

GUIDELINE 13: Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed

Certain stakeholders have mandates and unique skills to address the needs of different migrants. Referral procedures can help access these skills for those with particular needs.

Child migrants, for example, benefit from the assistance of actors versed in children's rights and protection, including dedicated focal points in governments. Interventions targeted at domestic workers or victims of trafficking may benefit from the knowledge and experience of advocates and specialists on those populations. Civil society, such as migrant, grass roots, and faith-based actors, may be best placed to access migrants in an irregular immigration status. Consular officers and some international organizations may have the authority and capacity to assess identities and issue identity and travel documents. Host State local and national actors are often best placed to provide necessary services and international humanitarian actors should strive to provide assistance through local and national systems.

Stakeholders should establish referral procedures to ensure that those responding to the needs of migrants refer refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons to national and international protection mechanisms for those populations.

Sample Practices

- *Evacuation of migrants to States of transit or States of origin with their informed consent.*
- *Establishment of criteria for eligibility for evacuation.*
- *Multi-stakeholder cooperation on evacuation.*
- *Evacuation for family units who have family members of different nationalities.*
- *Deploying personnel to consular posts to assist with evacuation.*

PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT GUIDELINE 13: Relocate and evacuate migrants when needed

Multiple Stakeholders

Relocation of migrants

Relocation of migrants within the host State may be appropriate when conditions elsewhere are safe and likely to remain so. This option is more likely in cases of natural disasters than in conflicts when violence may spread to other areas. Relocation may be for short or protracted periods. In some cases, migrants may be relocated to areas that have been affected by natural disasters to assist with reconstruction. Stakeholders can consider:

- Determining criteria and eligibility for relocation within the host State, for evacuation, or to remaining in place;
- Assessing the safety and security of potential relocation sites, with particular regard to the reception of migrants in those locations;
- Identifying shelter for migrants in relocation sites;
- Providing food, drinking water, and other necessities until migrants are settled;
- Identifying employment opportunities if the relocation is likely to be protracted;
- Linking migrants to health services, psychosocial assistance, and other needed services in relocation sites;
- Helping families to enroll children in schools if the relocation is likely to be protracted;
- Creating facilities for communicating with family members;
- Identifying particularly vulnerable migrants who may need special care during relocations, such as victims of violence, disabled migrants, elderly migrants, child migrants, including unaccompanied or separated children, and victims of trafficking or exploitation.

Evacuation of migrants to States of transit or to States of origin

Evacuation is generally a last resort, but it is absolutely essential if migrants cannot remain safely where they are or cannot be relocated safely to another part of the host State. Aspects that stakeholders should consider in implementing evacuation operations (some of which are described in more detail below) include:

- Criteria for determining persons eligible for evacuation;
- Arrangements to evacuate migrants to holding centers or outposts in unaffected parts of the host State or to a State of transit as a midway point before subsequent evacuation to the State of origin;
- Communication channels to inform migrants about circumstances under which evacuation will be made available, evacuation points, and procedures;
- Obtaining the informed consent of the migrants to be evacuated;
- Respect for the principle of non-refoulement;
- Negotiations with host States or armed non-State actors controlling territory (e.g., to secure exit permits for safe passage out of the host State);

- Negotiations with States of transit to secure transit visas (e.g., to secure safe passage through their territory);
- Cooperation with other stakeholders;
- Measures that facilitate evacuation of whole families and avoid separating families, including if family members have different nationalities;
- Pre- and post-evacuation support;
- Measures to secure funds to carry out evacuations;
- Identification of particularly vulnerable migrants who may need special care during evacuations, such as victims of violence, disabled migrants, elderly migrants, child migrants, including unaccompanied or separated children, and victims of trafficking or exploitation;
- Compiling a directory of persons being evacuated with information on evacuation centers to enable family members to get in touch with each other in case they are separated.

Steps for undertaking an evacuation operation could include:

- Reaching out to migrants to provide information on evacuation operations and identifying those requiring evacuation;
- Appointing a body authorized to make decisions, manage, and oversee evacuation operations;
- Deploying technical teams comprising personnel with pertinent skills, including processing teams, liaison officers, movement officers, health specialists, and translators and interpreters;
- Gathering migrants at evacuations points, including providing transport;
- Issuing emergency documentation for migrants without necessary documentation;
- Providing humanitarian relief and assistance prior to evacuation, such as distribution of blankets, food, drinking water, medical supplies, and medicines;
- Registering evacuees and preparing travel manifests;
- Upon arrival in States of origin, providing immediate basic services, such as shelter, transport, and health care, including psychosocial counseling.

Multi-stakeholder coordination on evacuation

Coordination among States or between States and other stakeholders in carrying out evacuations can ensure effective use of resources, especially because transportation or other services relating to evacuations may be in high demand. If not established before the crisis hits, factors to consider in establishing ad hoc arrangements to cooperate on evacuations include:

- Criteria for determining persons eligible for evacuation;
- Roles and responsibilities of each partner, with clear designation of who will perform each task, where, when, and how the task will be performed, and how progress will be reported to others;
- Reporting and tracking tools, including web-based tools, to ensure partners have real time information on location of migrants and status of evacuation;
- Direction on how to deal with difficult cases (e.g., if family members have different

- nationalities);
- Modes of evacuation;
- Common standards for transport and interim services to evacuees.

Measures to facilitate evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers

When undertaking evacuations, stakeholders should bear in mind that any evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers needs to be carried out in accordance with the principle of *non-refoulement*, including by ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers are not evacuated to their country of origin, or to a third country, if they would be subject to persecution there.

