Infosheet No 10
Migrants caught in crises

WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2020
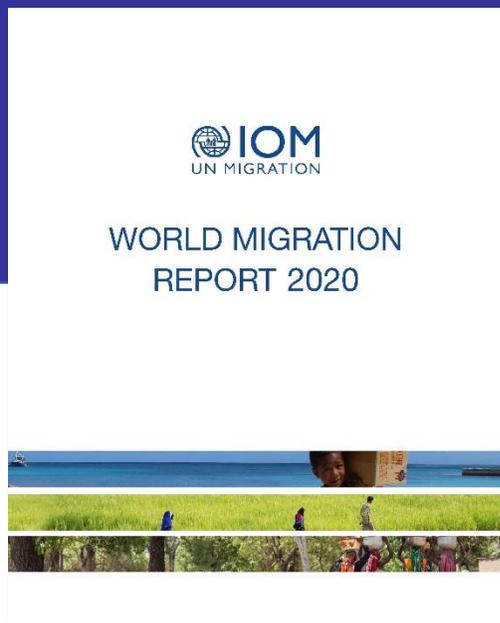
The situations of people who have moved from their countries of origin only to find themselves caught in a crisis that threatens their security and ability to thrive are of growing concern to the international community. While crises affect both nationals and non-nationals, the ability of migrants to cope with their impacts may be reduced, due to conditions of vulnerability associated with migrants' legal, economic and social status, as well as practical challenges, such as linguistic differences, geographic displacement and even cultural context, which can limit access to timely and understandable information, services, resources and safety. While not all migrants are equally affected in times of crisis, they are often among the most vulnerable, at increased risk and in need of specific support. Reflecting these realities, this chapter focuses on the experiences of migrants in crisis contexts, and the local, national and international responses to address their conditions and needs.

The chapter is organized into four sections: (a) the next section draws on the framework provided by the MICIC Initiative to examine the varying contexts, responses, gaps and lessons learned in crisis preparedness, emergency response and post-crisis recovery; (b) the section that follows provides an overview of existing data on migrants in countries at risk of or affected by crisis, and assesses data needs and gaps; (c) innovative responses for supporting migrants caught in crises are discussed in the section that follows; and (d) the final, concluding section reflects on policy and practice implications.

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF "MICIC"

The Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative and the development of the set of Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster provide concrete examples of efforts to improve current practice. The situation of migrants in crisis contexts is also acknowledged in the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, where it is highlighted as an essential element for the achievement of objective 2 on minimizing the drivers of forced migration, and objective 7 on reducing migrants' vulnerability.

The analysis in the chapter has a number of implications for future policy and practice in this area. These support the 15 guidelines of the MICIC Initiative, emphasizing that:

- Before, during and after crises, stronger preparedness and post-crisis actions are needed. Most largescale interventions in assistance to migrants in crisis have taken place in an unplanned manner. Instead, more systematic efforts are required to build on and develop capacities of emergency management actors, foreign embassies, consulates and missions, as well as local institutions and migrants themselves.

- Funding schemes need to be diversified and strengthened to support greater preparedness and coordination. Flexible and diverse funding can provide new avenues for support systems that can integrate migrants in a non-discriminatory manner. This includes the exploration of linkages with the private sector and diaspora networks, engaging with and sensitizing donors, while also scaling up initiatives for flexible donor and government financing of emergency funds for crises response.

- Post-crisis reflections can be enhanced, with responses beyond return to be explored, including local integration and resettlement. Returns are not the only solution and should not necessarily be the preferred one, given that there is often a lack of support after return. Where migrants are returned, long-term efforts to measure reintegration and monitor protection outcomes are critical to ensuring that migrants do not return to situations of greater harm or find themselves back in crisis situations.

- Addressing gaps and shortages of data will enable more effective coordination, preparedness, communication and provision of assistance. While anecdotal evidence may be available, larger data gaps prevent effective coordinated responses, whether between governments of origin and destination, or other stakeholders. The lack of impact evaluation data impedes the ability to identify fully what makes a response effective, while the lack of local level, disaggregated data does not allow for an understanding of the loss experienced by migrants.

- Developing a road map for innovations in response to migrants caught in situations of crisis, which takes into account the above recommendations, can support the elaboration of specific responses, stronger processes, organizational effectiveness and outreach that are more inclusive, both of migrants' vulnerabilities and their capacities.

- Human rights considerations and the humanitarian imperative to save lives should inform the development of emergency preparedness frameworks, and operational protocols and practices, during disasters. Supporting humanitarian and human rights-based responses requires cooperation of State- and non-State actors, who may hold differing priorities and agendas. It is important to ensure that responses in crises situations are primarily and substantively human rights based, rather than based on political considerations or populist expediency.

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