

# ADAPTING LOCAL EVACUATION PLANS

to Better Account for Migrants  
and Their Needs

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## MICIC Capacity-Building Tool

**MICIC**

MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

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## INTRODUCTION

This tool was compiled to assist emergency management actors at national and local levels in factoring in migrant populations in their crisis evacuation plans. Evacuations are a key measure to reduce the impact of natural and man-made hazards. Moving out of an area at risk or affected by a hazard, whether before or after its occurrence, can greatly reduce losses in emergencies. Planning for and supporting evacuations is a key element of the mandate of emergency management agencies.

Evacuations consist of moving people and assets temporarily to safer places before, during or after the occurrence of a hazardous event in order to protect them.

Evacuation plans refer to the arrangements established in advance to enable the moving of people and assets temporarily to safer places before, during or after the occurrence of a hazardous event. Evacuation plans may include plans for return of evacuees and options to shelter in place.

In societies that are increasingly mobile and diverse, including migrant populations in emergency response measures, and in particular in evacuation planning and assistance, is a key factor to mitigating the impacts of hazards of all kinds. Migrants' socioeconomic conditions and cultural background may influence their capacity and willingness to evacuate in emergencies. For example, the location in which migrants live or work, their ability to understand messages and communicate in the local language, the way they are reached by emergency warnings and interpret them, the levels of trust they have in the local

emergency management system, and the resources they can mobilize to get out of harm's way – are all factors that shape migrants' experience and behaviours in emergencies. As a consequence of these factors, migrants may be more reluctant than natives to evacuate a disaster-hit area, or less likely to do so, or they may move along different routes and to different destinations from other groups.

For emergency management actors working in communities hosting migrants, understanding how these conditions are reflected in migrants' evacuation behaviours (and more generally in the way they react in emergencies) is vital to being able to support effective emergency response. Many emergency management actors routinely take into account the different conditions of vulnerability, capacities and behaviours of specific population groups, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Similarly, in order to ensure migrants' effective integration in emergency evacuation plans and operations, preparedness and responses need to be designed in a way that addresses their specific characteristics.

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. This tool provides recommendations and indications to adapt evacuation planning and support for communities hosting migrant groups.

## ADAPTING LOCAL EVACUATION PLANS

### 1. Hazard and vulnerability assessments

Evacuation planning and support are usually based on risk assessments. A risk assessment usually is compiled with data and information on:

- All, or at least all the main, hazards that might affect a certain area, and their patterns of occurrence/intensity;
- The presence of people in the area (their number, geographic distribution, and movement, also considering dynamics linked with the time of the year, day of the week and time of the day);
- The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the population, with specific attention paid to people's access to private and public transportation options, and evacuation behaviours;
- The distribution and characteristics of assets and infrastructure in the area, and in particular of those that may be particularly important for evacuations (e.g. roads, specific sites, transportation options and support infrastructure).

Migrants' characteristics intersect with all these dimensions, and should therefore be adequately accounted for as part of these assessments.

In order to account for migrants and their needs in risk assessments:



#### Consider the specific dynamics of migrants' presence in the area

- Are migrants concentrated in specific areas and locations (e.g. neighbourhoods, worksites and schools)?
- Is there an inflow of migrants in the area during specific times of the year (harvest or peak production periods, high tourist season or academic year, most favorable season to cross the area ) or a particular day of the week (market day, school/work week, typical day of arrival or departure of tourists)?
- Do migrants stay in the area at a particular time of day (working hours, most favorable time for transit)?



## Consider the specific features of migrants' living and working sites

- Are migrants living, working or staying in areas particularly at risk (e.g. hazard-prone or informal settlements, as well as beachfront land in touristic areas)?
- Do migrants tend to live and work in unsafe buildings (i.e. substandard, informal housing and workplaces, where they could be disproportionately affected by floods, fires, earthquakes, etc.)?
- Do migrants live, work or stay in areas or sites that are not adequately served by communication networks?
- Do migrants live, work or stay in remote or isolated areas or locations that may be underserved by transportation infrastructure and services or where there may not be an adequate number of evacuation sites and relief supplies? How would that affect their ability to evacuate and reach safe sites?
- In emergencies, would there specific challenges to accessing areas in which migrants live and work to provide evacuation assistance?