Post-evacuation support in States of transit, including shelter, food, and medical assistance

Support to evacuated migrants may be required if migrants stay in the State of transit to await onward movement to the State of origin or re-entry to the host State. Post-evacuation support that stakeholders involved in the evacuation can provide includes:

- Temporary shelter;
- Food, drinking water, and other basic necessities;
- Medical and psychosocial assistance;
- Facilities for communicating with family members.

States of Origin

Deployment of additional personnel to assist with relocation and evacuation

Relocation and evacuation operations require close coordination and additional resources, including at consulates in host States as well as at the national and local level in States of origin. Measures that can be put in place include:

- Establishing or activating a central structure, at the national level in the State of origin, or in the host State;
- Seeking the assistance of local actors in host States, including private sector actors, international organizations, and civil society to implement specific aspects of operations, such as identifying citizens who need particular care;
- Deploying additional personnel.

Removing barriers to evacuation

Citizens may not want to leave a host State, even when there are risks to their own personal safety, if they have to leave family members behind (e.g., because family members have a different nationality) or abandon property or assets. States of origin can adopt emergency measures to remove barriers to evacuation, including:

- Waiving taxes or other restrictions that inhibit citizens from transferring home personal or business assets;
- Permitting evacuation for family units where family members have different nationalities;
- Permitting evacuation in some circumstances for employees of citizens, such as

domestic workers, when those employees are migrants themselves and have a different nationality.

Deployment of consular assistance teams to borders, airports, or other transit points

The deployment of consular assistance teams to borders, airports, or other transit points in the host State during a crisis can allow States of origin to provide consular assistance to their citizens, including assisting with arrangements to evacuate or relocate from the crisis area. Borders, airports, and transit points are often congested and chaotic during a crisis and consular assistance teams can help citizens navigate this environment. In deploying a consular assistance team, factors to consider include:

- Language capacity;
- Resources and assets at the teams' disposal;
- Responsibility for costs incurred;
- The scope of services that will be provided to citizens in the crisis area, including undertaking identity verifications, issuing identity and travel documents, and securing employment releases or permission to maintain regular immigration status;
- Liaison with authorities and emergency services in the host State and in States of transit;
- Whether to deploy 'advance teams' who could alert authorities of the need for surge capacity;
- Coordination with other relevant stakeholders.

Criteria for determining persons eligible for evacuation

In determining how to undertake evacuations and whom to prioritize for evacuation, States could consider the following factors:

- Emergency medical needs;
- Age, disability, and other vulnerabilities;
- Maintaining family unity, including for those family members with different nationalities;
- How dual citizens will be treated;
- How employees of citizens, including those of different nationalities, will be treated;
- When to support other States of origin to evacuate their citizens.

Private Sector Actors

Facilitating relocation or evacuation: employers

Employers, recruiters, and placement agencies can support relocation or evacuation of migrant workers either independently or in cooperation with States and other stakeholders. Whenever possible and relevant, they can implement measures that privilege in-country relocation of personnel and operations in the event of a crisis, considering arrangements to evacuate the migrant workforce from a host State as a last resort life-saving measure and when in-country relocation is not viable. Employers, recruiters, and placement agencies can provide specific support, including:

- Ensuring immediate access to identity and travel documents;
- Disseminating evacuation information from States of origin to migrant workers;
- Providing means to contact States of origin or international organizations to arrange evacuations;
- Providing temporary shelter and food until relocation or evacuation;
- Evacuating migrant workers by hiring transport or arranging for evacuation with States or international organizations.

Facilitating relocation or evacuation: service providers

Companies provide essential services during crises, including transportation, financial and insurance services, medical assistance, and evacuations. At the height of a crisis, service providers can consider waiving requirements or fees to facilitate relocations and evacuations. For example, transportation companies may take passengers to their State of origin without tickets, insurance companies can prioritize processing, and financial services companies could waive fees to send funds to pay for transportation or emergency services. Service providers could also waive fees on remittances or penalties to change airline reservations to enable migrants to exit crisis-affected areas.

International Organizations

Centralized portal or clearing house to log requests for evacuation by migrants or States and facilitate multi-State or multi-stakeholder cooperation on evacuations

Not all States of origin will have the capacity to assist migrants in countries experiencing crises. Temporary relocation within a State during a short-lived crisis in which individuals can receive assistance locally may be manageable for many; however, in those cases when large numbers of migrants from many States of origin need to be evacuated, international organizations may be called upon to assist. In order to manage requests from States of origin and migrants, international organizations could activate a centralized portal where States could, among other things:

- Request assistance;
- Provide information on migrants to be evacuated, including their location and needs;
- Access reports on contact with, and location of, migrants;
- View confirmations that a migrant will be evacuated and his or her destination;
- Request additional assistance for migrants with specific needs, and confirm whether migrants have received necessary assistance, including through referrals to specialized agencies;
- Make requests to verify identity and confirm results.

Onward transportation assistance

International organizations can provide migrants who arrive in States of transit with transportation assistance to reach their intended destination. In planning and implementing such assistance, organizations can collaborate with States, including on the provision of

identity and travel documentation, the place of destination, and reception and post-arrival assistance.

Civil Society

Support to evacuation operations

Civil society, including migrant associations, can play a useful role in supporting evacuation operations for migrants. They can contribute by:

- Identifying those in need of evacuation, including persons in isolated or remote locations or in detention;
- Assembling migrants to facilitate evacuations;
- Providing migrants with information related to evacuation operations;
- Supporting family tracing efforts.