Migrants caught in crises: Contexts, responses and innovation

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Introduction

The situations of people who have moved from their countries of origin only to find themselves caught in a crisis that threatens their security and ability to thrive are of growing concern to the international community. While crises affect both nationals and non-nationals, the ability of migrants to cope with their impacts may be reduced, due to conditions of vulnerability associated with migrants’ legal, economic and social status, as well as practical challenges, such as linguistic differences, geographic displacement and even cultural context, which can limit access to timely and understandable information, services, resources and safety. While not all migrants are equally affected in times of crisis, they are often among the most vulnerable, at increased risk and in need of specific support.

Addressing the needs of migrants living in places affected by crisis has become a priority of policy forums at both global and regional levels. Recent initiatives and policy processes include regional dialogues on migration in Africa, the Americas, and Central and South-East Asia; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; the Paris Agreement; and the World Humanitarian Summit. The Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative and the development of the set of Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster provide concrete examples of efforts to improve current practice. The situation of migrants in crisis contexts is also acknowledged in the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, where it is highlighted as an essential element for the achievement of objective 2 on minimizing the drivers of forced migration, and objective 7 on reducing migrants’ vulnerability.

Despite the existence of relevant policies, questions remain on the effectiveness of current efforts to address migrants’ vulnerability and support their capacity before, during and after crises. This is due, in part, to the fact that, although there is growing recognition at regional and global levels of the need to respond to the particular situation of migrants in crisis contexts, the needs and safety of migrant populations may not be a priority for affected countries. Moreover, in some cases, migrant-specific crisis response measures have focused primarily on returning migrants to their countries of origin. While evacuations or returns may in some instances be the only life-saving option for migrants caught in crisis contexts, this focus can come at the expense of other effective support mechanisms that may better meet migrants’ immediate post-crisis recovery and longer-term interests and needs. Ensuring appropriate responses requires a clear understanding of migrants’ interests and priorities across different geographical and sociopolitical contexts.

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1 Nassim Majidi, Founder and Director of Samuel Hall; Heaven Crawley, Professor, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University and Lorenzo Guadagno, International Organization for Migration; and Camille Kasavan, Samuel Hall.
2 MICIC, 2016. For the purposes of this chapter, migrants include tourists, business travellers, foreign students, temporary workers and permanent residents, as well as asylum seekers and refugees.
3 MICIC, 2016.
4 Martin, 2016.
5 The focus on evacuation of migrants to their countries of origin as a response to crisis, in a global context of return as the “go-to” policy response (Shaw, 2018), reflects a limited interest in, and use of, alternative responses that are more cognizant of migrants’ capacities and aspirations.
Reflecting these concerns, this chapter focuses on the experiences of migrants in crisis contexts, and the local, national and international responses to address their conditions and needs. This is important for three main reasons: (a) to better understand the ways in which migrants are affected by situations of crisis that occur in the countries in which they live or through which they are travelling; (b) to reflect on the effectiveness of efforts that focus on the needs of migrants in crisis contexts; and (c) to identify the ways in which actions by a range of stakeholders involved in any crisis situation can ensure that the needs and interests of migrants are taken into account.

The chapter is organized into four sections: (a) the next section draws on the framework provided by the MICIC Initiative to examine the varying contexts, responses, gaps and lessons learned in crisis preparedness, emergency response and post-crisis recovery; (b) the section that follows provides an overview of existing data on migrants in countries at risk of or affected by crisis, and assesses data needs and gaps; (c) innovative responses for supporting migrants caught in crises are discussed in the section that follows; and (d) the final, concluding section reflects on policy and practice implications.

**Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or National Disaster**

The MICIC Initiative, a State-led process launched in 2014, was designed to engage a wide audience on the topic of protecting migrants in crisis contexts. Through a series of multi-stakeholder consultations, the Initiative developed a set of voluntary Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or National Disaster. Published in 2016, the Guidelines represent a non-binding collection of principles, recommendations and practices that can guide efforts by all stakeholders to reduce the vulnerability of migrants in times of crisis.

**Figure 1. Cycles and steps in crisis management, as defined in the MICIC framework**
Key contexts and crisis phases

Crises – defined as situations “in which there is a widespread threat to life, physical safety, health or basic subsistence which is beyond the coping capacity of individuals and the communities in which they reside”\(^6\) – are associated with a wide range of phenomena. They can be triggered by environmental hazards, conflicts and terrorism, as well as complex emergencies, failures of political and economic management, epidemics and pandemics, and global financial cycles.

In recent years, flooding in Bangladesh and Thailand, major hurricanes in North America, conflicts in Libya and Yemen, as well as political and economic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, have created the need for emergency assistance and urgent protection of migrants. Each of these places hosted migrants prior to and during the crisis, including permanent residents, temporary workers, business travellers, tourists and students, as well as asylum seekers and refugees.