## Consider migrants' specific socioeconomic characteristics and behaviours

- What is the demographic composition of migrant groups? How do they break down by sex, age groups, health status?
- Where are they from?
- How well can different migrant groups speak the local language? What other language do they speak?
- How well are migrants prepared for potential emergencies and evacuations (e.g. awareness of evacuation warnings and procedures, availability of evacuation kits)?
- What is the average ownership of (or access to) vehicles in the community, how does that compare with the natives' and what implications does it have in terms of planning?
- Do migrants face specific challenges to evacuating, such as legal or administrative provisions regulating their movement within the country or detention?

- How likely are migrants to comply spontaneously with evacuation warnings and orders? Have migrants shown, or are they likely to show, specific evacuation behaviours based on:
  - culturally learned responses to hazards and warnings;
  - lack of understanding or, or trust in, warnings and need to validate warnings through other sources;
  - fear of arrest and deportation;
  - unwillingness to leave homes or workplaces due to other reasons (e.g. fear for personal security, family reasons, gender roles).

## 2. Coordination and management structure

Evacuations are complex processes that require the involvement of multiple organizations and actors. Coordination among them is crucial to ensuring an effective response. When an evacuation concerns a community hosting migrants, it is likely that the coordination structure will need to involve a variety of non-traditional actors who can be responsible for or play a role in assisting and managing the movement of migrants, disseminating information and warnings, or providing services in emergencies. Domains in which coordination may be particularly important include:

- Disseminating and validating information on emergencies and evacuations to migrant groups. It is particularly important to coordinate relevant efforts with:
  - Consulates and embassies;
  - Ethnic media;
  - Migrant leaders and representatives
  - Civil society organizations working with migrants;
  - Private sector employers.
  
- Evacuation assistance for migrants. It is particularly important to coordinate relevant efforts with:
  - Migrant leaders and representatives;
  - Employers and recruiters of migrant workers;
  - Schools attended by international students and pupils with migrant backgrounds;
  - Hotels hosting tourists and tour operators;
  - Consulates and embassies which may be providing transportation services (for internal or international evacuations of their nationals);
  - Host country authorities responsible for immigration management, reception of detention centres and other similar sites, for the evacuation of migrants that may be hosted or detained in such structures;
  - International organizations that may provide evacuation services.
  
- Providing information and relief services to migrants along evacuation routes, at checkpoints and in evacuation sites. It is particularly important to coordinate relevant efforts with:
  - Civil society and international organizations working with migrants in normal times;
  - Hotels and resorts;
  - Migrant leaders and representatives;
  - Consulates and embassies of migrant's home countries;
  - Interpreters and translators who can facilitate the delivery of assistance.

- Providing specific services migrants might need in evacuations (such as legal assistance, family tracing and issuing of documentation). It is particularly important to seek the support of and coordinate relevant efforts with:
  - Consulates and embassies (e.g. for all identification and documentation purposes);
  - Civil society and international organizations working with migrants;
  - Interpreters and translators (who can facilitate the delivery of assistance);
  - Relevant professionals (e.g. lawyers, cultural mediators, psychosocial support persons).

Relevant coordination structures, such as incident command systems, can be developed or revised to include representatives of the above mentioned actors, whenever they can be relevant to the provision of evacuation services.

In addition, joint structures can be set up for consultative purposes during the emergency preparedness phase.

### 3. Identification of evacuation routes and sites

Evacuation plans identify areas or facilities where evacuees can be moved to in emergency situations and routes to reach them. Suitable evacuation routes and shelters should:

- Resist hazards (including secondary hazards) or be located in areas hazards will not affect;
- Be accessible;
- Have sufficient capacity to accommodate the flow or presence of evacuees.

In addition, shelters should be served or reachable by basic utility networks (such as water and electricity), and (in general) should be as close as possible to the place where evacuees live or work, to avoid loss of livelihoods and the disruption of household/community life that may result from longer-distance movement. Migrants' presence affects such planning decisions in a variety of ways. In order to account for migrants and their needs in the identification of evacuation routes and sites:



