

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator(s) for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

**Evaluation type:** Central evaluation  
**Evaluator(s):** MDF Training and Consultancy  
**Evaluation period:** 2018 - 2022  
**Final report date:** June 2023  
**Commissioned by:** IOM Central Evaluation Unit, DOE  
**Managed by:** IOM Central Evaluation Unit

**Evaluation objective:** To assess the extent to which IOM is capable to timely and effectively implement the global L3 emergency response through a predictable process, so it is fit-for-purpose – i.e., with appropriate leadership and coordination mechanism to deliver assistance and facilitate protection as the scale, complexity and urgency of a crisis develops.

**Evaluation criteria:** Relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, impact, and sustainability and connectedness.

**Evaluation methodology:** Document review, key informant interviews, surveys and case studies.

### Project information:

Geographical coverage: Global

## BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), as one of the largest humanitarian actors, provides comprehensive responses to at-risk populations and communities at all phases of a crisis (before, during, after). On average, IOM's crisis-related programming has an operational reach of over 30 million people in more than 80 countries per year. As a full member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), IOM commits to coordinated humanitarian action via the IASC, subscribes to IASC policies and frameworks, and ensures its policies and frameworks are aligned with those of the IASC.

The Organization's strategic planning, preparedness, response, transition and recovery policies, frameworks and tools support the advocating for emergency humanitarian situations with national authorities and partners, and the provision of technical assistance to strengthen national systems so adequate protection and assistance can be provided to migrants, mobile populations, displaced persons as well as at-risk national populations during a crisis. The IASC replaced the previous system of classifying an emergency into three levels with the new "Scale-Up" protocols.

The Level 3 (L3) activation was a mechanism designed to improve humanitarian emergency response following the highly uneven responses to two major natural disasters: earthquake in Haiti in 2010 and massive floods in Pakistan in 2011. It was meant as an exceptional measure designed for exceptional circumstances to ensure that the collective humanitarian system was equipped to respond as best as possible to the needs of affected populations.

IOM generally activates an L3 in conjunction with a Scale-Up declaration by the IASC but may, or may not, do so independently as well. The initial response activation period should not exceed three months as during this period, the IASC member organizations should put in place the required capacities – i.e., longer-term funding, staffing and expertise, and leadership arrangements – to allow transition from a L3 response to a locally-managed response. However, practice to date showed that L3 responses in complex and protracted crisis settings – Syria, South Sudan, Afghanistan – were extended well beyond the initial three-month period due to the prolonged and severe nature of these crises.

The Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE) coordinates IOM's participation in humanitarian responses, movement operations and resettlement. It serves as the organizational focal point for IOM's crisis related work in the areas of preparedness and emergency response. It coordinates with and advises other migration services within the Organization, such as on risk reduction and prevention, protection, post crisis transition and recovery, health, climate change, humanitarian border management and counter-human trafficking when relevant to crisis contexts. It oversees individual specialized initiatives related to humanitarian principles, Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN), cash-based interventions (CBI), protection mainstreaming, and protection from sexual abuse and exploitation. The Preparedness and Response Division (PRD) serves as the institutional focal point in preparing for and providing timely response to sudden onset disasters and protracted crises. Within PRD, the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) is the institutional focal point for emergency mitigation, monitoring and response coordination. ERU provides technical support to Regional and Country Offices in delivering responses to crisis through the management of surge staff, the provision of guidance and remote/field support.

## KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

**Relevance:** IOM is amongst the five largest humanitarian funding recipients in 2022 and donors and implementing partners' feedback reported IOM programmatic activities to have a broad geographical and sectoral coverage, in line with beneficiary needs and priorities, and to be well localized (in terms of resources and contextual knowledge). IOM has been consistently involved in the IASC meetings during 'Scale-ups', is an active participant in UN Country Teams (CTs) and adheres to IASC System-wide declaration protocols. However, IOM sometimes declares L3s later than other UN organizations (in line with prerogatives left to each organization to declare it). The expected duration of an L3 response was also reviewed, with IASC's current standard set at six months, while IOM's protocols suggest a maximum of three months (almost always extended).

**Effectiveness:** Organization's multi-sectoral L3 responses have been well appreciated by partners, including shelter, non-food items (NFI), health, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), camp coordination and camp management (CCCM), and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), with displacement tracking matrix (DTM) and CCCM being particularly well-received. IOM is also active in health and mental health working groups. IOM's capacity to be quick and flexible during L3 responses is an enabling factor, with programmatic surge teams deployable on time, through its Migration Emergency Coordinator (MEC) and its crisis response team. Donor reports confirm IOM's effectiveness in responding to beneficiary needs. However, it was noted that protocols delay sometimes the L3 interventions and there are issues with the implementation of expedited human resources (HR) procedures. The timeline for L3 activation is not always respected, and there is confusion around deactivation processes.

**Coherence:** IOM guarantees both internal and external coherence in the implementation of L3 approach and programmes. External coherence is facilitated by the UN cluster system active within L3 responses, and IOM often plays a leading role in clusters and advisory/working groups at both a central and regional level. IOM also has a key coordination role with governments in terms of migration and cross-border support and programming.

**Efficiency:** The feedback from IOM offices suggests that there are cases of delays due to slow HR, financial, procurement and legal procedures, and some reluctance to use emergency procedures. Moreover, there is confusion regarding reporting lines and communication channels during the transition period that precedes the official communication of the L3 activation. There are also inefficiencies in how the surge teams are deployed, with a lack of communication reported for Mozambique, and Ukraine for instance. This has led to delays in signing contracts, hiring, and deploying staff (especially support staff), procuring vital operational

supplies, and making financial transfers when cash is needed. Funding procedures are compounded by IOM's projectized funding mechanisms, and the UN's one-year Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funding cycle system does little to encourage the multi-year funding requirements for HDPN programmes.

**Impact:** There is a lack of evidence on how IOM measures the impact of its interventions on targeted populations. L3 responses have resulted in expanded programmatic coverage in countries such as Ukraine, generating substantial additional funding from donors. IOM's responsiveness during L3s is appreciated by the UN system, although there is feedback that IOM could better focus on a few sectoral areas where it has consolidated expertise. The extent to which IOM's intervention complements those of other UN agencies is an area of concern due to inherent competition for funding, with implemented activities often overlapping.

**Sustainability and Connectedness:** In the long term, most deactivated post-L3 countries have a greater country programme portfolio than before the crisis. External factors aside, internal preparations for recovery, transition and rebuilding activities need to be established early in the L3 process, particularly in terms of in-country and regional capacity building and expertise required. The sustainability of L3 results requires a better transition strategy and an increased leadership in the CTs and the coordination system. There is generally a weak awareness and understanding of HDPN programming in L3 across IOM.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**L3 declaration and deactivation protocols:** The issue of activating and deactivating later than other UN members should be addressed and detailed L3 deactivation process developed, with clear roles and responsibilities.

**Contingency planning/preparedness:** Contingency planning and prepositioning of emergency stocks should be scaled up, non-earmarked funding and surge capacity increased.

**L3 roles and responsibilities protocols:** Protocols should be updated to contain clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of senior management and on competencies.

**L3 Emergency "fast track" procedures:** Protocols for HR, finance, legal, procurement, and security functions should be updated and disseminated throughout the Organization.

**Accountability/Knowledge Management:** There is a need to reinforce them including through L3 evaluations to record successful programmes available for replication.

**HDPN:** Clarification on when recovery/developmental activities start within an L3 response to be provided, and on how to work with governments on long-term interventions.