The issue of migrant vulnerability in crisis contexts has been brought to the attention of the international community following large humanitarian emergencies. Lower-intensity (but often higher-frequency) events – such as urban fires and accidents, localized landslides and episodes of violence – can also disproportionately affect migrants, who may be living in areas more susceptible to these hazards. Experience from all crisis events shows that patterns of marginalization and exclusion increase migrants’ vulnerability to most hazards. Different crises, whether large- or small-scale, affect migrants in different ways (see appendix A), and will result in different operational interventions or actions.

Taking specific operational contexts into account: The example of health crises

Health crises have their own unique markers, which include clear protocols and preparedness procedures as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). Migrants are rarely included in relevant planning mechanisms, with significant impacts on migrant and host communities alike. This has human rights as well as health implications, and means that health-care practitioners need to have an understanding of the social dimensions of human mobility. Shared learning between health-care and humanitarian practitioners, as well as migrant communities, is a priority.\(^a\)

Migrants may experience greater obstacles accessing protection and support, particularly where an individual has limited social networks. Depending on the circumstances, numerous other factors (such as gender, age, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability status) compound vulnerability and the ability to cope in crisis contexts. At the same time, and as discussed in this chapter, migrant and local capacities before, during and after crises can inform and strengthen response beyond a vulnerabilities-centric approach, to one geared to understanding migrant capabilities. Recognizing the diversity of migrant profiles and supporting migrants to respond to crises are essential to reducing risks. Migrants may find themselves facing situations in which they are more vulnerable or more empowered. When the 2011 Brisbane floods occurred in Australia,

\(^a\) See key informant interviews with Hui (2019); and Wickramage (2019).

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\(^6\) Martin, Weerasinghe and Taylor, 2014.
for instance, the role of culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders in immigrant and refugee communities was essential, as they acted as gatekeepers and communicated emergency responses to the disaster to their communities. While in Thailand, restrictions on mobility stemming from administrative barriers limited the mobility of many migrant workers affected by floods, who had to choose between staying in flooded, risky areas or face possible loss of legal status, arrest and deportation.

**Coordination, planning, and preparedness**

Effective coordination, planning and preparedness require clear identification of the roles of various stakeholders. This begins with the fundamental obligation of States under international human rights law to protect the life and dignity of everyone – both citizens and non-citizens – living within their borders.

Countries of origin most often respond to the needs of their nationals caught in crises abroad through consular assistance. The rights and responsibilities of consular services to exercise their consular prerogatives in times of crises are delineated in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963). In practice, however, the ability of States to act effectively in these contexts depends on resources, capacity, political will, effective planning and preparation.

**The right to consular protection**

The responsibility of consular services to assist their citizens abroad is a recognized norm, enshrined in the national laws of at least 45 countries. The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations does not explicitly obligate States to provide support to nationals affected by crises abroad. However, article 5 of the Convention lists a number of functions States can exercise in another State’s territory, including (a) the protection of the interest of its nationals, and (e) the disaster assistance a State can provide to its nationals abroad. Article 36 also obligates host countries to allow consular officials to communicate with – and provide support and protection to – their nationals, to the extent allowed under the national laws of the host country.

Beyond consulates, other institutions in migrants’ countries of origin can provide support in crisis contexts. For instance, the Government of the Philippines has integrated measures to protect its nationals abroad in its policies, institutional structures and mandates, which may directly and indirectly support migrants caught in crisis. Key to the country’s system is the Overseas Preparedness and Response Team, established in 2011 and comprising representatives of several ministries. The team’s objective is to develop preparedness strategies aimed at supporting Filipinos abroad, including destination-specific contingency plans in case of crisis, to be updated every six months. This is complemented by a variety of programmes and services that aim to support the ability of migrants to address challenges they may face.

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7 Shepherd and Van Vuuren, 2014.
8 Guadagno, 2015.
9 Battistella, 2012.
10 Government of the Philippines, 2011.
Philippine consular support for migrant workers caught in conflict

The preparedness arrangements of the Philippines’ consular authorities were tested during the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. Due to escalating violence, a rapid response team composed of staff from the Foreign Affairs, Labour and Interior ministries was deployed to assist the embassy in Damascus in repatriating 8,000 Filipino workers. For example, Ruth Pana, 29, domestic worker for a Syrian family, fled her employer’s house because she was fearful of being caught in the crossfire between government troops and rebel forces in 2012. When her employer and his family moved to a rented house, she contacted the Philippine Embassy, which sent a car that took her into the care of Filipino personnel until she and the others were repatriated. Pana said her employer initially did not want her to leave, saying she was still under contract, but then relented.