#### Identify evacuation sites appropriate to host migrants

- How many migrants will need to be hosted in evacuation sites? If migrants concentrate in high-risk areas and substandard housing that may be particularly affected in emergencies, and if they have little networks available locally for community-based evacuation solutions, a larger proportion of them may need to be hosted in evacuation sites.
- Are safe sites and evacuation shelters close to migrants' living and working places? Migrants are often less willing or able to move long distance (e.g. due to reduced access to private means of transportation, lack of welfare protection in case of unemployment, inability to move long distances within the host country), and it will be particularly important to identify locally available viable solutions.
- For how long are migrants likely to need support in evacuation sites? If migrants have reduced access to relief and recovery assistance and to alternative accommodation options, they may remain in sites longer than natives.
- Are migrants allowed to use official evacuation sites? Could migrants have any problem using official evacuation sites, for example due to fear of discrimination, arrest, mistrust of response actors or members of host communities, in particular if such sites include police or military barracks or fenced-off sites? If so, what alternative safe sites can be

identified that migrants may be more likely to use (e.g. open spaces, religious buildings, buildings owned by migrant organizations). Are these sites and structures hazard-resistant and adequately served by basic utility networks?

- Are existing evacuation sites planned according to migrants' specific needs? Migrant-inclusive planning should take into account:
  - average family size and composition among migrant groups;
  - culture-specific privacy requirements and need for separate spaces for women, children and the elderly;
  - specific uses of common areas, including religious celebrations.



### **Identify evacuation routes in and out of high-immigration areas**

- Are routes out of high-immigration areas (in particular informal neighbourhoods) adequate to ensure the effective evacuation of affected migrants, in all seasons/days/times? Do they have sufficient capacity and are they likely to be operational after an emergency?
- Are the routes usable with the transportation means already available to migrants?
- Are migrants aware about these routes and possible changes to their accessibility in different seasons/days/times?

## 4. Timing of the evacuation

Evacuation plans are based on timing models that estimate how much time an evacuation would take, thereby informing emergency management actors about when to issue an alert and when to order an evacuation.

The effective dissemination of warnings and the roll out of an evacuation in migrant communities may take longer, and this needs to be considered in the evacuation decision-making mechanisms and planning. In order to address possible obstacles to migrants' compliance with the planned timing of evacuations:



### Identify and address possible sources of delay in communicating evacuation warnings

- Do warnings, orders and communications need to be translated and adapted before they can be disseminated to migrants? If so, have interpreters, translators, cultural mediators and speakers (including bilingual staff and volunteers) been pre-identified? Have standard messages been translated in advance or are automated translation systems available?
- Do messages need to be disseminated through additional channels in order to effectively reach migrants? If so, have these channels been identified and are communication mechanisms established?
- Have warning systems and messages been tested with migrant groups to ensure they are effective?



### Identify and address possible sources of delay in migrants' evacuation

- Are migrants likely to need some additional time to validate official warnings through alternative channels they trust (e.g. other members of their community, their preferred media or their consular authorities)? Should this be the case, are there systems in place to ensure that dissemination of warnings is carried out in coordination with actors and sources migrants trust?
- Have migrants been informed of what are the appropriate crisis-response behaviours in the event of a crisis, and in particular expected evacuation-related behaviours?
- Are migrants likely to have learned specific response behaviours? If so, how will they reflect on their evacuation behaviours? Is there a need to plan for deployment of dedicated personnel (e.g. culturally competent staff, trained members of trusted organizations) in evacuation areas to provide information and guidance to migrant evacuees?

- If hotlines/websites/social media profiles are set up to provide information on the evacuation, are there provisions to ensure multilingual services? Is the personnel manning it able to reply to specific queries by migrants?
- In case migrants are less likely to own a vehicle than natives, how much longer will their evacuation take on average? What transportation means can be deployed in order to speed up their evacuation?
- In case migrants live in remote, underserved areas, how much longer will it take them to evacuate?

## 5. Providing evacuees with warnings and information

Communicating timely, accurate information is key to providing evacuees with details on the situation and with instructions on the actions to be taken for a timely and safe evacuation. Communicating with migrants often presents a set of specificities (e.g. language proficiency, preferred channels) that need to be accounted for in emergency communication plans in order to support effective evacuations. In order to account for migrants and their needs in the provision of information and warnings related to evacuations:



