

TEMPLATE FOR STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs) for Assisting Migrants in Emergencies

MICIC Capacity-Building Tool

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PURPOSE OF THIS TEMPLATE

There are some 250 million international migrants in today's world, living abroad for work, education or family reasons. Tens of millions of people have moved across borders to find refuge from conflicts or disasters, and many more travel abroad every year for tourism, business or to visit friends and relatives. Every country in the world today hosts a more or less significant share of migrants (including migrant workers and their families, international students, tourists and business travelers, and refugees and people displaced across borders). At the same time, disasters due to natural and man-made hazards, epidemics and episodes of violence may potentially affect any country in the world.

As shown by a number of past occurrences, migrants face specific barriers to accessing information, assistance and resources in emergencies (including limited proficiency in the local language, discrimination and lack of local knowledge and social networks, lack of trust in host country authorities). However, they also possess specific sets of experiences and capacities that can help them cope with and recover from their impacts. Accounting for migrants' presence and for their specific needs and skills is becoming increasingly essential to the work of emergency management actors all over the world.

Most countries that host large migrant populations have well-established structures and capacities for emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Within these systems, emergency management actors are often required to provide services in a non-discriminatory manner, or even to cater specifically to the needs of identified "vulnerable groups". However, emergency management systems only rarely account for migrants' presence and specificities, and their institutions and personnel do not always have the capacities and resources to adequately include them in their activities – nor to adequately assist them before, during and after emergencies.

This template is designed to support a set of organizational efforts that can help address this gap. It can be used to develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to clearly define the responsibilities that governmental and non-governmental emergency response actors will bear, and the steps they will have to take, when responding to emergencies that affect migrants alongside native populations. It can also be used to define relevant procedures and options for cooperation among them.

HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE

This template provides a blueprint with generic indications that will require adaptations depending on the actual operational contexts and institutional frameworks in which it is used. SOPs are often developed at the initiative of mandated governmental emergency management agencies (at national or subnational level). This template SoP, however, can be used as an instrument to support multi-stakeholder cooperation and as such needs the buy-in of a variety of other actors.

It is recommended that it be localized through a consultative process inclusive of national and local mandated emergency management institutions, other relevant governmental entities (e.g. Ministries or department competent for issues such as migration or labour; public service providers, municipalities), civil society actors working in close contact with migrants, representatives of the migrant communities, employers, recruiters and other private sector actors, as well as representatives of migrants' home Government (e.g. consulates and embassies). This process can be based on a comprehensive mapping of relevant stakeholders and their assets and capacities – an exercise that should be carried out at the local level.

This template indicates the main areas of work where migrants should be better accounted for and a summary of relevant measures and coordination mechanisms that may be adopted to strengthen the emergency management systems' capacity to adequately assist them. When compiling specific SOPs based on this document, relevant institutions should list in detail all the relevant actors, their roles and procedures that exist or may be established to roll out the different actions. Some of the sections and measures listed in this template may not be relevant or applicable to all contexts.

TEMPLATE FOR STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)

1. Introduction

Objective of the SoPs

The SOPs define roles and responsibilities of relevant actors and establish coordination mechanisms among them to better include migrants in emergency preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Scope of the SOPs

The SOPs should explicitly state:

- What emergency situations the instructions will apply to;
- What groups of migrants it will cover;
- What kinds of emergency management efforts it applies to (e.g. risk assessment, contingency planning, relief and recovery efforts).

Main actors involved

This section can summarize what actors are covered by the SOPs, as well as at what administrative level the SOPs will be relevant for the various institutions (e.g. national, provincial, municipal).

Relevant frameworks

This section can list main legal, operational or administrative instruments the SOPs build upon (e.g. emergency management law, regulations of emergency management actors, relevant international frameworks and principles).

2. Including migrants in assessments of risk, needs and impacts

This section should include details on measures to ensure that migrants' presence and characteristics are captured in all assessments aiming to estimate the (potential or realized) human and economic impacts of all relevant hazards. This implies:

- ensuring that there is sufficient data on migrants' presence and on mobility in at-risk areas;
- ensuring that vulnerability and impact assessments take into account relevant migration-related characteristics (e.g. limited language proficiency, different evacuation behaviour, limited access to assistance).