Where States cannot respond effectively, international organizations have sometimes stepped in to fill gaps and support the implementation of support mechanisms for migrants. This was seen most clearly in Libya during the conflict that broke out in 2011. Between 1.5 million and 3 million migrants, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, were estimated to be living in the country at the time of the civil war, and most were unable to access services provided by Libyan or home country authorities when the conflict escalated, as there were no contingency plans for migrants. Bordering countries promptly opened their borders to migrants escaping Libya, and non-governmental and international organizations also supported relief efforts, notably in the form of international evacuations to home or third countries. Coordination of these operations was initially developed on an ad hoc basis. In March 2011, IOM and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) coordinated evacuation efforts and set up the Humanitarian Evacuation Cell. This Cell sought to support the management and use of assets and in-kind contributions received from 19 countries for the evacuation of migrants, totalling an estimated USD 23 million, and was supported by the European Union (EU) Monitoring and Information Centre, which assisted in transmitting requests for assets and in collecting offers from EU member States. The ad hoc nature of these operations highlighted the need for stronger preparedness mechanisms to manage large-scale international evacuations out of crisis areas.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) are also key service providers in crisis contexts, often acting as a bridge between migrant communities and State actors. During the 2006 war in Lebanon, for instance, CSOs supported migrant domestic workers, forming a consortium to work with the Lebanese Government to address the needs of this group. CSOs made the case for better cooperation and coordination with intergovernmental organizations and State actors, which were their main allies during the crisis. In the United States, civil society efforts such as the California Farm Worker CARE Coalition have also played a role in ensuring that migrant workers had access to information and support during the California wildfires (see box below).

12 Aghazarm, Quesada and Tishler, 2012; Zampagni et al., 2017.
14 Mansour-Ile and Hendow, 2017.
California Farm Worker CARE Coalition: Civil society coordination

Following the 2007 California wildfires, the California Farm Worker CARE Coalition developed a structure to better coordinate and communicate with (and assist) migrants in emergencies. The structure leverages existing community networks, and peer educators known as *promotoras*, and includes local response organizations, other domestic NGOs and media (including Spanish language media). As part of this work, the Coalition has built the capacity of its members to prepare for and respond to emergencies, and has developed a formal emergency preparedness plan that is now integrated in official crisis management arrangements.\(^a\)

\(^a\) Martinez, Hoff and Núñez-Alvarez, 2009; Martinez, 2017.

Emergency responses and lessons learned

The effectiveness of responses is to a large extent dependent on the preparedness of key stakeholders, and their ability to include and coordinate plans with migrant communities. Regardless of the level of preparedness, many crises require flexibility, ad hoc arrangements and quick decision-making. The availability of and rapid access to crisis funding, information and flexible migration policies can significantly affect the effectiveness of response efforts targeting migrant populations.

Responses to the needs of migrants in the contexts of large humanitarian crises have mostly been financed through traditional funding streams. Evidence from past crises suggests that these can be narrowly or politically focused. In the 2011 Libyan context, for instance, there is evidence that funding was used primarily for evacuation and returns to home countries, rather than on supporting those migrants who wished to remain, or providing options to stay in safe third countries.\(^{15}\) Moreover, these traditional funding streams may be difficult to access, or slow to activate, significantly impacting on the lives and well-being of migrants. Again, there is evidence that administrative and bureaucratic obstacles delayed and limited the timeliness of support operations during the crisis in Libya. By November 2011, IOM had formally received USD 111 million from donors and USD 23 million in in-kind donations.\(^{16}\) At the height of evacuation operations, up to USD 4 million were required every day to charter planes to destinations as far away as Bangladesh or Viet Nam.\(^{17}\) Administrative issues delayed access to the funding and, in turn, evacuations.\(^{18}\) Following the experience of large-scale migrant evacuations in response to the Libya crisis, IOM set up a Migration Emergency Funding Mechanism, with Member States’ support, to cover the cost of international transport for migrants affected by crisis. The purpose of the fund is to jump-start the emergency response while waiting for donor funding to be received, in order to avoid the delays similar to those experienced during the evacuations from Libya.

There have been efforts by international organizations such as the World Bank and IOM to improve direct cash assistance. In 2011, the World Bank granted a loan of USD 72 million to the Government of Bangladesh

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\(^{15}\) Perchinig, Rasche and Schaur, 2017.  
\(^{16}\) Aghazarm, Quesada and Tishler, 2012.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
to repatriate and provide transitional assistance to over 36,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers who escaped the crisis in Libya. The assistance was provided directly to returnees, through a one-time cash grant to cover immediate basic needs and partial expenses associated with the initial restoration of livelihoods.

At the national level, India has established Community Welfare Funds, which levy small fees from consular services to support Indian nationals caught in crisis or other emergency situations abroad. These funds allow consulates to have rapid access to resources in emergency cases, which in turn allows for the launch of rapid responses. This has been further strengthened through the institutionalization of State capacity to repatriate nationals in times of need. In addition to emergency response services such as repatriation, the funds can fund a range of support services aimed at addressing migrant vulnerability and capabilities, including providing boarding and lodging for migrants in need, emergency medical care and provision of legal assistance.

New avenues for cooperation could usefully be developed between the private sector and other non-traditional actors, including diaspora populations, providing material support, communications resources, translation or shelter to migrants in crisis contexts. The role of private sector actors in supporting migrant resilience and their capacity to face crisis effectively was highlighted during the MICIC Initiative’s consultations. In 2016, IOM moved forward with private sector partnerships, including partnerships with media or partners within the technology sector working on effective information sharing. Such partnerships may serve as models for better integration of community and private sector actors in backing or initiating activities that may directly or indirectly better support migrants’ capacity to handle a crisis. Research is needed to ensure that best practices are successfully identified and adapted to specific contexts. Diaspora populations may also have an important role to play in improving emergency response capacity and coordination, notably through their provision of more reactive funding streams.