### Adapt messages to ensure effective communications of evacuation warnings and information

- Are translated standard messages or automated translation systems available?
- Are procedures in place to identify and alert interpreters, translators, cultural mediators and speakers, including bilingual staff and volunteers, to translate and adapt warnings, orders and communications in case of need (e.g. rosters of professionals)?
- Are there systems in place to ensure that migrants can validate the information they receive through official channels (e.g. through community members, consulates and embassies)? Is there any coordination with such actors to ensure that information sharing is consistent?
- Do migrants have specific information needs? For example, do emergency communications include information on:
  - Specific sites migrants can evacuate to in safety or where they can receive targeted services (e.g. renewal of identity and travel documents);
  - Specific information on eligibility for receiving basic services and aid for different migrant groups (e.g. documented and undocumented migrants);
  - Contacts and addresses of dedicated multilingual hotlines and information services;
  - Updates about changes to immigration regulations, such as temporary extensions of visas or residence permits during the crisis period.
- Is there any plan to deploy multilingual, culturally competent staff in evacuation areas to provide information to migrants during evacuation operations?



## Complement message dissemination with media and channels that migrants use and trust

- Are traditional dissemination systems sufficient to effectively reach out to migrants (especially those living in isolated location or who use a different set of media from the natives)? Otherwise, what other channels may be of use and how can they be integrated in emergency communications mechanisms (including community-based ones, ethnic media, consulates and embassies and so on)?
- What communications channels (formal and informal) do different migrant groups use? Have these channels be mapped as part of preparedness efforts? Can this information be retrieved from migrant representatives and organizations?

## 6. Supporting migrants' movement out of the evacuation area

Many evacuees may need assistance to leave the evacuation area and to get to safe locations. Based on the assessment of the evacuation zone and of the population to be evacuated, as well as on the identification of possible evacuation routes, emergency management actors can determine people's actual ability to evacuate and plan to support their movement. Supporting the evacuation of migrants requires understanding whether and why they may be less able or less willing to evacuate than natives. This is due to, for example, to:

- Reduced knowledge of evacuation routes and sites;
- Fear of arrest, deportation and xenophobic acts;
- Unwillingness to accept assistance from people outside their community;
- Concerns regarding the security of families and assets left behind;
- Willingness to stay close to kin and community members, or to their workplaces;
- Reduced access to private transportation options.

In order to facilitate migrants' movement out of the evacuation area:

### **Direct migrant evacuees to safe areas and shelters**

- Are maps, signs and route information systems multilingual/translated or do they provide information through pictures and visuals?
- Can multilingual personnel/volunteers, including relevant community members, be deployed to key locations to provide indications to migrant evacuees?

### **Reducing the presence of uniformed officials**

- As migrants are often wary of police, military and other uniformed officers, is it possible to deploy non-uniformed personnel and volunteers (e.g. wearing a simple badge or symbols), firefighters or personnel of institutions migrants trust in areas in which high migrant presence is likely?
- Is it possible to avoid the use of official vehicles of the police/army/border guards/prisons to evacuate migrants?

## Arrange transportation options

- If migrants are more likely than natives to require transportation support during an evacuation, are there enough vehicles to accommodate their transportation needs?
- What means of transportation are available and how can they be used to serve relevant high-immigration neighbourhoods, including potentially isolated, hard-to-reach ones?
- Are transportation options that may support people's spontaneous evacuation (e.g. taxis, buses) affordable to low-income individuals?

## Addressing migrants concerns to ensure they comply with evacuation instructions

- Is there any opportunity for migrants to renew their lost documentation? If so, how can relevant information be shared with migrant evacuees?
- Do evacuation procedures consider the need to try to keep as much as possible migrant families (including enlarged families) and communities together throughout the evacuation?
- Is there any option for migrants to receive unemployment benefits, welfare support or to receive assistance to recoup unpaid salaries? If so, how can relevant information be shared with migrants?
- Are all evacuation personnel instructed not to ask evacuees for documents as part of evacuation operations? Are there provisions in place to disseminate through targeted campaigns information on:
  - evacuation assistance being separated from immigration enforcement;
  - flexibility of immigration regimes to provide more options for migrants to stay in the area.

## 7. Managing evacuation sites

Availability of adequate evacuation sites is key to minimizing the risks evacuees face in emergencies, and is often a precondition for the effective delivery of assistance. The need to assist a diverse group of affected persons, including migrants, bears significant consequences for the identification, planning and management of such facilities.