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on data collection and data analysis efforts to produce migrant-inclusive risk assessments, and what other institutions will be relevant to data collection, data sharing and data analysis efforts.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that risk assessments for all relevant hazards account for migrants' presence and characteristics, including, for instance:

- Setting up procedures for emergency management actors to source up-to-date migration statistics and integrate them in risk models, including by identifying all existing data sources (official and not);
- Adapting vulnerability assessment tools to include factors and characteristics that are linked with migration status;
- Adapting impact assessments, including displacement tracking, to disaggregate data by migration-related characteristics.

This section should also include provisions to ensure that assessments are regularly updated.

3. Mapping stakeholders

This section should include details on mapping efforts to identify actors that would be relevant to migrant-inclusive emergency management. Such actors may include governmental institutions, private sector entities, civil society bodies, international organizations and research institutes, among others.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on the stakeholder mapping exercises, and what other institutions will need to be involved in the identification of relevant stakeholders.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify how stakeholder mapping exercises will take place, and what are the expected outcomes of such exercises. These might include, for instance:

- Creating contact directories of community organizations and representatives for each migrant group;
- Creating rosters of interpreters, translators and cultural mediators for each migrant/linguistic group;
- Identifying focal points in the migrants' home countries' consulates and embassies in the country for emergency matters.

4. Creating coordination and referral systems among actors

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that communications and coordination mechanism among relevant actors are established and can function in emergencies. These should include all relevant actors identified through a stakeholder mapping exercise. Such efforts can also include the establishment of systems to refer cases in need of specific services or assistance in emergencies.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on overall coordination, as well as all other actors that should be involved in coordination and referral mechanisms.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that coordination mechanisms are established and they are fully functional in the event of an emergency. Such measures may include, for instance:

- Identifying relevant focal points (and alternates) for each relevant actor (whether institutional, non-governmental, private sector, etc.), and sharing relevant information among all stakeholders;
- Involving representatives from all institutions in preparedness exercises and emergency briefings;
- Creating an information management system to refer emergency cases and coordinate responses.

5. Accounting for migrants in early warnings and emergency communications

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that early warnings and emergency communication systems adequately account for the presence and specific communications needs of migrants. This may include revising the content and format of warnings and messages, the language they are delivered in and the channels through which they are disseminated.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on the revision and adaptation of warnings and communications systems, and what other actors will be involved in efforts to develop and disseminate relevant messages.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to adapt early warning and emergency communications systems to account for migrants' presence and communications needs. Such measures may include, for instance:

- Conducting a mapping of migrants' preferred communication channels;
- Sharing warnings and communications with consulates, embassies, CSOs and ethnic media for their feedback and further dissemination;
- Setting up systems for the rapid translation or interpretation of messages by identified professional or qualified staff;
- Setting up systems for the validation of warnings and communications by cultural mediators or migrant leaders prior to their dissemination;
- Providing migrants with tailored information on available opportunities for response and recovery assistance;
- Extending existing early warning systems to cover high-immigration areas.

6. Including migrants in contingency plans

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that contingency plans adequately account for the presence and needs of migrants. This may include revising existing plans or ensuring that additional considerations are factored in as part of plan development or update.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on adapting contingency planning, and what other actors will be involved in planning efforts.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that contingency plans account for migrants' presence and specific needs in emergencies. Such measures might include, for instance:

- Ensuring that evacuation models account for migrants' diverse evacuation behaviours;
- Identifying evacuation routes and sites that are accessible to migrants, and not too far away from their residences and workplaces;
- Planning evacuation areas in a way that account for migrants' specific needs;
- Ensuring that transportation plans cover high-immigration areas, and account for migrants' specific assistance needs, as well as for potential trust issues;
- Ensuring the provision of assistance and information in multiple languages along routes and in shelters;
- Organizing drills and exercises in high-immigration areas;
- Ensuring that migrants are properly informed about contingency plans and emergency procedures.