Access to services, information and social networks is also critical in times of crisis, for ensuring migrant safety and decision-making. However, access to information for migrants can be challenging, and is often hampered by a failure to take account of migrants in emergency communication plans, as well as their limited language skills, local knowledge and lack of opportunity of access to local social networks.

This problem could be seen during the 2011 floods in Thailand. Emergency services in Thailand were informed by census data that was unable to adequately capture a large population of migrants with irregular status. In addition, limitations on migrant worker movement, as well as conflicting information from the Government concerning support to migrants, was a source of confusion and uncertainty for migrants and national aid workers. Migrants’ awareness, access to knowledge and preparedness for the floods thus depended on their level of integration in their host society, especially their ability to speak and understand Thai.

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20 Ibid.
22 MICIC, 2016.
24 MICIC, 2015.
26 Ibid.
27 Samuel Hall, 2018.
28 Bravi et al., 2017.
29 Ibid.
30 Perchinig, Rasche and Schaur, 2017.
The existence of migrant groups and community networks can mitigate the negative impacts of a crisis. This can be seen, for example, in the case of Japan during the 2011 earthquake. Prior to the earthquake, the Bayanihan Kesennuma Filipino Community collective was already an active group, bringing together Filipino women living in Kesennuma (mostly married to Japanese men), who provided guidance and support to newcomers. The strength of these existing networks meant that the group was able to ascertain the status and safety of families and individuals during the earthquake, provide information to the Embassy of the Philippines, and support response actions and aid distribution.\footnote{MICIC, 2017.}

In addition, there is clear evidence that migration status can also have a significant impact on the ability of migrants to deal with crisis, and that flexible immigration and visa policies enable migrants to both keep themselves safe in times of crisis and more easily recover from its impact. For example, the Government of Tunisia led the way in allowing the movement of migrants and other affected persons out of Libya in 2011. Thousands of migrants who were unable to return to their countries of origin were assisted by Tunisian institutions, civil society and the population, with the Tunisian Red Crescent playing a central role.\footnote{Zampagni et al., 2017.} Similarly, the Government of Djibouti has played a key role in facilitating the evacuation of migrants trapped in Yemen en route to Gulf States during the conflict.\footnote{Veerassamy, 2017.} Moreover, flexibility of visa and work permit policies can ensure that migrants who have lost documents are able to renew them.

**Post-crisis actions: Reintegration and reconstruction**

Policy revisions and reflections after a crisis ensure that lessons are learned and can enhance response capacity and preparedness. The MICIC Initiative itself reflected a growing global concern to address the situation of migrants in times of crisis.

A critical gap in post-crisis action concerns the support that is provided to returnees and host communities. Although repatriation is common in many crisis scenarios, returns can challenge the absorption capacity and resilience of households, communities and societies in the country of origin. It is notable that no long-term positive examples of reintegration were identified during the review undertaken for this chapter. Indeed, most literature points out that migrants often receive little or no long-term assistance after being returned to their countries following a crisis.\footnote{Kleist, 2017; Hendow et al., 2018; Zampagni et al., 2017.} The majority of reintegration efforts – where they existed – were short-lived, with longer-term crisis responses hindered by lack of funding and the absence of future-oriented perspectives.\footnote{Ibid.}

The failure to institute effective reintegration structures raises important questions about the extent to which it is appropriate to focus on return when addressing the needs of migrants in countries facing crisis. Returns are often a highly visible sign of action, but they are also expensive and politically sensitive. Returns – if combined with a long-term reintegration strategy, and made to a location where conditions are safe and amenable to the pursuit of a dignified life – can be appropriate. However, returns may also render migrants considerably worse off. For instance, Cameroonian and Chadians who were working in the Central African
Republic in 2012 were mainly self-employed business people working in trade, and generally better off than the average local population. Most returned to their countries of origin because of the 2012 crisis, funded by donor States. However, the return and reintegration support that was available was often lacking. The returnees who had previously found success working in urban areas in the Central African Republic were frustrated to find themselves in rural surroundings upon return. When assistance to returnees dried up due to donor interests shifting to the insurgency in the Lake Chad region and resulting displacement, Chad was unable to continue to support returnees, and the reintegration support effectively ended.36

Thailand: Migrants’ involvement in emergency management as a driver of integration

Although migrants caught by the floods in Thailand were a particularly vulnerable group, they also were active members of their communities, providing relief and clean up services where needed and supporting preparedness, response and recovery efforts. This, in turn, made them feel more integrated in their host community. As one male migrant commented: “Do you know, I even helped the soldiers and Thai citizens make dams against the flood? I lived like a Thai citizen and felt like I had a responsibility to support neighbours to prevent the flood.”

Local Thai CSOs reported the involvement of migrants in supporting the communities they lived in, including support for host community members: “In Samut Sakhon, some groups of migrant workers tried to form support networks and mobilized monks to collect alms as a fund for relief supplies. These were mostly Burmese, but they did it to support all flood victims, not just their compatriots.”

