



Credit: Benjamin Suomela

The Regional Migration Programs' Knowledge Uptakes provide lessons learned and promising practice-oriented solutions to feed into the consultations for the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) and serve as a global knowledge product for policymakers and practitioners. The Knowledge Uptakes draw upon the US Department of State PRM-funded Regional Migration Programs' years of experience in supporting migration policy and implementing operational programs and services.

WHY IT'S RELEVANT

In the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, as well as other international instruments and frameworks, States committed to the principle that all persons, including all migrants irrespective of their migration status, are entitled to have their human rights respected, protected, and fulfilled. These international frameworks also recognize the vulnerability of migrants to abuse, exploitation, and human trafficking, and as such, the need to address the protection of the rights of migrants in vulnerable situations. The Global Compact on Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, too, intends to address migrants in vulnerable situations, specifically the **“effective protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, including women and children, regardless of their migratory status, and the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations.”** Relatedly, the Global Compact will also address the **“reduction of the incidence and impact of irregular migration”** and **“identifying those who have been trafficked and consider providing assistance, including temporary or permanent residency, and work permits, as appropriate.”** These items are interconnected and together demonstrate the commitment of states to protect migrants in vulnerable situations and decrease the incidence and impact of trafficking, exploitation, abuse, and other risks.

In order to protect and assist migrants in vulnerable situations, stakeholders aim to provide direct assistance. However, identifying migrants in vulnerable situations, their rights, their needs, and the appropriate responses can be quite difficult, for instance for front-line responders, such as police officers, border officials, healthcare staff, or labour inspectors. This indicates a gap amongst stakeholders in programming, and potentially even in policies, to appropriately and effectively identify and protect migrants in vulnerable situations. Identification is integral to protecting migrants but without appropriate systems in place this process can lead to bottlenecks in services or no access to services. Thus, timely identification is critical. Once identified, the ability to protect and assist migrants and provide access to appropriate resources may be limited. Protection therefore requires an effective protection system and cooperation amongst

stakeholders. Understanding knowledge gaps for migrants and effectively communicating information to migrants may also pose challenges.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Through IOM's Regional Migration Programs, its partner service organizations, and government stakeholders, **approximately 65,000 migrants in vulnerable situations benefitted from direct assistance services in 2016**. Beneficiaries included victims of exploitation, violence, and abuse, as well as others in vulnerable situations. This is only a small portion of the many migrants in vulnerable situations assisted by IOM worldwide every year.

IOM has learned through its many years of experience how to best identify, assist, protect, and respond to migrants, including through its **Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms (MRRMs)**. MRRMs are developed with key partners in strategic locations along the migratory routes to provide operational support to government authorities to address complex migratory flows, facilitate the identification and registration of migrants, protect and assist migrants, and support data collection to feed into evidence-based policy and programming.

The number of MRRMs is rapidly growing. The following are a few of the MRRM locations supported by the Regional Migration Programs:

- Poi Pet, Cambodia
- Nghe An, Vietnam
- San Pedro Sula, Honduras
- Motozintla, Mexico
- Palenque, Mexico
- Suchiate, Mexico
- Tacana, Guatemala
- Sibinal, Guatemala
- San Marcos, Guatemala
- Paso Canoas, Panama
- Paso Canoas, Costa Rica
- Obock, Djibouti
- Mile, Ethiopia
- Bosasso, Somalia

What are Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms?

MRRMs are flexible cooperation arrangements among key partners, tailor-made to fit each country's migration patterns and needs, taking into account the specific social, political, economic, and legal context. The nature of a MRRM will vary in each location; however, all MRRMs will seek to formalize co-operation among IOM, government agencies, civil society organizations, and UN agencies dealing with migrants in need. MRRMs include Migrant Response Centers (MRCs) and other regionally-specific centers, but the general approach remains the same. MRRMs are:

- **A cooperative framework** to facilitate the identification of migrants in need, and to ensure that they receive appropriate immediate and longer-term support;
- **A "one-stop shop" for the provision of information** and integration support programs; and
- **A mechanism through which migration data is collected** about migrants and migration trends.

