

G 11: PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION



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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There is no greater imperative than to save lives and alleviate suffering in the collective effort to protect migrants caught in countries experiencing conflicts or natural disasters. Humanitarian assistance must be provided on the basis of need, without discrimination and regardless of immigration status, nationality, ethnicity, gender, age, disability or other differentiating characteristics.

Some migrants, just as with affected citizens, may need assistance to address their particular needs and circumstances – pregnant women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly may face mobility challenges. Domestic workers and others working in isolated conditions, migrants in an irregular immigration status, and migrants in detention may require specific assistance from States, international organizations, and civil society. Others may face incapacitating financial burdens, due to money they may owe to recruiters or employers may withhold their wages – being unable or unwilling to pay. Organized criminal networks may take advantage of migrants' exacerbated vulnerability during crisis.

With shifting dynamics of a crisis, migrants' needs will not remain static. A change of circumstances in a migrants' State of origin may compel some people to seek asylum rather than return. Stakeholders should ensure access to asylum procedures in the host State or State of transit and consider providing migrants temporary and other forms of humanitarian protection during or in response to a conflict or natural disaster.

Lessons from the earthquake in Chile (2010)

In 2010, Chile experienced a major earthquake that caused widespread damage on land, displacing an estimated number of 1.5 million people. Chile is a major migrant-hosting country to both – regular and irregular migrant workers from neighbouring countries. Most of the more than 350,000 migrants at the time, were living and working in large cities, with 65 per cent residing in the capital Santiago. Although the quake's epicentre was located in the Maule and Bio Bio regions south of Santiago, in the same way as nationals, migrant populations living and working in poor neighbourhoods in the capital's metropolitan area experienced major damage and loss of life. With houses rendered completely destroyed and uninhabitable, needs included temporary shelter, food and non-food emergency relief items in the immediate aftermath of the quake. Some of the migrants faced challenges in accessing services provided by emergency actors to the affected populations as they lacked a valid national identification number.

TAILORING ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS' NEEDS

MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS

Assistance provided should consider migrants' specificities and should be linguistically, culturally and religiously appropriate. Response measures should also account for particular needs of migrants with disabilities, older migrants, migrant children, including separated or unaccompanied children, and migrants of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Targeted interventions to address needs and specific vulnerabilities can include, for example, gender - and age-sensitive procedures in reception places, shelters, camps, and centres for migrants. Response measures should also take account of needs stemming from work in isolated conditions, lack of social networks and lack of documentations.

Assistance to foreign nationals in the areas hit by the Great East Earthquake, Japan

The Great East Japan Earthquake affected many foreign nationals. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with IOM, implemented efforts ensure that foreign nationals would be provided with relevant information on the evolving crisis as the local population was. Messages were disseminated through web based news releases, broadcasts in multiple languages, daily briefings for diplomatic corps and briefings for foreign business communities. Efforts also included the facilitation of rescue and voluntary return arrangements for foreign nationals and the setting-up of eased re-entry and overstay process for foreign residents. Quick issuance of visas for families and humanitarian workers ensured their access to assist victims.

SCOPE cards, Somalia

The World Food Programme (WFP) provided humanitarian assistance to Yemeni nationals as well as vulnerable Somalis fleeing the conflict in Yemen through electronic transfer cards known as "SCOPE cards".

At the ports of entry in Somalia, vulnerable Somalis and Yemenis participated in a biometric registration before receiving the SCOPE cards. With the cards migrants were able to redeem a cash value in numerous shops across regions in Somalia. The biometric data acts as their personal signature, validating each transaction. SCOPE cards are used to support a range of WFP's programmes, including in-kind transfers and nutrition interventions.

CRISIS OR RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS

STATE OF ORIGIN

During crises, States of origin may be required to bolster their capacity in host States and States of transit to enhance their ability to assist their citizens. Deployment of trained, multi-functional experts can be one way of doing so. Factors to consider include geographic location for deployments, including host States, transit points, evacuation areas, border points and other major gathering sites. Further factors to consider are the level of institutional and decision-making authority necessary for timely responses and the range of skills, knowledge and capacities of deployees to assist citizens. The breadth of services that they may need include services related to consular, medical, transportation and identity document assistance.

Libya crisis quick response team, Philippines

In response to the Libyan crisis, the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) of the Government of the Philippines created the Libya Crisis Quick Response Team to secure the safety and welfare of Filipino migrant workers affected by the crisis. The response team served as a focal group for purposes of coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs and concerned Philippine Overseas Labour Office. It closely monitored and assessed the situation of Filipino workers in Libya and submitted regular reports and recommendations to the Secretary through the Office of the Undersecretary for Employment.

