MICIC
MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS

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UN MIGRATION

G 13: RELOCATE AND EVACUATE MIGRANTS WHEN NEEDED

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Where protection cannot be provided locally, it may be necessary to relocate migrants to other parts of the host State or evacuate them to States of transit or States of origin. Evacuation is generally a last resort, but essential if migrants cannot remain safely were they are or be relocated safely to another part of the host State. Some migrants may embark on these journeys on their own, others rely on assistance from States, employers, civil society or international organizations for support and assistance.

Where comprehensive contingency plans, and standing evacuation and relocation arrangements are not already in place ad hoc arrangements on evacuation may be needed to determine of eligibility criteria, establish modes of transport and negotiate with States of transit and other actors. Coordination between States and other stakeholders in carrying out evacuations is useful to leverage different resources.

States should implement specific safeguards to ensure individuals who face persecution, serious harm or other life-threatening situations in their States of origin or other States, including refugees, are protected against refoulement.

Lessons from the conflict in Lebanon (2006)

During the Israel–Lebanon conflict, air raids damaged huge portions of Lebanese civilian infrastructure and displaced over one million Lebanese. At the time, Lebanon occupied an estimated 160,000 migrant domestic workers (MDWs), from Bangladesh, Egypt, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. Many of them faced challenges in accessing assistance, due to pre-existing structural factors. Migration status and linked it legal rights and protection, physical segregation and limited proficiency in Arabic— reduced access to information, social services and evacuation options. While some MDWs were able to flee with their employers or were brought to their respective embassies, others found themselves 'trapped' or 'locked away'. Under the Lebanese sponsorship system, many employers withheld passports and refused to let domestic workers leave. In other cases, migrants' home country's embassy in Lebanon lacked the resources to help them, or the home country had no diplomatic presence in Lebanon. At that time, sufficient contingency plans both on the Lebanese and the country of origin side were not in place. Evacuations of migrants and other foreigners were conducted primarily by Caritas, other civil society organization and IOM.

DEPLOYMENT OF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO ASSIST WITH RELOCATION AND EVACUATION

STATES OF ORIGIN

Evacuation is generally a last resort, but it is absolutely essential if migrants cannot remain safely where they are or cannot be relocated safely to another part of the host State. Stakeholders should consider several aspects when implementing evacuation operations, including pre-and post-evacuation support. This entails providing adequate information to migrants under which evacuation will be made available, evacuation points and procedures. Implementing evacuations also requires informed consent of migrants to be evacuated and should be based on criteria that determine migrants eligible for evacuation and safeguards should be set in place to ensure the principle of non-refoulment is respected. States can deploy additional personnel at national and local level in host States to assist with coordination or relocation and evacuation operations that help implement specific aspects of operations, such as identifying nationals who need particular care or providing and renewing documentation.

Operation Ramp, Australia

During the 2006 Israel–Lebanon conflict, the government of Australia deployed the Australian Defense Force to support the evacuation of over 5,300 Australians and over 1,300 foreign nationals from the Lebanese ports of Beirut and Tyre. The task force deployed 96 personnel, comprised of a command element; two evacuee processing teams; liaison officers; movement officers; health specialists from various units and linguists. The evacuation was led by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). In this operation, Australia charted 17 ships, 22 Australian aircraft and over 470 buses. Initial evacuations prioritized families with children and the handicapped who boarded a British warship already in the port of Beirut.

Operation Maitri, India

Operation Maitri was a rescue and relief operation in Nepal by the government of India and Indian armed forces in the aftermath of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. Within hours of devastating earthquake, the operation was launched and within days, 43,000 Indians were evacuated through land route and were provided with medical care at the camps set up by the force. The massive operation witnessed the evacuation of 341 foreigners, who were granted transit visas. By air, a total of 9,509 persons were evacuated and 785 foreigners were granted transit.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Evacuations to States of transit or origin are complex operations. Coordination among actors can ensure effective use of resources, especially as transportation or other services relating to evacuations may be in high demand. If not established before the crisis hits, factors to consider in establishing ad hoc arrangements to cooperate on evacuations include determining clear roles and responsibilities of each partner performing what task where, when and how. It is also critical to consider reporting and tracking tools which will ensure partners have real time information on location of migrants and status of evacuations.

Steering committee on the evacuation of migrant workers, Viet Nam

During the 2011 Libya crisis, Viet Nam established an inter-ministerial steering committee on the evacuation of Vietnamese workers in Libya as well as five working groups which were sent to countries in the surrounding region, namely Egypt, Greece, Malta, Tunisia and Turkey. The working groups established cooperation with Vietnamese embassies, local authorities and relevant international organizations such as IOM and UNHCR, to facilitate the reception and return of Vietnamese workers. The Steering Committee was headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of other relevant ministries. The Steering Committee also included representatives of Vietnam Airlines to help organize the evacuation effort.

Humanitarian Evacuation Cell, IOM and UNHCR

During the 2011 Libya crisis, IOM and UNHCR supported the evacuation of migrants. The two agencies joined forces to coordinate evacuation efforts and set up the Humanitarian Evacuation Cell (HEC) at the headquarters level in Geneva. The HEC supported, among other things, the coordination of assets received, and in-kind contributions from nineteen countries for the international evacuation of migrants. The HEC was thought to be time-limited, but remained an active arm of support to IOM field missions when conducting evacuation operations.

EMPLOYERS FACILITATING EVACUATION

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

Employers, recruiters, and placement agencies can support relocation or evacuation of migrant workers either independently or in cooperation with States. They can implement measures that privilege in-country relocation of personnel and operations in the event of a crisis when possible, or evacuate the migrant workforce from a host State when in-country relocation is not viable. Employers can ensure access to identity and travel documents and provide specific support to migrants by disseminating evacuation information, support them in contacting their States of origin, and providing temporary shelter and food until evacuation.