Some MRRMs may require setting up facilities where migrants can register and access in-house services, such as counseling, temporary accommodation, or medical assistance. Other MRRMs may not require a physical location; they may simply establish a structured referral system for migrants among different parties or work through mobile outreach units.

GOOD PRACTICE: COOPERATIVE FRAMEWORKS TO IDENTIFY MIGRANTS IN NEED

MRRMs are cooperative frameworks that facilitate the identification of migrants in need and ensure that they receive appropriate immediate and longer-term support. The basic aims of a MRRM are to ensure that the human rights of migrants are respected and provide an effective way to refer migrants in need to specialized services.

Established in strategic locations along the migratory routes, such as in transit countries, MRRMs establish systems to identify and refer migrants in need to specialized agencies offering support services as well as shelter and protection from physical and psychological harm. MRRMs fill critical gaps in direct assistance along key migratory routes, and in addition to direct assistance and service referrals, MRRMs screen migrants in vulnerable situations, including unaccompanied minors and victims of trafficking.

In line with individual needs, support services may include: medical and psychological support; food; non-food items, such as clothing and hygiene kits; temporary accommodation; legal counseling; and the facilitation of contact with

families and consular offices. Support is tailored to address particular vulnerabilities, such as those of unaccompanied and separated migrant children, migrants who have been trafficked, exploited, abused, or are particularly vulnerable to such abuses, migrants with health and psychosocial-related needs, as well as persons in need of international refugee protection, in partnership with national authorities and UNHCR. MRRMs also seek to facilitate alternatives to high risk irregular migration and longer-term solutions, such as assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) to countries of origin.

MRRMs are created through cooperation agreements between IOM and its partners. The agreements set out the specific roles and duties of each organization involved in the MRRM, and require cooperation to ensure that migrants in need are offered immediate and longer-term assistance through their referral to specialized services. IOM's MRRM partners include government agencies, social service providers, civil society organizations, and UN agencies.

Cooperating with Other Stakeholders for Service Provision in Cambodia

Poi Pet, Cambodia lies along the border with Thailand and is the main border crossing for Cambodian migrants entering and returning from Thailand. On average, between 100 to 200 Cambodian migrants return to Cambodia across the border each day, with numbers rising to as high as 1,000 per day during certain times of the year. Because of the significance of the location, the Regional Migration Program established a MRC at the border in Poi Pet. The MRC reaches over 200 returning migrants every day.

The MRC is able to identify and assess the needs of the migrants, including determining whether a migrant is in a vulnerable situation. The MRC coordinates with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in screening priority migrants, including migrants in vulnerable situations. By working together, the NGOs and the MRC avoid duplication of services and aim to serve all migrants through a variety of services. IOM has largely assumed the role of providing health services, and other stakeholders refer migrants to the MRC for health assistance, including psychosocial and mental health services. First aid is provided immediately at the MRC, prioritizing female migrants and children. Serious treatments are referred to IOM doctors or local hospitals, and serious cases are provided transportation and possibly even shelter. IOM also offers psychosocial support services as there are many gaps in mental health services. These services are in addition to safe migration campaigns and messaging, assistance with passports and documentation, reintegration assistance, direct services, onward transport, transit assistance, destitute allowances, family tracing, and ongoing support to migrants in vulnerable situations and victims of trafficking.

In times of crisis or high flows of returns, NGOs and the MRC coordinate and work together with the government of Cambodia to cover the response effectively. Large movements require government-level assistance, and the MRC platform serves a way in which government-led interventions are shaped and directed.

Capacity building is an important component of the MRC, which has developed a strong relationship with the Cambodian government. The Regional Migration Program has built a partnership with the national government health clinic to share resources and coordinate services, including after hours. There is a shift now towards trainings, for instance on first aid training for the community, understanding psychological needs and mental health, as well as how to identify those in need.

