ASSISTING MIGRANTS IN EMERGENCIES

Recommended actions for inclusive provision of emergency services

MICIC Capacity-Building Tool

MICIC
MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS

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Main Challenges

Communications	Organizing key facilities	Providing essential goods and services
▪ Migrants might not be proficient in the local language. ▪ Migrants might use a different set of media to access information than the local population. ▪ Migrants might not trust information, warnings and messages, especially when coming from official sources. ▪ Migrants might interpret messages differently than natives.	▪ Language barriers may hinder migrants' understanding of signs, documents and indications. ▪ Site planning and supplying may need to be adapted to cater for migrants' culture-specific needs. ▪ Migrants may be reluctant to use key facilities due to lack of knowledge or trust.	▪ Distribution of food and non-food items may need to be adapted to account for migrants' culture-specific needs. ▪ Provision of basic services may need to be adapted to cater for migrants' culture-specific needs. ▪ Migrants may be reluctant to come forward to ask for basic assistance.

Recommended actions

Communications	Organizing key facilities	Providing essential goods and services
✔ Deployment of multilingual teams with interpreters, volunteer and staff. ✔ Use phrasebooks and remote translation systems. ✔ Use targeted communications materials (multilingual and dedicated documents). ✔ Be mindful of specific etiquette and greeting or speaking codes. ✔ Look for, and involve (if possible) bilingual migrants who can serve as interpreters and as mediators.	✔ Display targeted communications materials (including registration forms, information leaflets and posters, signage). ✔ Staff your registration desk with bilingual staff, and equip it with "find your language" signs and phrasebooks, dictionaries or some device capable of translation, or contacts of interpreters. ✔ Equip the prayer room so that it can be used by people of different religions (e.g. different items, ideally removable symbols). If needed, define a schedule for use of the room by different groups. ✔ Plan sleeping arrangements, washrooms and toilets according to cultural preferences. ✔ Be mindful of sensitivities linked with the presence of pets. ✔ Engage representatives from all migrant groups in site committees and involve them in relevant briefings and communications.	✔ Be aware of migrants' right to receive assistance. ✔ Provide food according to different groups' dietary restrictions and preferences. Provide clothes and personal items according to different groups' cultural preferences and needs. ✔ Be mindful of culture-specific sensitivities linked with health-care and psychoocial support. ✔ Refer migrants to relevant organizations and professionals if they need specific forms of assistance you cannot provide. ✔ Provide opportunities for migrants to mourn their dead anc participate in collective rituals and celebrations. ✔ Consult and collaborate with migrant representatives, religious leaders and civil society representatives to approach migrants more effectively.

1. Introduction

In today's increasingly mobile societies, emergencies affect communities that have grown more diverse, and include migrants alongside local populations. Migrants, like other minorities and culturally and linguistically diverse groups, may have specific assistance needs during emergencies: their diverse social, linguistic, cultural and ethnic background, as well as their legal status, contributes to determining their risk perceptions and their emergency response behaviours, their priorities, and the protection and support options they have available in emergencies. These differences should be accounted for in emergency planning and service delivery; emergency service providers need to be cognizant of individual and collective specificities within the communities they work with and be prepared to adapt their assistance accordingly.

Diversity is related to a variety of individual and collective factors, including gender and sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status and literacy level, health and disability status. As a consequence of a global trend towards increased international circulation of people, in communities all around the world, diversity is increasingly the result of the presence of foreign nationals (including international migrant workers and their families, students, expats and business workers, tourists, as well as refugees and people forcibly displaced across borders).

All these groups (collectively referred to as "migrants" in this document) may face specific obstacles and barriers to accessing assistance in emergencies. Limited language proficiency, barriers linked with irregular migration status and fear of being identified, lost or confiscated identity or travel documents, xenophobia, limited social networks, as well as culturally determined preferences and needs, are some of the most recurrent factors compounding their vulnerability. Moreover, migrants often go unaccounted for by crisis preparedness planning and response efforts, which give little consideration to their presence, and to their sociocultural diversity.