7. Protecting migrants' rights during and after emergencies

This section should include details on measures to ensure that migrants' rights are protected in times of emergencies. This may include, for instance, setting up system to ensure migrants can have access to relief assistance on a non-discriminatory basis, or that they can access legal assistance and relevant complaint and redress mechanisms during and in the aftermath of a crisis.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on the various measures, as well as other actors that will be involved in relevant efforts.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what mechanisms can be established to protect migrants' rights in emergencies. This may include, for instance, systems and measures to:

- Disseminating “know your rights in emergencies” information for migrants;
- Campaigning with employers and recruiters, service providers and host communities to ensure that they are all aware of migrants' basic rights to assistance in emergencies;
- Suspend the enforcement of immigration regulations during evacuations and emergency relief operations;
- Provide affordable, effective assistance to migrant workers to recoup unpaid salaries and documentation that might be withheld or lost;
- Monitor possible violations of migrants' rights, in particular linked with violation of labour rights and trafficking;
- Extend welfare assistance and livelihood support to migrants in the aftermath of an emergency.

8. Providing culturally competent emergency assistance

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that lifesaving and immediate response efforts in an emergency are provided in a way that is appropriate to migrants' cultural background, including language, preferences, etiquette, stances towards health-care, care of the dead and any other cultural feature that may be relevant to the provision of emergency services.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on efforts to improve the cultural competence of emergency response personnel and volunteers, and what other actors will be involved in these efforts.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures can be taken in order to improve the capacity of emergency response staff and volunteers to provide assistance in a culturally competent manner. Such measures might include, for instance:

- Clearly defining responsibilities for assisting in a culturally competent manner migrants in emergencies with all relevant forms of support (health-care, food and non-food items);
- Involving relevant response personnel in trainings and workshops on cultural diversity and its implication for emergency response;
- Briefing response personnel on the specificities of response efforts in migrant communities before deployment in the field;
- Stockpiling appropriately to cater for the needs of migrants in need (e.g. specific food, clothing items, multilingual information materials).

9. Renewing migrants' documents

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that migrants' documents are renewed or replaced in an expedite manner in emergencies. This may apply to identity and travel documents, and work permits and visas.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on documentation efforts for the different kinds of document, and what other actors will be involved in such efforts.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that systems are established for migrants to be able to renew or replace lost or damaged documents in the aftermath of emergencies. Such measures may include, for instance:

- Creating information management systems to circulate information and requests between relevant home and host country authorities to expedite the issuance of documents, and collaboration mechanisms to respond to such requests;
- Ensuring that facilities where documents can be replaced or renewed are still functioning, or establishing mobile documentation points in key locations;
- Establishing expedite procedures for the issuance of relevant documentation.

10. Facilitating migrants' voluntary departure from the country

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that migrants can leave the country, if they wish to do so. It can cover both operational arrangements and administrative measures.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on relevant efforts to facilitate the departure of migrants from the country, and what other actors will be playing a role in related operations.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures can concretely be taken to allow migrants to more easily or more swiftly leave the affected country, should the emergency reach a level where they may have no alternative to doing so. Such measures might include, for instance:

- Waiving administrative requirements for exiting the country;
- Setting up information sharing and coordination system among actors that have the capacity to transport evacuees across borders;
- Setting up systems to transport people to exit points and border crossings, or other pre-identified pre-departure meeting points.

11. Communicating with, and tracing family members

This section should include details on efforts to ensure that systems available to affected persons to communicate with, or trace, their family members within or outside the crisis areas are also available to migrants, in particular those whose families are in their home country.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on efforts to communicate with, and trace, family members, and what other actors will be playing a role in their roll out.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that migrants can communicate with or trace their family members, or receive support for doing so. Such measures may include, for instance:

- Equipping dedicated facilities for free or affordable international communications for migrants that may be affected by emergencies and may wish to communicate with family members in their home countries;
- Creating or identifying information management systems to record information on migrants' condition and location in the aftermath of the emergency, and share it with family members and home country authorities at the migrants' request;
- Collaborating with relevant international and home country actors to trace family members within and outside affected areas.

12. Migrants' inclusion in relevant activities

This section should include details on how to ensure that migrants and their representatives actively participate in relevant emergency management efforts – including by contributing to consultations and planning activities, and by taking on active roles in volunteering for response.

Relevant actors

This section should identify what institution will lead on ensuring the involvement of migrants in emergency management efforts, and what other actors and individuals will be involved in engaging them.

Relevant procedures

This section should identify what measures should be taken to ensure that migrants can actively participate to planning and operations before, during or after emergencies. Such measures may include, for instance:

- Engaging migrants in consultation bodies for and on emergency preparedness and response or recovery planning;
- Engaging migrants directly as staff members and volunteers before or during emergencies.



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