

# MICIC CASE STUDY

*How to integrate migrants into preparedness and emergency response in countries in crisis*

*A real example of best practices from the Cambodian diplomatic corps*

**MICIC** Save Lives  
Increase Protection  
Decrease Vulnerability  
Improve Response  
MIGRANTS IN COUNTRIES IN CRISIS INITIATIVE



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## Purpose of the Document

*In June 2024, IOM Cambodia, in collaboration with IOM Headquarters (HQ), conducted a training programme in Siem Reap, Cambodia, for 15 participants from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Labour. At the conclusion of the training, participants were divided into four groups and shared real-case studies reflecting their experiences and challenges during assignments abroad. IOM HQ collected and reformulated these case studies to demonstrate their alignment with the Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Guidelines and their effectiveness in the field. This document illustrates how MICIC Guidelines can assist local authorities in protecting their nationals abroad and provide an operational tool for member states to collect and establish a database of their nationals abroad to ensure effective communication during crises. It also demonstrates how to integrate these nationals into emergency response and contingency plans. Furthermore, this document is considered a best practice resource for IOM missions and representatives from member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs and consular corps.*

## Case Study 1: The Royal Embassy of Cambodia's Response to Support Cambodian Nationals in Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

### A. Background

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 triggered a worldwide health emergency that profoundly impacted socio-economic structures, human lives, employment, and livelihoods. During this upheaval, around 2,500 Cambodian citizens, comprising students, workers, tourists, and businesspeople, were left stranded and vulnerable in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar.

#### The Role of the Royal Embassy of Cambodia to Kuwait

In response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Royal Embassy of Cambodia to Kuwait undertook several crucial actions to support and protect Cambodian citizens in these host countries. The Embassy's initiatives can be categorized into several key areas:

**1. Information and Emergency Response:** The Embassy provided timely information and emergency responses through telephone calls and WhatsApp groups in accordance with the host countries' guidelines, aligning with [Guideline 9](#) (Communicate widely, effectively, and often with migrants on evolving crises and how to access help).

**2. Data Collection and Sharing:** The Embassy systematically collected data on Cambodian citizens residing in Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar to the national authorities from different sources such as surveys and telephone calls to ensure their integration in contingency and evacuation plans, aligning with [Guideline 2](#) (Collect and share information on migrants, subject to privacy, confidentiality, and the security and safety of migrants).

**3. Provision of Essentials:** Food, medical supplies, and psychosocial support were provided to Cambodian citizens, aligning with [Guideline 11](#) (Provide humanitarian assistance to migrants without discrimination) and [Guideline 14](#) (Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives).

**4. Coordination with Host Countries and Local Authorities:** The Embassy coordinated with the relevant authorities in the host countries to facilitate support for Cambodian citizens, such as through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Migration, aligning with [Guideline 12](#) (Establish clear referral procedures among stakeholders).

**5. Communication Channels:** Regular communication was maintained between Cambodian citizens, the Embassy, and the host countries to share the emergency updates and news, and evacuation plan, aligning with [Guideline 6](#) (Communicate effectively with migrants).

## B. Outcomes

- 1. No Fatalities:** There were no reported deaths of Cambodian citizens due to Covid-19 in Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar.
- 2. Safe Repatriation:** Through the Embassy's intervention, 150 Cambodian citizens were successfully repatriated, aligning with [Guideline 13](#) (Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed).
- 3. General Well-being:** All Cambodian citizens who remained in these countries were reported to be in good condition.

## C. Conclusion

The services and supplies provided by the host countries were delivered effectively and promptly to Cambodian citizens. In response to the crisis, the Embassy and host countries enhanced their collaboration and cooperation, highlighting the importance of diplomatic efforts in safeguarding citizens abroad. This case underscores the importance of [Guideline 7](#) and [Guideline 14](#).

## Case Study 2: Cambodia's Response to the Holland America MS Westerdam Cruise Ship During the Covid-19 Pandemic

### A. Background

On 25 June 2020, the passengers and crew aboard the Holland America MS Westerdam faced an unprecedented challenge as they floated adrift, having been turned away by multiple ports due to fears of a potential Covid-19 outbreak. In this context, Cambodia intervened to offer a safe harbour.