Marriott International's evacuation of guests and workers, Libya

As intense fighting broke out in Libya, the hotel management of the JW Marriott Hotel Tripoli arranged to evacuate guests, as well as staff. The Marriott regional operations team and crisis team at Marriott headquarters, coordinated closely on a daily basis to facilitate the evacuations. Phones were distributed to workers to communicate with each other and their families. The hotel issued salary payments and retrieved the passports of several migrant employees from the Libyan government, where they were for registration and obtained exit visa for all staff. Marriott pre-arranged a transit stop for the plane in Jordan and was able to arrange assistance from the Jordanian immigration officials to issue visas. Marriott kept in contact with the evacuated employees, and offered them positions in other locations.

Evacuation of construction workers from Libya

When the fighting between Gadhafi's security forces and rebels intensified in February 2011, the Vinci Construction Grand Project, a French-led construction project in Libya, quickly activated its emergency evacuation plan. All its foreign workers were brought to safety in a guarded and well-equipped site in Tripoli, while arrangements for their emergency repatriation were finalized. Repatriation plans were coordinated with recruitment agencies, which played a key role updating the workers' families and home authorities on developments. The company managed to arrange with Libyan immigration authorities the departure of its workers without the required exit visa. Upon arrival in Paris, migrant workers were provided accommodation while onward flights to their respective home countries were arranged.

SERVICE PROVIDERS FACILITATING RELOCATION OR EVACUATION

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

Private sectors actors can provide essential services during crisis, including transportation, financial and insurance services, medical assistance and evacuations. Service providers can take a number of measures to enable migrants to exit crisis-affected areas, and can help facilitating relocation or evacuations of migrants, either independently or in cooperation with States and other stakeholders. For example, transport companies may take passengers without tickets, or waiving requirements or fees including for air travel and financial services.

Qantas Airlines response to the tsunami, South East Asia

Following the 2004 tsunami in the South East Asia, Qantas Airlines operated a special flight to Phuket to evacuate Australian – regardless of which airline they had booked with. It further sent Qantas staff to Phuket to assist with relief efforts. It also offered free of charge travel to team volunteer doctors from Melbourne and Colombo and carried medical and charitable supplies free of charge. In the initial phases of the disaster, the airline remained in close contact with the Australian Government to provide their capacity if required.

Airbnb Disaster Response, Global

The online market place Airbnb connects travelers with hosts worldwide. In times of crisis, Airbnb can activate its response tool feature in designated geographic areas. It thereby can share general disaster response information with Airbnb guests and hosts. It also sends out automatically emails to Airbnb hosts in the affected areas to request whether they are able to assist with accommodation and processes all Airbnb bookings in the affected areas fee-free. For better preparedness and collaboration during crisis, Airbnb partners with local government agencies and disaster relief organizations.

ADAPTING LOCAL EVACUATION PLANS TO BETTER ACCOUNT FOR MIGRANTS AND THEIR NEEDS

Moving out of an area at risk or affected by a hazard, whether before or after its occurrence, can greatly reduce losses in emergencies. Past evacuations of migrants from countries experiencing crises underscored migrant's specific conditions of vulnerability during crises and evacuations. Planning and supporting evacuations is a key element of the mandate of local emergency management actors.

Accounting for migrants in evacuation planning does not require setting up dedicated systems, rather adapting existing plans and arrangements, effectively communicating them to migrants and adequately engaging them in preparedness and response activities.
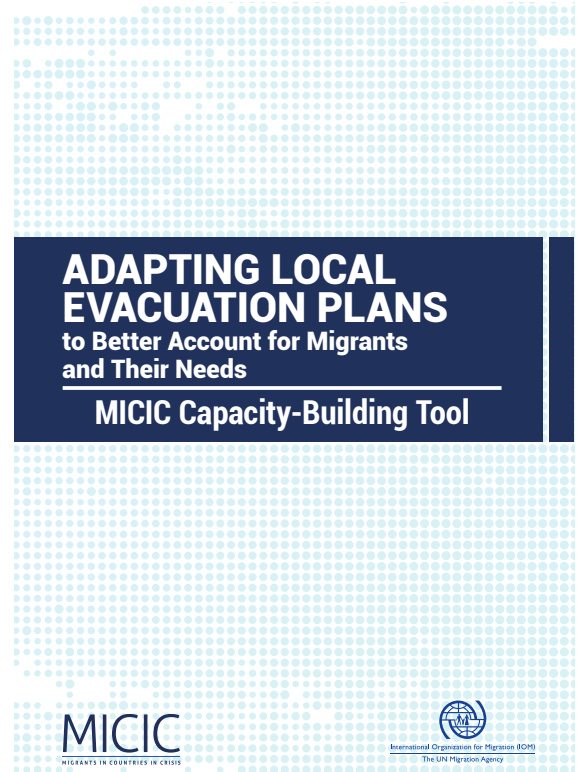
In view of this, IOM develop the template to "Adapting local evacuation plans to better account for migrants and their needs." The tool provides recommendations and indications to assist local and national response actors working in in communities hosting migrants, on how to adapt evacuation planning and support for communities hosting migrant groups.

ADAPTING LOCAL EVACUATION PLANS
to Better Account for Migrants and Their Needs

MICIC Capacity-Building Tool

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Tool at glance:

Adapting local evacuation plans
Hazard and vulnerability assessment
Coordination and management structure
Identification of evacuation routes and sites
Timing of the evacuation
Providing evacuees with warnings and information
Supporting migrants' movement out of the evacuation area
Managing evacuation sites

For more guidance specific to evacuations, please also refer to the tool on "planning for, and supporting evacuations" and the "reference checklist for special measures for the evacuation of migrant children".

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