Identifying and Assisting to Migrants in Need in the Horn of Africa and Yemen

The Regional Migration Program assists migrants in Yemen and the government of Yemen coordinates with the Regional Migration Program in allowing the provision of food, shelter, and water to migrants, regardless of migrant status. Key to the success of the MRRM is the capacity to effectively identify, assist, and protect migrants. Often the migrants' human rights have been violated. They may have experienced gunshots, lacerations, and/or peeled skin. The Regional Migration Program offers doctors and nurses to provide treatment and hospitalization. The most vulnerable, for instance those exploited, are possibly offered a reintegration package. Children that are identified as victims of trafficking are offered reintegration services.

Many migrants, especially those experiencing exploitation and abuse, will seek to return home. For these migrants, the Regional Migration Program offers voluntary "fast evacuations." Due to the conflict in Yemen, there are no commercial airlines traveling in and out of the country, so the Regional Migration Program utilizes chartered boats to bring migrants through the MRC in Djibouti, where migrants are then prescreened to determine nationality and provided travel documents to return home.

In the same region, other MRCs provide similar services. The Regional Migration Program aims to build government

capacity to operate MRRMs. The MRRM in Hargeisa, Somaliland is now run by the government, with technical support from the Regional Migration Program.

GOOD PRACTICE: ONE-STOP SHOPS FOR INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Over the last 10 years, governments, NGOs, social partners, and international organizations, such as IOM, have established MRRMs, MRCs, and other similar facilities in both origin and destination countries. They function as a one-stop-shop with a range of services adapted to local conditions and information requirements. Globally, MRRMs are recognized as having a key role to play in the empowerment and protection of migrants.

MRRMs in countries of origin and destination may provide pre-departure and post-arrival integration support programs for various categories of newcomers, including migrant workers, family migrants, and resettled refugees. Such programs are designed and implemented with the involvement of employers to strengthen the role of such initiatives in enabling early labour market inclusion of migrants and refugees, in line with their competences and qualifications. In countries of origin, the development of information-sharing platforms and referral services should be delivered to potential and travel-ready migrants in cooperation with employment services and other actors through hotlines and/or online platforms.

In countries of origin and countries of transit, MRRMs may provide a neutral space where migrants can access accurate information about the risks of irregular migration, and positive alternatives to irregular migration (including livelihood opportunities in countries of origin and regular labour mobility programs to the EU and other destinations). Information may be provided through individualized counseling, awareness-raising and information materials, dedicated hotlines and websites, or internet access to help migrants make informed choices and mitigate the risks associated with irregular migration, including trafficking and smuggling.

Providing Information Services and Referrals in Mesoamerica

In the Mesoamerica region, the Regional Migration Program provides information services and referrals through Information Hubs, referred to as *ventanillas*. These Hubs play a key role in raising awareness and offering information to communities and migrants on the risks and dangers of irregular migration, including human trafficking and smuggling networks, and legal migration pathways. In addition to providing migrants information, direct assistance is offered to migrants in vulnerable situations, if needed. In general, the Hubs have focused on migrant children and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) migrants.

There are 15 Information Hubs in 11 countries in the Mesoamerica region, ranging from Panama to Mexico, with most located in Mexico. The most active Information Hub is in Paso Canoas, Costa Rica. These Hubs are generally based in government offices in partnership with governments of selected municipalities characterized by high migration flows. The transition of the Hubs to local institutions is a strong emphasis of the Regional Migration Program strategy. The Hubs' staff are involved in conducting training activities to build capacity of governments and other stakeholders, and offer, when applicable, referrals to authorities for migrants in need of assistance.

GOOD PRACTICE: MIGRATION DATA COLLECTION

MRRMs are mechanisms through which migration data can be collected about migrants and migration trends. This de-personalized information, collected mainly through the registration of migrants and in line with IOM Data Protection Principles, contributes to building a clearer picture of migration trends and migrant vulnerabilities, which can feed into evidence-based advocacy, policy, and programming.