Source: The above is an abridged extract of the Thailand Case Study (Bravi et al., 2017).

At the same time, there are examples of migrants choosing to stay, sometimes successfully, in their host countries, despite the existence of crisis. In some cases, this resulted in a strengthened sense of community, due to the involvement of migrants in response and recovery efforts. In Lebanon, for example, those in the migrant community who remained found themselves turning to each other for support and information after the 2006 war.37 Once migrants started to work together with their embassies and with NGOs to support domestic workers affected by the conflict, they better understood the importance of coordination and community solidarity. Migrant workers reportedly went from feeling helpless and disconnected prior to and during the crisis, to being a largely connected and stronger force on the ground.38 After the crisis, migrant domestic workers maintained strong networks and established the Domestic Workers’ Union. In this particular case, the lack of international or government support for migrants was seen as the trigger for building more active grassroots support networks within migrant communities themselves, as they worked to create activist groups and build their own resilience and coping mechanisms.39

36 Zampagni et al., 2017.
37 Mansour-Ille and Hendow, 2018.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
Learning from migrant and local capacities

There is much to learn from migrants at all stages of crisis management, from preparedness planning to post-crisis reflection. Afghan, Somali and Iraqi refugees were able to contribute and be an integral part of community rebuilding after the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes in New Zealand.\(^{40}\) Likewise for Filipino migrants in the wake of the 2011 Tohoku disaster, affected migrant women spoke about the empowerment and the increased social capital they gained in the aftermath of the disasters, as they participated in reconstruction efforts.\(^{41}\)

During the 2011 floods in Brisbane, Australia, migrant representatives acted as intermediaries between local authorities and their communities. They supported response efforts through translation and appropriate information dissemination, supporting relief agencies in identifying affected persons in need of support, and advocating with local authorities on behalf of their fellow nationals to ensure that official assistance received was adequate and culturally appropriate.\(^{42}\) Furthermore, following the 2015 Hurricane Stan, efforts by the Government of Mexico to have a line of direct communication with local stakeholders and representatives from migrant and host communities marked a clear shift in approach, leading to the Reducing the Vulnerability of Migrants in Emergencies project. The IOM-led project mainstreams migration in national disaster response policies and plans, while also creating a space for participation of migrants in policymaking.\(^{43}\)

These examples highlight the opportunities that exist to re-centre conversations at the local level and on migrant capabilities, and ways to actively include civil society in conversations related to crisis response. It remains the case, however, that more can be done to ensure that recommendations of the MICIC Guidelines\(^{44}\) are implemented beyond the national level at the subnational and local levels.\(^{45}\)

Using data to address challenges

Data on population mobility (such as those available in the UN DESA and World Tourism Organization (WTO) databases\(^{46}\)) highlight the fact that global mobility trends are wide ranging: when combined with data on hazard exposure or risk, these can support planning, preparedness and effective response measures. As can be seen in table 1, crisis affects countries regardless of development levels, with both developed and developing countries exposed to significant risks of crises that can affect migrants. Correlating data on migrant stocks, hazard exposure and risk levels allow for the identification of countries where crisis may particularly affect migrant populations.

Table 1 correlates data on migrant stocks, hazard exposure and risk levels to show that crises may affect countries regardless of development levels, and that in both developed and developing countries, potential crises may affect large numbers of migrants. All countries can therefore benefit from more immediate and robust inclusion of migrants in emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction planning: the existing data can inform these decisions at the national or regional levels.

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40 MICIC, 2017.
41 Ibid.
43 MICIC, 2017.
44 MICIC, 2016.
45 MICIC, 2017.
46 Available at, respectively, UN DESA: [www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/database/index.asp](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/database/index.asp); and UNWTO: [www2.unwto.org/content/data](http://www2.unwto.org/content/data) (both accessed 16 July 2019).
Table 1. International data on migrants and crises

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<th>Exposure to natural hazards, 2018</th>
<th>Exposure to human hazards, 2018</th>
<th>Risk class, 2018</th>
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<td>115</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>504,053</td>
</tr>
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<td>116</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>353,135</td>
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<td>5.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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<td>Very High</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>High</td>
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<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>1,253,083</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>187</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>865,552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** UNDP, 2018; UN DESA, 2019; IASC, 2018.

**Notes:** This is a non-comprehensive list of countries included both in the Human Development Index (HDI) and Inform Risk Index. Inform’s “hazard exposure” indices express on a scale from 0 to 10 the likelihood that a given country is affected by either a natural hazard (such as an earthquake, flood, tsunami, cyclone or drought) or a human hazard (such as conflict or violence). The risk classification is based on consideration of each country’s hazard exposure, vulnerability (resulting from such factors as inequality, aid dependency and composition of the country’s population) and capacities (resulting from governance levels, quality of local infrastructure and access to health, among others). The following thresholds are defined to assign each country’s risk index (from 0 to 10) to a given risk class: 0–1.9 = very low; 2.0–3.4 = low; 3.5–4.9 = medium; 5.0–6.4 = high; 6.5–10 = very high.
Figures 2 and 3 provide examples of how information on key hazards can be superimposed onto data relating to migrant stocks and flows in Mexico and Libya, respectively. These kinds of mapping exercises allow the identification of high-risk areas within countries, which are also characterized by a significant presence of migrants (including those in transit). Since migrants’ presence is not always captured comprehensively and in a timely fashion by census and population statistics, this kind of local-level disaggregated migration data, where they exist, can be integrated into assessments for a more accurate picture of hazard exposure and risk.