Response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Malta

The tsunami of December 2004 overwhelmed the capacities to respond of all the countries directly affected. In support of the large number of Maltese nationals caught in the disaster area, the Maltese Ministry of Foreign Affairs deployed a rapid response officer to the disaster area. The officer assisted in the provision of consular assistance and arranged for the timely repatriation of survivors and deceased. The Maltese consular department further supplemented the consular staff posted in the area with a team of technical experts in the home country. The technical experts provided situation analysis and identified outstanding needs. They were also in frequent exchange with the in-country officer to provide expert advice.

SEPARATION OF IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT FROM ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN SERVICES

HOST STATE

Due to fear of immigration enforcement, detention and deportation, many irregular migrants, or those who would otherwise distrust authorities, may be unwilling to access available assistance. Ensuring non-discriminatory access to life-saving assistance may require authorities to separate emergency assistance from immigration enforcement. States can also limit requirements for proof of identity in emergency shelters or when providing emergency assistance like food, water or emergency health care and leverage civil society organizations' outreach capacities to share respective information.

[Disaster relief and emergency assistance act, United States of America](#)

In the United States, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act guides federal work on disaster response and calls for regulations to ensure that disaster relief and assistance are provided without discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, proficiency in the English language or economic status. As a consequence, in the event of a disaster, all immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, qualify for non-cash, short-term disaster relief from government agencies. The Federal Emergency Management Agency in particular provides all disaster victims with a range of services in an unrestricted manner, including transportation, emergency medical care, counselling and emergency shelters.

[Immigrant eligibility for disaster assistance, United States of America](#)

Whereas some disaster services are unrestricted, some government-related aid for disaster recovery, such as cash assistance and longer-term help to disaster victims, are usually restricted to citizens and to individuals in specific legal immigration categories. The New York Disaster Interfaith Services prepared an information sheet on Immigrant Eligibility for Disaster Assistance for families with members who are not U.S. citizens, and agencies that help immigrant families affected by a disaster. This information was also published as tip-sheet for U.S. religious leaders who may have a role in ensuring that all people with unmet needs, regardless of immigration status, receive the support necessary for sustainable recovery.

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society can support other stakeholders to tailor assistance to migrants' needs, for example by sharing information with emergency responders on local migrant populations and gaps in assistance. Their expertise can also be leveraged for out-reach activities, to provide direct assistance for migrant groups with particular needs as well as to assist with family tracing and reunification. Civil society actors are also well placed to establish safe spaces and centres for migrants and vulnerable migrants.

[Assessment and analysis, IFRC and Red Cross Societies, Chile](#)

In the immediate aftermath of the Chile earthquake in 2010, the Chilean Red Cross (ChRC) mobilized 116 volunteers in the affected area, activated 22 staff members at the national headquarters, and operated in the affected areas through branches in Arica, Pozo Almonte, Alto Hospicio and Iquique. Damage and needs assessment were conducted to inform planned interventions and reports were issued on the situation of migrants in Iquique. Regular progress reports issued by the IFRC informed partners about the situation. IFRC also provided technical support health in emergencies, communications and emergency shelter and coordinated the international assistance through the International Emergency Appeal mechanism.

[Grupos Beta, Mexico](#)

The Mexican Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) has set up a specialized body, dedicated to protect and assist migrants in transit through the Mexican territory – the Grupos Beta. The Grupos Beta provide orientation, rescue and first aid, regardless of nationality or immigration status. The 22 groups operating in nine of Mexico's states, are composed of officials from the municipal, federal and state who receive dedicated training to rescue, protect and orient migrants in a vulnerable situation. In 2016 Grupos Beta and the Mexican National Center for Disasters Prevention (CENAPRED) joined the capacity-building programme to reduce the vulnerability of migrants to disasters, organized in cooperation with IOM.

ASSISTING MIGRANTS IN EMERGENCIES – RECOMMENDED

ACTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Migrants, as well as 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.

IOM designed tool 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.

The tool can be used by emergency management agencies and other actors, governmental and non-governmental that provide key services and assistance in emergencies. It can help 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 recommended actions at the glance:

1. Recommended actions: Communicating with migrants

- 1.1 Translating and adapting messages
- 1.2 Choosing the right media and communication channels
- 1.3 Improving migrants' trust in emergency communications
- 1.4 Preparing migrants for possible emergencies

2. Recommended actions: Organizing key facilities

- 2.1 Addressing language barriers
- 2.2 Addressing culture-specific needs through site planning
- 2.3 Encouraging migrants to use evacuation sites and shelters and other facilities

3. Recommended actions: Providing goods and services

- 3.1 Adapting delivery of basic goods
- 3.2 Adapting delivery of key relief services
- 3.3 Removing barriers to migrants' access to assistance

The template is part of the MICIC implementation toolkit and available in [English](#).

The Guidelines in Action present implementation examples and tools to support the operationalization of the MICIC Initiative Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster. Practices and tools may be relevant for one or more stakeholders. Find more examples of practices in the MICIC Guidelines and in the online Repository of Practices on our website.

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ASSISTING MIGRANTS IN EMERGENCIES

Recommended actions for inclusive provision of emergency services

MICIC Capacity-Building Tool

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