Emergency service providers are primarily mandated to appropriately assist and support all people that are present within an emergency-affected area under their jurisdiction, on a non-discriminatory basis. As such, they are responsible for assisting all affected migrants, too, regardless of status, through appropriate assistance. This does not imply that migrants should be receiving a "special treatment" – rather that, unless emergency services are adapted, migrants may be discriminated against in emergencies. Accounting for migrants' presence and their needs in the provision of key services is essential for emergency service providers to effectively fulfil their mandate and mitigate the overall impacts of emergencies on communities and societies.

This tool

This checklist is designed to help emergency service providers assess some of the main challenges they may encounter when providing key services in communities that host migrant populations, and identify actions they can take to overcome such barriers and provide more inclusive emergency assistance. It is designed for emergency management agencies and other actors, governmental and non-governmental, that will be responsible for the provision of key services and assistance in emergencies. It can help such actors plan for the deployment of personnel before and during emergencies, and brief staff and volunteers with synthetic information on potential operational challenges they may face and key recommended actions that may increase their ability to provide appropriate services to affected persons.

Relevant challenges and actions are grouped under three main topics:
1) communications
2) organization of evacuation sites and key facilities
3) provision of basic goods and services

Specific challenges and recommended actions identified through this tools should ideally be presented to different emergency responders as part of preparedness efforts, or before their deployment to crisis affected areas in which the presence of migrants is expected. To this end, the checklist is complemented by a **template presentation** that can be used to highlight some key elements.

While the checklist covers a number of situations and measures that are often relevant when working in areas hosting migrants, concrete challenges and recommended actions should always be identified and prioritized based on an understanding of the local context, and in particular of the conditions and specific cultural needs of all relevant migrant groups: gathering information on each group's specific needs and preferences for these areas (for instance by surveying representatives or community leaders) is the foundation of inclusive preparedness and early response efforts.

2. Recommended actions: Communicating with migrants

Communicating with all at-risk and affected populations before, during and after emergencies is an important responsibility of emergency service providers. Developing and conveying awareness-raising messages, early warnings and emergency communications is key to improving people's preparedness for potential hazards, and ongoing emergencies, to enabling them to behave in ways that reduce the hazards' impacts, and to increasing their ability to look for assistance and support.

Communicating with migrants, however, may present some specific challenges, including:

- Migrants might not be proficient in the local language.

- Migrants might use a different set of media to access information than the local population.

- Migrants might not trust information, warnings and messages, especially when coming from official sources.

- Migrants might interpret messages differently than natives.

In order to address these challenges, the following actions can be helpful.

2.1 Translating and adapting messages

✓ Be aware of what languages are spoken in your community. Survey migrant representatives or personnel from local authorities or civil society to understand whether people in their communities speak or read the local language, and what language they speak instead.[1]

✓ Simplify all messages, warnings and communications, as well as the text on all communication materials. Simplified text in the local language is likely to be more clearly understood by affected migrants and locals alike.

✓ Use as many visual/pictorial elements as possible in your messages, signs and communication products.

✓ Identify (ideally before the emergency) a roster of people who can help translate messages, or provide interpretation services.[2] If possible, train them to the specificity of the emergency context and terminology, and on the sensitivities of working with people in situations of distress. Such rosters may include:

- Local professional interpreters and translators
- Remotely based providers of translation and interpretation services, including those providing pro-bono services (e.g. Translators Without Borders)
- Bilingual emergency service staff and volunteers
- Other bilingual speakers (including migrants themselves).

✓ Translate messages (including early warning messages), communication products (e.g. awareness raising and preparedness materials), and other materials needed for emergency preparedness and response (e.g. FAQ on relief services, forms to register in shelters or request assistance). Consider producing multilingual materials, if more effective.

✓ Consult representatives of migrant communities to verify whether messages and symbols are clearly understood.

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[1] A template to collect this information is available at:
https://micicinitiative.iom.int/sites/default/files/resource_pub/docs/12_en_info_gathering_tool-migrant_groups.pdf

[2] A template to collect this information is available at:
https://micicinitiative.iom.int/sites/default/files/resource_pub/docs/12_en_info_gathering_tool-migrant_groups.pdf

✔ Equip key locations, such as check points along evacuation routes and evacuation shelters, with relevant materials (e.g. pictorial signs, multilingual forms), in particular in areas in which a high concentration of migrants is reported or expected. Also equip such locations with posters for people to identify the language they speak, contact directories of translators and interpreters and phrasebooks or dictionaries.