Effective crisis management should build on precise, local-level information. Disaggregating migration and risk data at the subnational level is essential for informing emergency management in ways that better include migrants. Focusing on the more localized administrative level (such as within a district or municipality) can help improve the effectiveness of crisis management measures. This level of data correlation and analysis enables relevant institutions to: (a) tailor warnings and emergency communications to the specific and appropriate requirements of migrant populations; (b) stockpile or deliver food and non-food items that may be essential to specific migrant groups; and (c) deploy multilingual or culturally competent personnel in crisis.
areas with high migrant presence. When informed by specific and localized data, responses can effectively address the specific needs of at-risk and affected migrant communities.

**Figure 3. Migrant presence and transit through Libya, and occurrence of violence**

This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Sources: IOM, 2019 and ACLED, 2019.

There are, however, challenges to collecting robust, reliable and comparable data, and official migration statistics are likely to be conservative estimates that do not fully capture the extent of movements. Foreign embassies, missions and consulates rarely have comprehensive information about their nationals abroad. Data on asset, livelihood and other material and opportunity losses incurred in crises are often not categorized or disaggregated. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to quantify (a) the true loss suffered by migrants, (b) their vulnerability in comparison with other affected groups, and (c) any extraordinary losses unique to migrants.

In the absence of comprehensive and up-to-date datasets, it is important to utilize a variety of information sources and data collection mechanisms. Academic institutions, international organizations, civil society and private sector actors provide some of the most detailed and useful stand-alone data sets, but taken together, these may still be patchy or disconnected. Significant resources may be required to systematically gather, update and safely store relevant, appropriate and timely data.

It should also be noted that loss data do not always capture longer-term well-being impacts, particularly as they relate to a less effective, slower recovery – which may be particularly relevant for migrants, who are often excluded from longer-term financial, housing and livelihood assistance after crises. In addition, whenever migrants are affected in a crisis, loss estimates should also account for impacts suffered in distant locations. The impacts migrants suffer may be felt by: (a) their families and communities in countries of origin, in the form of psychological impacts, missing remittance transfers and inability to pay off debts; and (b) people in places migrants return to or move to as a consequence of a crisis, in the form of increased pressures on labour markets and availability of services, land and housing.48

Information on migrants’ language proficiency, preferred communication channels, cultural sensitivities relevant to the provision of emergency services, levels of trust towards responders, and existing capacities at the community level would allow for stronger and more inclusive crisis planning and response. The limited degree to which these kinds of data currently exist and inform crisis management is one of the elements compounding migrants’ vulnerability in times of crisis.

Innovative responses and ways forward

One of the key components of innovation is finding ways to enable people to work together. Innovations can lead to partnerships that support the implementation of guidelines and principles outlined in international protection frameworks and non-binding agreements. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and
Development (OECD) Oslo Manual 2018: Guidelines for Collecting, Reporting and Using Data on Innovation provides a framework for identifying the range of innovations that can be adapted to support migrants in crisis contexts (table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. The OECD guidelines on innovation adapted for responses to migrants caught in crisis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Product</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outreach and visibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section focuses on innovative responses that aim to better connect migrants with information, services and social networks, as these have been shown to deliver better outcomes and can be delivered without requiring government support or elaborate systems of financial assistance. There are two interventions that provide a foundation for improved communication and mobilization: (a) improvements in knowledge and data on migrants living in the contexts of crisis, and (b) the use of technology in responding to crisis.

The establishment of regular data standards in tandem with expansion of data collection is necessary to ensure effective and long-term analysis of the impacts of policies and practices intended to address the needs of migrants in crisis contexts. Information is needed about the number of migrants present in a specific area – especially at the subnational level – in order to enhance preparedness and response. More rigorous analysis is also needed on the impacts of crises in migrant communities. Although some reports exist on these impacts, they remain the exception rather than the rule, and stand as good practices to be scaled and replicated. For example, in north-eastern Nigeria, questions on language and communication needs were included in IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix surveys as a way to fill the information gap that existed concerning the languages spoken and understood by those displaced by conflict.

Technology has the potential to assist migrants affected by crises. At a 2018 Techfugees Global Summit in Paris, 25 start-ups from across the world presented social enterprise initiatives for addressing the needs of migrants. The use of these technologies needs to be mainstreamed into global, regional, national and local crisis response policy and practice, with attention paid to sensitization programmes, culturally friendly trainings and workshops, to ensure uptake. Trust-building during the preparedness phase, through community-led efforts, can ensure that migrants have the impulse, during emergencies, to rely on technologies that they are familiar with.