The Government of Cambodia collaborated with the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC), and the Institute Pasteur Cambodia (IPC), in coordination with the national Ministry of Health, to mount a comprehensive public health response, aligning with [Guideline 7](#) (Establish coordination agreements in advance to leverage strengths and foster trust).

As a signatory to the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), Cambodia needs to meet core capacity requirements that not only protect the country but also contribute to global health security. Member States are obliged to assess, report and respond to public health hazards, and establish procedures to uphold global public health security. The IHR also offer guidance regarding the proper practice of international travel and screening for infectious diseases at ports of entry, patient management and surveillance. The decision to allow the MS Westerdam crew and passengers to disembark in Cambodia was made in line with IHR recommendations and was initiated after a thorough risk assessment that balanced the public health measures against potential unintended health, social and economic implications.

## B. Actions Taken by the Cambodian Authorities:

- 1. Screening and Disembarkation:** Cambodia permitted the disembarkation of all 2,257 individuals from the cruise ship, screening them and ensuring their safe return home, in line with [Guideline 10](#) (Facilitate migrants' ability to move to safety) and [Guideline 13](#) (Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed).
- 2. Comprehensive Risk Assessment:** A thorough risk assessment was conducted to balance public health measures against potential unintended consequences, supporting [Guideline 1](#) (Track information on conflicts and natural disasters, and the potential impact on migrants).
- 3. Coordination with International Bodies:** Collaboration with WHO, US CDC, and Institute Pasteur Cambodia demonstrated effective coordination, aligning with [Guideline 7](#).

## C. Outcomes

- 1. Safe Return:** All passengers and crew were safely disembarked, screened, and returned to their home countries.
- 2. International Cooperation:** Cambodia's response was praised as a model of international cooperation and solidarity, reinforcing [Guideline 15](#) (Support migrants' host communities).

## D. Conclusion

Cambodia's handling of the MS Westerdam incident showcased its capacity to provide necessary aid to international migrants in distress and underscored the importance of international cooperation during public health emergencies. This case study aligns with [Guidelines 1, 7, 10, 13, and 15](#).

## Case Study 3: Providing Assistance to Cambodian Nationals During the Internal Conflict in Myanmar

### A. Background

The safety and security of approximately 500 Cambodian nationals in Myanmar became a pressing concern when internal conflict erupted between Myanmar authorities and rebels in the Northern region. This group included students, monks, workers, and businesspeople, with over 50 nationals directly impacted by the conflict. Despite the sizable Cambodian community in Myanmar, the Cambodian Embassy only had records for a few dozen nationals. Many had registered or participated in events hosted by the Cambodian mission in Myanmar, allowing the Embassy to maintain contact with them. Additionally, the Embassy kept contact information for some community leaders among the migrants.

The escalating violence in the Northern region posed a serious threat to these Cambodian nationals. The limited records at the embassy highlighted the challenge of ensuring the safety and well-being of all nationals amidst the turmoil. This situation underscored the urgent need for improved registration and communication mechanisms to better support and protect Cambodian nationals abroad during crises.

The Cambodian embassy in Myanmar activated a comprehensive response strategy to ensure the safety and well-being of its nationals. Key actions included:

- 1. Information Dissemination:** Utilized migrant community networks, social media, student associations, and trade unions to disseminate critical information about the conflict, aligning with Guideline 9 (Communicate widely, effectively, and often with migrants on evolving crises and how to access help).
- 2. Collaboration with the Myanmar Government:** Engaged with Myanmar authorities to request assistance and protection for affected Cambodian nationals, supporting Guideline 12 (Establish clear referral procedures among stakeholders).
- 3. Coordination with Cambodian Ministries:** Worked with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Interior to plan and execute evacuation operations, aligning with Guideline 13 (Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed).
- 4. Engagement with International Organizations and Civil Society:** Requested support from UN frameworks and various civil society organizations to provide food and non-food items, supporting Guideline 8 (Build capacity and learn lessons for emergency response and post-crisis action).
- 5. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Collaboration:** Contacted heads of mission from ASEAN member states for mutual assistance in identifying and aiding nationals, aligning with Guideline 12.