✔ Make sure that relevant staff has access to online or remote translation and interpretation services (e.g. through apps on their smartphones, such as IOM's MigApp, relevant websites or remote interpretation companies).

✔ Deploy bilingual staff and interpreters in key sites, in particular in areas in which a high concentration of migrants is reported or expected. This includes engaging speakers of key languages to deliver information through door-to-door campaigns or community briefings, if any is planned.

2.2 Choosing the right media and communication channels

✓ Be aware of and map the communications channels used by migrant communities (e.g. ethnic media, home country media, informal community channels). Survey community representatives to understand how to most effectively reach out to them.[3]

✓ Create a contact directory of media outlets and communications channels most used by migrant communities (e.g. their foreign post's official channels, their communities' social media pages), and include their contacts in your emergency communication plan.

✓ Engage regularly with the focal points of all relevant outlets and channels to raise their awareness of the role they can play in emergencies and to keep them updated on what they may be required to do.

✓ Disseminate communications and warnings in emergencies through all channels available, formal and informal.

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[3] A template to collect this information is available at:
https://micicinitiative.iom.int/sites/default/files/resource_pub/docs/12_en_info_gathering_tool-migrant_groups.pdf

2.3 Improving migrants' trust in emergency communications

✓ Produce materials and messages in collaboration with institutions or individuals migrants trust. This can include co-branding leaflets and visuals, or having personnel from trusted institutions or community leaders and representatives deliver messages in relevant video or audio communications.

✓ Whenever having direct contact with migrants, be mindful of group-specific etiquette and speaking codes that may apply. For example, be mindful that in some cultures women may only speak to other women.

✓ Whenever visiting locations with a considerable migrant population to deliver emergency-related messages (e.g. door-to-door information campaigns, community briefings), have a community member known and trusted by migrants to accompany you, and avoid the presence of uniformed officials (in particular those associated with enforcement of immigration laws).

✓ Engage as much as possible with civil society organizations that provide services to migrants.

2.4 Preparing migrants for possible emergencies

✓ Produce targeted awareness materials, including "know-your-rights in emergencies" products that may increase migrants' willingness to seek assistance they are entitled to.

✓ Develop materials that can be used by migrants and local civil society organizations to organize awareness-raising activities with their nationals.

✓ Organize dedicated awareness sessions for migrant representatives to share information on possible or current emergencies, alerts and main means of communications, relevant actors and available assistance, and recommended responses.

✓ Integrate migrant representatives in the emergency response structure.

3. Recommended actions: Organizing key facilities

Accessing and using evacuation sites, shelters and other facilities providing essential services can be key to people's safety and survival in emergencies. However, planning and resourcing such locations may not always take into account migrants' presence and their specific needs. Adapting relevant arrangements can be key to ensuring that migrants affected by an emergency are willing and able to use such facilities to access life-saving assistance. Among the main barriers that may need to be considered are:

- Language barriers may hinder migrants' understanding of signs and documents within shelters and evacuation sites and other facilities.

- Site planning or supplying may need to be adapted to cater for migrants' culture-specific needs.

- Migrants may be reluctant to use evacuation sites and shelters and other key facilities due to lack of knowledge of the availability of such services, lack of trust in responders, fear for arrest, deportation, xenophobic violence.

3.1 Addressing language barriers

✔ Print and display multilingual or/and pictorial signs to mark all the key spaces within the shelter (e.g. registration desk, toilets, prayer space, sleeping area, eating area, smoking and no-smoking areas, gender-specific areas, child-friendly spaces, etc.).

✔ Print and stock multilingual registration forms. Such forms can be integrated to include specific information on peoples' language proficiency, culture-specific dietary habits, sleeping preferences or requirements that are relevant to the provision of basic services.

✔ Translate any leaflet presenting information on the centre (e.g. rules, services provided). Include information on migrants' specific rights to use the site in such documents, if needed.

✔ Print and display feedback forms in different languages to allow migrants to provide comments and recommendations on the assistance received.

✔ Hang a poster for "finding one's language" (i.e. with flags or translated text) by the registration desk or provide relevant staff with a visual communication tool, basic phrasebooks in foreign language or dictionary, or instructions to use online translation tools, if needed.

✔ Equip the registration desk with references for interpreters/translators (also working remotely) or local embassies/consulates and community members.