Innovative initiatives that may be scaled to assist migrants in crisis and address current limitations include, but are not limited to, the following:

**Translation and digital information services:** Translators Without Borders has developed freely downloadable multilingual glossary apps accessible online and offline, and has worked with Refucomm to test the distribution of mother tongue information on legal and asylum procedures via micro-SD cards to recently arrived migrants in Greece. Other apps, such as IOM’s MigApp, help migrants make informed decisions throughout their migration process (for example, on health and travel requirements, visa application processes and remittances), and provide migrants a platform to share their experiences. Accessible digital translation and information initiatives can bridge the information gap migrants experience due to language barriers and lack of tailored communications.

**Enhancing accessible communication media:** Sri Lanka’s SIM card scheme for workers going abroad is one model for ensuring access to communication options for migrants. The existence of hotlines in countries of destination to recover and communicate information that can support migrants is another example. The Sendai International Relations Association set up one such multilingual information hotline in 2011.

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50 See, for example, the literature examining unmet needs of immigrant communities in the Metro New York area after Hurricane Sandy (Make the Road New York, 2012; New York Women’s Foundation, 2015).

51 Translators Without Borders, 2017b.

52 Ogie et al., 2018.


54 IOM, n.d.

55 UNISDR, 2015.
Crowdsourcing platforms to address discrimination against migrants: The African Centre for Migration and Society at Wits University in Johannesburg and the technology website iAfrikan launched a crowdsourcing platform called Xenowatch to monitor efforts related to violence against migrants. People can report xenophobic threats or violence to Xenowatch online, by SMS or email. Reports are verified, anonymized and documented on a map using the Ushahidi platform, and shared with the police and UNHCR. Crowdsourcing platform initiatives are a real-time resource for organizations to advocate for and enhance migrant rights, security, inclusion and community engagement.

Looking ahead and policy implications

Migrants may face particular challenges in accessing documentation, information, resources and assistance in crisis situations, and may be exposed to additional precariousness and to discrimination. Responses have not systematically addressed this range of challenges before and during crises, and further information and data at the local levels are needed in order to support effective planning and preparedness. However, information without funding, political will and the participation of migrants would not suffice to support preparedness. In most of the examples reviewed, cooperation sprang up spontaneously or as a result of a top-down decision by governments or international organizations. The role and inclusion of grassroots organizations, employers, technology partners and the diaspora in situations of emergencies and post-crisis recovery merit greater attention than they have received to date. At the governance level, the implementation of the MICIC Initiative can inform and accompany the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The inclusion of human rights frameworks, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, can strengthen initiatives and facilitate discussions between State and non-State actors.

Our analysis in this chapter has a number of implications for future policy and practice in this area. These support the 15 guidelines of the MICIC Initiative, emphasizing that:

• Before, during and after crises, stronger preparedness and post-crisis actions are needed. Most large-scale interventions in assistance to migrants in crisis have taken place in an unplanned manner. Instead, more systematic efforts are required to build on and develop capacities of emergency management actors, foreign embassies, consulates and missions, as well as local institutions and migrants themselves. Involving non-traditional stakeholders and migrants in the response and coordination mechanisms is key to enhancing flexible, effective funding and response.

• Funding schemes need to be diversified and strengthened to support greater preparedness and coordination. Flexible and diverse funding can provide new avenues for support systems that can integrate migrants in a non-discriminatory manner. This includes the exploration of linkages with the private sector and diaspora networks, engaging with and sensitizing donors, while also scaling up initiatives for flexible donor and government financing of emergency funds for crises response.

56 Alfred, 2016.
57 Hendow et al., 2018; MICIC, 2015.
58 ICMPD, 2017.
59 OHCHR, 2018.
• Post-crisis reflections can be enhanced, with responses beyond return to be explored, including local integration and resettlement. Returns are not the only solution and should not necessarily be the preferred one, given that there is often a lack of support after return. Where migrants are returned, long-term efforts to measure reintegration and monitor protection outcomes are critical to ensuring that migrants do not return to situations of greater harm or find themselves back in crisis situations.

• Addressing gaps and shortages of data will enable more effective coordination, preparedness, communication and provision of assistance. While anecdotal evidence may be available, larger data gaps prevent effective coordinated responses, whether between governments of origin and destination, or other stakeholders. The lack of impact evaluation data impedes the ability to identify fully what makes a response effective, while the lack of local level, disaggregated data does not allow for an understanding of the loss experienced by migrants. Enhancing transnational learning can lead to the scaling up of successful practices.

• Developing a road map for innovations in response to migrants caught in situations of crisis, which takes into account the above recommendations, can support the elaboration of specific responses, stronger processes, organizational effectiveness and outreach that are more inclusive, both of migrants’ vulnerabilities and their capacities.