## B. Evacuation and Assistance Efforts

- 1. Issuing Travel Documents:** Nationals intending to leave were provided with travel documents and other necessary identification, aligning with Guideline 10 (Facilitate migrants' ability to move to safety).
- 2. Safe Evacuation:** Facilitated evacuation via flights and land routes, supporting Guideline 13 (Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed).
- 3. Support for Nationals Willing to Stay:** Coordinated with local authorities to provide transportation to safer locations within Myanmar, as requested by the nationals, aligning with Guideline 14 (Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives).

## C. Challenges and Lessons Learned

- 1. Incomplete Data Records:** Highlighted the need for robust data collection and updating of migrant information, supporting Guideline 2 (Collect and share information on migrants, subject to privacy, confidentiality, and the security and safety of migrants).
- 2. Communication and Coordination:** Emphasized the importance of effective communication and coordination mechanisms, aligning with Guideline 6 (Communicate effectively with migrants).
- 3. Resource Mobilization:** Stressed the necessity of adequate resources and partnerships with international bodies, aligning with Guideline 8 (Build capacity and learn lessons for emergency response and post-crisis action).
- 4. Policy and Procedural Frameworks:** Underlined the need for clear policies and procedures for emergency response, supporting Guideline 14 (Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives).

## D. Conclusion

The Cambodian embassy's response to the internal conflicts in Myanmar demonstrated a proactive and collaborative approach to protecting its nationals. This case aligns with Guidelines 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14.

## Case Study 4: Comprehensive Response to the Tsunami Warning in Japan for Cambodian Migrant Workers and Residents

### A. Background

The Government of Japan issued a tsunami warning for several prefectures in Japan, a country that hosts approximately 20,000 Cambodian migrant workers and 5,000 Cambodian residents. Following the tsunami warning, the Cambodian Ministry of Labour initiated a comprehensive response plan to ensure the safety and well-being of Cambodian nationals in the affected areas.

### B. Actions Taken by the Cambodian Authorities

1. **Monitoring and Examination:** A working team was established to monitor updates and examine statistics of Cambodian migrant workers in the affected areas, aligning with [Guideline 1](#) (Track information on conflicts and natural disasters, and the potential impact on migrants).
2. **Public Announcement:** The Ministry issued a public announcement detailing the tsunami strike, instructions on how to act during the hazard, and contact information for assistance, supporting [Guideline 9](#) (Communicate widely, effectively, and often with migrants on evolving crises and how to access help).
3. **Coordination with Japanese Authorities:** The Ministry contacted the Cambodian Embassy in Japan and relevant Japanese authorities to establish cooperation and receive live updates on the situation, aligning with [Guideline 7](#) (Establish coordination agreements in advance to leverage strengths and foster trust).
4. **Engagement with Private Recruitment Agencies:** Informed private recruitment agencies about the hazard and provided contact details for assistance, supporting [Guideline 14](#) (Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives).

#### B.1. During the Tsunami Strike

- **Communication with Embassy and Authorities:** The Embassy and Japanese authorities were contacted by the national authorities for updates and to check if any Cambodian migrant workers were affected, aligning with [Guideline 9](#).
- **Frequent Updates from Agencies:** Private recruitment agencies were asked to provide frequent updates on the status and situation of their migrant workers, supporting [Guideline 12](#) (Establish clear referral procedures among stakeholders).
- **Direct Communication with Migrant Workers:** Maintained direct communication with migrant workers to check on their well-being, needs, and evacuation status, aligning with [Guideline 6](#) (Communicate effectively with migrants).

#### B.2. After the Tsunami Strike

- **Ensuring Return and Support:** The Ministry communicated with migrant workers to ensure they had returned to their residences and were provided with essential needs, supporting [Guideline 14](#) (Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives).
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Private recruitment agencies and the Cambodian Embassy in Japan were asked to continue monitoring and following up with affected migrant workers, aligning with [Guideline 8](#) (Build capacity and learn lessons for emergency response and post-crisis action).

### C. Conclusion

The collaborative and proactive response by the Ministry of Labour, the Cambodian Embassy in Japan, and private recruitment agencies ensured the safety and support of Cambodian migrant workers during and after the tsunami. This case aligns with [Guidelines 1, 6, 7, 9, 12, and 14](#). Moving forward, seeking technical assistance to develop a comprehensive contingency plan for the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in collaboration with destination countries is essential to enhance preparedness and response strategies for future emergencies, supporting [Guideline 4](#) and [Guideline 5](#).