In order to account for migrants and their specific needs in the management of evacuation sites:



### Account for migrants in registration procedures

- Is it possible to assign non-uniformed officers to registration desks in shelters? The presence of civilian officers at registration desks may encourage migrants, in particular those without valid documentation, to access these structures.
- Are there available bilingual staff and volunteers that can be assigned to registering incoming evacuees?
- Is there a directory of relevant interpreters, personnel and volunteers (available on site or by telephone) who can be of assistance with regard to the specific language needs of incoming migrants, and that can be shared with shelters' registration desks?
- Is there any basic phrasebook or pictorial communication tools, or translated/multilingual registration form that can be distributed in evacuation sites?
- Are registration forms adapted? They should allow to gather, on a voluntary basis, basic information on:
  - Language proficiency;
  - Country of origin;
  - Privacy requirements;
  - Dietary restrictions and preferences;
  - Needs linked to religious or community practices, and treatment of the dead;
  - Privacy or etiquette;
  - Stances towards health care and psychosocial support;
  - Points of contact, within the country or in another country.
- If welcome letters or handouts with the rules, plan or schedule of the facility are distributed to registered evacuees, are they also available in the languages that are the most common among the migrants?



## Arrange evacuation site spaces to accommodate migrants' specificities

- Is pictorial or multilingual signage available for the evacuation facilities?
- Do sleeping arrangement reflect the preferences of migrant evacuees (for example, flexibility to allow families or communities to stay together, requirement of completely segregated sleeping areas for males and females, etc.)? Can arrangements be set up (e.g. using screens, tents, bed sheets or towels) to create separations?
- If there are tensions between specific ethnic groups, can they be addressed as part of site planning and management?
- Do some migrant groups have specific hygiene practices? Can practices such as using water instead of toilet paper, ritual hand washing, prohibiting use of alcohol-based hand wash, or using a bucket of water instead of a shower be accommodated?
- Do migrant groups have specific space needs for community activities (e.g. a quiet prayer or meditation room, a larger space for assemblies or collective rituals) or need specific items/furniture (e.g. water containers, mats, signs)? If so, how can they be accommodated in evacuation sites? If the facility has only one common room, can a schedule be set up to ensure that all groups' needs are met?
- Is it possible to plan for migrants' national, ethnic and religious celebrations, festivals and social events? Do they require specific spaces or resources?



## Guarantee the safety of migrant evacuees in evacuation sites

- Do migrants face specific threats as a consequence of xenophobia in the area?
- Are there alternatives to the presence of uniformed officers to ensure the safety and security of evacuees? Or can officers of migrant background, community police officers and other trusted personnel be assigned to sites hosting large numbers of migrants?
- Are protocols to protect evacuees from violence and abuses, including from gender-based violence and abuse, adapted to account for the migrant population in evacuation sites? Are the mechanisms to report violence and abuse also adapted (e.g. personnel with appropriate multi-language skills, representatives of migrant groups among the personnel, culturally appropriate support for victims, access to complaint mechanism)?

## **Adapt communication facilities to migrant users**

- Is it possible to set up basic communications facilities within evacuation sites? Do they include:
  - mobile telephone recharging areas?
  - cybercafe-style area with computers with Internet connection and communication software;
  - Wi-Fi;
  - landline telephones evacuees might use, including for long-distance calls; a few mobile telephones with credit or international flat rates available to evacuees.

## **Provide culturally appropriate food and other basic relief services**

- Do migrants have specific eating and drinking preferences or restrictions? Can the following elements be considered in sites stockpiling and planning:
  - Preference for some types of meals (such as those with specific cereals, a lot of meat, a lot of vegetables, or very spicy or not);
  - Prohibition to eat or drink specific products (such as pork, beef or all meat, shellfish, non-halal or non-kosher products, or alcohol);
  - Expectation to drink or eat specific products at specific times (such as warm beverages any time during the day, or milk with all meals);
  - (Not) eating at specific times of the day, week or year, or during festivals (for example, no meat on Fridays, no eating or drinking between sunrise and sunset during Ramadan, or having meals significantly later or earlier than other groups).
- Do migrants have specific clothing requirements (e.g. linked with culture or religion) and can these items be made available in sites?
- Do migrants have additional needs for basic relief items (e.g. warmer clothing, additional demand for standard relief commodities)?

## **Arrange access to evacuation shelters to other actors for the provision of specific services**

- Can shelters include specific spaces for the provision of services by external actors, for example responsible to renew and issue IDs and visas?
- Are coordination mechanisms with relevant institutions established to facilitate the provision of these services in the sites?





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