✔ Assign staff or volunteers who speak relevant languages to the registration desk. If possible, ensure gender, age, ethnic diversity in your registration clerks and make sure that they are aware of potential sensitivities linked with etiquette or greeting/speaking habits.

3.2 Addressing culture-specific needs through site planning

✔ Assess culture-specific preferences and needs migrant groups may have with regards to temporary accommodation arrangements. For longer-term arrangements, consider additional necessities (such as being close to public transportation).

✔ Make sure to plan/organize shelters and other key sites based on an understanding of culture-specific needs and preferences of the migrants who may use them. If not available beforehand, this information should be gathered upon people's arrival at the site and can be used to help adapt its organization and management.

✔ Identify a prayer room (ideally a quiet area), and make sure to stock relevant materials (e.g. symbols, chairs, religious texts, praying mats, separations to segregate different areas). Ideally, make sure that all items, especially religious symbols, are removable. If needed, prepare a schedule to ensure that it is allocated to relevant groups at relevant times.

✔ Plan sleeping arrangements according to culture-specific preferences, if applicable. For some groups this will mean splitting men's and women/children's sleeping areas. Other groups will prefer having families (including extended families) sleep together whenever possible.

✔ Be mindful of sensitivities that may arise from the presence of animals (e.g. some guests' pets) to guests of specific cultural background.

✔ Equip washrooms and toilets facilities for use by people with different cultural background: e.g. use of water instead of paper. In addition, keep in mind that washrooms may need to be used for ritual washing: make sure to designate at least a specific one for that purpose, and keep it particularly clean.

✔ If applicable, identify a space which could be used to provide migrants with specific services (e.g. documentation renewal). Equip the space accordingly.

3.3 Encouraging migrants to use evacuation sites and shelters and other facilities

✔ Engage with migrant representatives and civil society organizations to share information about shelters and evacuation sites and other facilities, including as part of preparedness efforts.

✔ Engage migrants in any drill organized to test the knowledge and use of evacuation sites and shelters.

✔ Prepare and disseminate messages on migrants' right to access evacuation sites, shelters and other key facilities. If needed and possible, reassure migrants that no immigration enforcement operation will take place at such locations.

✔ If possible, make sure that community representatives accompany emergency management personnel in key sites along evacuation routes, or sit together with clerks at the registration desk. In alternative, staff and volunteers of migrant background can be tasked with relevant work.

✔ Identify locations that migrants know and trust (e.g. community centres, school, church, temple or mosque) and stock and use them as shelters, to provide migrants with an alternative to official sites.

✔ Appoint a representative for each migrant group within any given shelter to gather and provide feedback on migrants' use of, and issues with, the site.

✔ When setting-up shelter or camp coordination structures or mechanisms, ensure that migrants are adequately represented, and participate actively if possible.

4. Recommended actions: Providing goods and services

Providing relief and recovery goods and services (such as food, water, shelter and housing reconstruction assistance, basic items, health and psychosocial care) is one of the main responsibilities of emergency actors and key to reducing short and long-lasting impacts on affected persons. Providing appropriate assistance to all affected persons means accounting for their diverse capacities, needs and priorities. In particular, when working with migrants, this may entail that:

- Distribution of food and non-food items may need to be adapted to cater for migrants' culture-specific needs.

- Provision of basic services may need to be adapted to cater for migrants' culture-specific needs.

- Migrants may be reluctant to come forward to ask for basic assistance.

4.1 Adapting delivery of basic goods

✓ Be aware of culture-specific preferences and needs migrant groups may have with regards to the provision of basic relief goods and services, including: food and drinks, clothing and personal items. It can be useful to develop a table or list with key information for relevant groups, such as the example in table 1) and share it broadly with response personnel. Adapt your emergency stockpiling and procurement accordingly.

✓ Make sure to provide food according to different migrant groups' dietary restrictions linked with religious beliefs and culture (e.g. halal or kosher food, avoiding pork or beef). If possible, accommodate different groups' preferences (e.g. preference towards rice or bread). This also applies to respecting, insofar as possible, usual timing of meals (especially if it is linked with festivals and celebrations, such as Ramadan). Most people, however, will allow for exceptions to their dietary habits in case of emergency.

