Panjabi he already knew.

After helping interpret for an RCNM field coordinator who was taking another Afghani man to hospital, Hazrat was quickly recruited to support the Red Cross in its work at the HSP, playing a key role in enabling communication and building trust between the Red Cross and people on the move from Afghanistan. When not supporting translation and cultural mediation at the HSP, Hazrat also volunteers helping sort clothes donated to the National Society.

We worked with Hazrat to develop a scenario for the video from the beginning, demonstrating his experiences working with the Red Cross each day: getting to the bus station, taking the bus from Skopje to Kumanovo, close to the Serbian border, visiting the HSP in the village of Lojane, preparing for the field trip and talking with his colleagues, approaching the border, and going up to the mountain and engaging with the people who are crossing the border. We shot the whole video in one very long day, 8-9 hours non-stop.

The main challenge was trying to film interactions between Hazrat and people who were crossing the border: there is no exact time when, or place where, people will cross, which made planning difficult, we just had to go with him on the day and see what happened.

The idea of the video was to show Hazrat's working day and the experiences he has with the Red Cross - his relationship with his colleagues, how they all work together. Shortly before we were due to film, Hazrat was very worried and told us that he wasn't sure he would be able to make the video.

We discussed with him and offered access to psychosocial support (PSS) counselling to help with his wellbeing. After that he was ok to go ahead with the filming – it was very important that he felt comfortable and not under any pressure to take part unless he really wanted to.

When we finished filming, we had collected a lot of materials which we shared with IFRC Regional office for them to help edit and produce two videos, one about Hazrat and another one about the HSP.

We already have plans for another video about a refugee from Ukraine, to show her story and the assistance RCNM has provided.

“To sum up, the main goals with this video were to show the world that people on the move are human beings like you and me, by accepting them and treating them as you or I would wish to be treated, then together we can achieve more than if we turn against them and treat them poorly. The second point is that North Macedonia can be a safe and welcoming country to migrants and asylum seekers,” says Sandra Tomovska, field coordinator within the National Program for humanitarian assistance of migrants and refugees within RCNM migration department.

Results

By engaging closely with people on the move, RCNM were able to share relevant information, build trust, better understand needs, and offer more effective support.

Recruiting staff and volunteers from affected communities makes a lot of things easier, and this is one of the most important experiences we can share. Hazrat has the personal experience of migrating from Afghanistan, he has intimate knowledge of the challenges and needs people on the move face.

It quickly builds empathy and trust when people see somebody like themselves working with the Red Cross, and of course it also helps remove the language barrier, which means people can more easily share their experiences and tell us their needs.

Lessons learned

“The whole process encouraged us to find and put together more stories of people that are staying in our country. We are aware that our videos perhaps don’t look the most professional but by putting these stories out there, we are fighting discrimination, building the image of the Red Cross, encouraging people to think about their own attitudes and actions, and also promoting the idea of volunteering with us,” says Aleksandra Ristovski, PHV coordinator in RCNM.

Next steps & recommendations

Through the video, we are hoping to reach a wider audience, and help build trust between asylum seekers and people in North Macedonia. Firstly, to show that asylum seekers are #notalone in their struggles, and that our National Society is always there to help whoever you are and wherever you may be from. Secondly, to show to the world that by supporting Humanitarian Service Points, (HSPs) Red Cross Red Crescent Movement members are making sure there are safe, welcoming, and strategically located spaces where migrants and displaced people can access reliable humanitarian support from Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. We recommend and encourage other NS in the region to find ways to open HSPs along migration routes throughout the Balkan region, so people on the move can feel safe and #notalone throughout their journeys.

You can access both videos at the links below:

[Hazrat video 1](#)

[Hazrat Video 2](#)

Contact information

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