Collecting Migrant Data in Cambodia

In addition to the direct assistance and safe migration messaging, the Poi Pet MRC serves as a research base for data collection, analysis, and information-sharing to support evidence-based advocacy, policy development, and regular programming. In 2016, the Poi Pet MRC collected data from 550 migrants on their migration experience. Based on migrant surveys, the Regional Migration Program determined that the majority of migrants crossing the border back into Cambodia are male between the ages of 19-29, married, and largely from the Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia. The majority of migrants have children. Almost a quarter of migrants migrated with their children, whereas the others were commonly left with grandparents. The majority of migrants did not have documentation when crossing the border, but data revealed which types of documentation were held and how it was acquired, as well as the skill sets of the migrants, and whether they were paid for their work. Many migrants worked with no days off, and many reported debt bondage and excessive working hours, among other issues.

Almost half of all migrants surveyed were offered a job in construction, followed by high numbers in agriculture and farming and market selling.

This information, along with information on the origin communities of migrants, informs the Regional Migration Program programming throughout the country, including types of projects, location, and for which target populations. The MRC can also visualize trends that may reflect or inform policy changes. For instance, after a recent decree by Thailand, the Regional Migration Program noticed a significant increase in undocumented low-skilled migrant workers returning to Cambodia across the border at Poi Pet. The increase in migrant returns jumped from the average 200 migrants a day to 900 migrants. Such an increase in migrants also increases the risks of human trafficking and vulnerabilities, including exploitation and abuse. By tracking data, the Regional Migration Program is better alerted and able to respond.

Gathering Data in the Horn of Africa and Yemen

MRCs play a significant role in gathering data in the Horn of Africa and Yemen region. The regional MRCs gather and compile the data and information, for instance on reasons for migrating, immediate migrant needs, experience of hardships and human rights abuses, as well as demographic information, amongst other important statistics on trends and patterns.

MRC registration allows the Regional Migration Program to determine a migrant's needs and experiences to best offer information, protection, assistance, and referrals. Registration provides a way to collect and record data on migrants through voluntary screening. The data collected covers 40 questions and includes: place of birth; marital status; composition of those who are traveling; origin; transits; pathways between country of origin and destination; intended final destination; motivations for leaving; intention upon arrival; intention to send remittances; reasons for route choice; mode of transportation; mode of trip organization (for instance, voluntary or involuntary, use of broker, payment to someone); and an assessment of protection and health needs. With this data collection, the Regional Migration Program can monitor, understand, and share what is happening on the ground, and whether there is appropriate capacity to meet migrants' needs.



REGIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAMS

WHAT ARE IOM'S REGIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAMS?

Funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), IOM's Regional Migration Programs provide technical assistance to help build the migration management and protection capacities of origin, transit, and destination countries, and directly assist the world's most vulnerable migrants. The Regional Migration Programs utilize a five-pillar approach tailored to each region and ensures that implementation is needs-driven.

REGIONAL MIGRATION PROGRAMS' 5 PILLAR APPROACH



CAPACITY BUILDING

Engage governments and local stakeholders in origin, transit, and destination countries to advance effective and humane migration management, and promote safe, orderly, and regular migration.



DIRECT ASSISTANCE

Protect and assist the world's most vulnerable migrants, such as unaccompanied children, persons rescued at sea, and trafficked victims, while building local and government stakeholders' ownership of migrant protection.



REGIONAL DIALOGUE

Support regional-level information exchange and cooperation between governments to address regional migration challenges and uphold the rights of migrants.



INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

Partner with UNHCR and other UN organizations, civil society organizations, and the private sector to promote multi-stakeholder coordination on migration issues, advance information-sharing and cooperation, and leverage complementarities.



EMERGENCY MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

Promote the capacities of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to anticipate migration crises and better respond to the needs of migrants affected by crises.

In addition, IOM's [Global Knowledge Management Project](#) strengthens regional programming through streamlined monitoring and evaluation capacity development, enhanced systems and processes for knowledge management, and the increased visibility of promising practices from this portfolio.

GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE



- CENTRAL ASIA
- CHINA
- DOMINICAN REPUBLIC & HAITI
- GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION & MALAYSIA
- HORN OF AFRICA & YEMEN
- WESTERN BALKANS
- WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
- SOUTHERN AFRICA
- NORTH AFRICA
- MESOAMERICA



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