• Finally, and fundamentally, human rights considerations and the humanitarian imperative to save lives should inform the development of emergency preparedness frameworks, and operational protocols and practices, during disasters. Supporting humanitarian and human rights-based responses requires cooperation of State- and non-State actors, who may hold differing priorities and agendas. It is important to ensure that responses in crises situations are primarily and substantively human rights-based, rather than based on political considerations or populist expediency. In order to uphold international human rights obligations, it is crucial that respect for the human rights of all migrants, irrespective of status, should be on par with the maintenance of the rights of citizens. Greater flexibility on visa policies and removal of administrative and security restrictions are known to improve migrant protection and community resilience. These should be recognized as exceptional measures needed in times of crisis. Support for coordination, negotiation and diplomacy with relevant countries affected by crisis is necessary in order to ensure that rules are made flexible to empower migrants to have a broader range of options and make informed decisions.

60 Ibid.
Appendix A. Different crisis situations, different impacts on migrants

**Fire**
Between May and June 2016, fires swept the area around Fort McMurray, triggering the evacuation of around 90,000 people. No victims were reported in the disaster, but residents faced profound, long-lasting social and economic impacts. Migrants working in the area faced specific insecurity: many had no friends or family to support with accommodation, and those on temporary work permits risked losing their regular status as their employers’ businesses shut down. In addition, many migrant workers sending remittances back home had little savings and no access to unemployment benefits, and were left with limited options to cope.

**Terrorist attacks**
On 22 March 2016, three suicide bombings occurred in Brussels. The attacks hit a metro station and the airport of a city with a population comprising over 60 per cent of foreign-born residents and hosting tens of thousands foreign travellers and workers every day. 32 people were killed and some 350 injured in the bombings. Of the 32 victims, 19 were foreigners, including citizens of the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, India, China, Liberia, Morocco and Peru.

**Criminal violence**
For over a decade, Mexico has been plagued by a low-intensity war among criminal organizations, and between these organizations and Mexican security forces. The conflict has caused at least 200,000 victims since 2006, with many more people witnessing violence and violations of human rights. Criminal groups have also become increasingly involved in the migration business, as migrants transiting through Mexico cross areas under their control: they regulate schedules and trajectories of the flows and extort migrants and smugglers. Data show that no less than 10 per cent of migrants are robbed or extorted money while in transit through the country, and many may also be kidnapped, abused or killed.

**Public health emergency**
In early 2014, the Ebola virus spread from Guinean rural areas to cities, then to Liberia and Sierra Leone. During the following two years, the virus killed over 11,000 people, including in Mali, Nigeria and the United States. In a region characterized by intense population mobility across porous borders, migration represented a challenge to rapid containment of the outbreak, resulting in the enforcement of sanitary controls at entry points, and in some cases in flights being suspended or border closed. Following the outbreak, African migrants experienced scapegoating and xenophobia all over the world.

**Main sources**
Starting in early 2015, Yemen has been torn by a power struggle among factions, which has since developed in a full-blown civil war, and was compounded in 2016 by a famine and in 2017 by a cholera outbreak. Traditionally a country of transit and destination for migrant workers and refugees from the Horn and the middle East, despite the ongoing crisis Yemen has still witnessed some 100,000 arrivals in 2017 alone. In addition to being trapped in the country and being affected by the ongoing crisis, migrants face abuse, torture, kidnapping for ransom, arbitrary detention, forced labour and death at the hand of traffickers and armed groups.

On 11 March 2011, a 9.0 magnitude earthquake struck Japan, triggering a tsunami that caused a failure at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant. Affected areas hosted an estimated 700,000 foreign residents and visitors. 23 of them were killed and 173 injured. Non-Japanese speaking people had little access to official, updated information on the disaster, which led to confusion and widespread fears. Following recommendations disseminated through informal sources and even embassies and home country media, some 470,000 foreigners left Japan in the aftermath of the disaster, including from areas deemed not at risk. This, in turn, caused intracommunal tensions with Japanese citizens.

The 2008 financial crisis affected workers all over the world. In Thailand, more than 50,000 workers were laid off as businesses slowed down activities. 9 Million people became eligible for an assistance handout. The estimated 500,000 migrants working in the country at that time were not entitled to receiving it, in addition to being often underpaid, having no savings or having contracted debt, and not being able to rely on family members and local networks to cope with economic hardship. The crisis also led to tensions with Thai nationals over shrinking income opportunities, work permits not being renewed, no new permits being issued and undocumented migrant workers being deported.

Starting in 11 May 2008, episodes of xenophobic violence sparked in South Africa, first in the Gauteng province, then in Durban, Cape Town and other areas of the country. Migrants and minority citizens were targeted in mob attacks, their businesses damaged, and 62 people (of which 41 foreigners) killed. Tens of thousands foreign residents found refuge in community centres and police stations. Many left the country or contacted their foreign posts and IOM for repatriation assistance. By 27 May, it was estimated that some 27,500 Mozambicans had returned home, while tens of thousands of Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and Congolese faced eviction or deportation in the months following the events.

Between 2010 and 2011, Christchurch was hit by a series of earthquakes that killed 185 and heavily damaged the city. In the aftermath of the disaster, service providers progressively built their capacity to assist and communicate with local migrant and refugee residents, which still faced significant obstacles in accessing translated information and culturally appropriate basic services. While many migrants showed exceptional resilience in the face of the events, newly settled communities, and the more marginalized individuals within the different migrant groups were among the least able to cope with and recover from the disaster.
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