✓ Make sure to provide clothes and personal items that are culturally acceptable to the different groups. Keep in mind that people's habits and preferences will affect the way the will use the items provided, and that they may have additional requirements (e.g. warmer clothes or additional blankets if they are not used to cold weather). Also, if specific groups require specific items (e.g. headwear), make sure to adequately procure and distribute them.

✓ Consider coordinating with external partners if the capacity to accommodate these needs is not sufficient. This may include civil society organizations as well as foreign posts of migrants' home countries, which may be receiving relief goods from migrants' home government authorities, fellow nationals, or diasporas.

Table 1. An example of dietary preferences by ethnic/cultural group

Indian	Hindu	- Many follow a lacto-vegetarian diet that allows milk products but abstains from meat, fish, poultry and eggs. - Don't consume beef as the cow is considered sacred. - Orthodox Hindus avoid onion, garlic and gelatin by-products.
Indian	Sikh	- Sikh dietary law prohibits eating non-halal or non-kosher meat, alcohol and other intoxicants. - Many Sikhs follow a vegetarian diet, as part of custom and tradition.

Israeli	Jewish	- Will eat kosher food – i.e. food that responds to a set of complex guidelines, which include:
		   • which animals may be eaten (e.g. no pork, no shellfish),
		   • which parts of animals are allowed,
		   • who is allowed to prepare food,
		   • in which combinations while avoiding contamination (by using separated cookware for different classes of food).

Italian	Christian Catholic	- May abstain from meat (except fish) on Fridays. - In the "lent" period between Ash Wednesday and Easter, may abstain from animal products – some will allow fish.
Lebanese	Muslim	- Will only eat halal food. Pork is not allowed, and other meat needs to be butchered by certified butchers. - During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, no food and drinks (including water) are allowed from dusk until dawn.
Vietnamese	Buddhist	- May follow a vegetarian diet due to the commandment that one shall not kill and their belief in reincarnation.

Source: https://cccdpcr.thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/

4.2 Adapting delivery of key relief services

✓ Make sure that personnel of emergency health services are aware of potential sensitivities different migrant groups may present: cultural background, including religious beliefs, may affect migrants' willingness to receive treatment, including life-saving assistance. Migrant groups may also present culture-specific stances towards pain.

✓ Make sure that personnel providing psychosocial care in emergencies is aware of how migrants' willingness to receive assistance may depend on cultural factors, gender roles and ethnic allegiance and so on.

✓ Improve responders' capacity to communicate with migrants by identifying and appropriately deploying interpreters and bilingual staff and volunteers, or equipping them with basic phrasebooks, pictorial communications products and live translation systems (e.g. dedicated apps, contacts for remote interpretation).

✓ Make sure that responders have available a list of contacts of organizations and professionals (including consulates) they can refer migrants to for more targeted assistance, including legal assistance, (re)issuance of visa and identity documentation, family tracing, international evacuation and so on.

✓ Throughout the relief and post-crisis phase, make sure to provide spaces and opportunities for migrant groups to mourn their dead, as well as participate in collective mourning events, rituals, festivals and celebrations. This includes ensuring the availability of opportunities for religious practice, in coordination with religious or spiritual leaders.

✓ Gather and compile information on the different migrant groups' stances towards health and psychosocial care, care of the dead and celebrations, and share it broadly with response personnel.

4.3 Removing barriers to migrants' access to assistance

✓ Prepare and disseminate messages on migrants' right to access assistance. If needed and possible, reassure migrants that no immigration enforcement operation will take place at key locations where items are distributed or services are provided.

✓ Make sure to consult with community representatives and religious or spiritual leaders on any matter that may be relevant (e.g. availability of preferred or recommended food or non-food items, performing specific health-care practices), and disseminate these individuals' advice within the community.

✓ If possible, make sure that representatives from the migrant community are present at key locations where items are distributed or services are provided. If alternative, staff and volunteers of migrant background can be tasked with relevant work.

✓ Make sure that professionals are aware of, and respect, etiquette and speaking/greeting codes with different migrant groups. Sensitivities linked with age/gender may discourage migrants from accessing assistance.

✓ Identify locations that migrants know and trust (e.g. community centres, school, church, temple or mosque) and perform distribution or service provision there.

✓ Survey representatives of the different migrant groups to gather feedback on their specific level of access to essential goods and services, outstanding priorities and existing issues or challenges.

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