EVALUATION BRIEF

A THEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE IOM'S MIGRATION CRISIS OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK (MCOF)

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

Evaluation type: Internal independent thematic evaluation

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Evaluation purpose: a) assess IOM's overall performance in applying the MCOF in crises with mobility dimensions; b) explore the development of IOM's technical expertise for managing the Framework; c) analyze the MCOF's relevance to IOM's mandate, operational responses, and to new developments in the humanitarian and developments fields; and d) examine the internal synergies and institutional steps taken for an effective and sustained use of the MCOF as a key decision-making and management tool for IOM's comprehensive responses to crises.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcome and impact.

Evaluation methodology: Documentation review, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and electronic surveys.

BACKGROUND

Contemporary crises caused by natural or man-made disasters are characterized by complex and often large-scale migration flows both within and across the borders of affected countries. The patterns of mobility during a crisis, which often shift alongside changing contextual factors and dynamics on the ground, involve significant vulnerabilities for individuals and affected communities. It is against this background and the awareness that crisis-related migration flows are growing in scale and complexity that the IOM developed the MCOF, which was endorsed by Member States in November 2012 through Resolution No. 1243.

The Operational Framework is based on the understanding that States bear the primary responsibility to protect and assist crisis-affected persons residing on their territory in a manner consistent with international humanitarian and human rights law. Upon their request and with their consent, IOM supports Member States to fulfil these responsibilities.

The MCOF comprises of two pillars. Pillar one consists of the three phases of a crisis (before, during and after) that direct the type of response required. Pillar two maps out the 15 sectors of assistance linked to each phase of a migration crisis, each of which represents a distinct set of IOM activities with a specific function in an operational response, depending on the type and phase of the crisis. Together the two pillars support a flexible, comprehensive and context-specific response

to crises with mobility dimensions with the aim to:

1) Improve and systematize IOM's response to migration crises by bringing together its different sectors of assistance within a pragmatic and evolving approach, while upholding human rights and humanitarian principles and promoting longer-term development goals;

2) Help crisis-affected populations, including displaced persons and international migrants stranded in crisis situations in their destination/transit countries, to better access their fundamental rights to protection and assistance through IOM support to States;

3) Respond to the often-unaddressed migration dimensions of a crisis, by complementing existing humanitarian systems, as well as other systems addressing peace and security, and development issues; and

4) Build on IOM's partnerships with States, international organizations and other relevant actors in the fields of humanitarian response, migration, peace and security, and development."

As per Resolution No. 1243, IOM is to report to the Council on a regular basis on the application of the MCOF. However, apart from two short assessments on the application of the MCOF (2013 and 2015) and brief discussions in the yearly reports to the IOM Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance, a comprehensive evaluation of the MCOF has not been carried out. In addition, since the adoption of the MCOF, a series of developments have taken place on the international scene in the humanitarian, peace and security, and development fields. It is against this background and

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the importance of the MCOF for responding to crises, that the present thematic evaluation was conducted.

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the MCOF remains an institutionally and strategically relevant document for the Organization. While the Framework has been found to be an effective tool in the few cases where it has been applied, greater efforts are still required to increase its operational use, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes and impact.

RELEVANCE: The MCOF was developed based on IOM's operational experiences, in particular the Libyan crisis response in 2011, and in compliance with IOM's mandate, the 12-point strategy, and other internal policies, frameworks, strategies, guidelines and standard operating procedures. However, further efforts are required, as demonstrated by the limited number of existing MCOF strategic plans, especially at the Country Office (CO) level, to ensure that the MCOF remains relevant. Nevertheless, the MCOF is perceived as having supported a comprehensive approach to crises, helped address cross-cutting issues and accounted for context-specific factors such as key political events and processes, and the social and economic consequences of crises.

EFFECTIVENESS: Overall, the MCOF and those developed at the Regional Office (RO) and CO levels have helped IOM achieve the four objectives of the Operational Framework at these respective levels, with Objective 4 faring best at all levels (CO, RO and Headquarters). In contrast, the ten Member States that participated in the evaluation found the MCOF as having helped IOM first and foremost with Objective 1. Utility-wise, IOM staff at all levels reportedly use the MCOF for several purposes with the primary one being to justify and clarify IOM's activities. However, several barriers were identified by IOM staff, especially internal ones when it comes to using the MCOF in responding in a comprehensive way to mobility dimensions of a crisis (e.g. a lack of understanding about the value of the MCOF in crises situations). On facilitating external collaboration, the MCOF is reportedly most effective with governments, followed by donors, and less so with United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations and civil society actors.

EFFICIENCY: Few IOM staff at the country and regional levels have reportedly analyzed the financial and administrative requirements for effectively applying the MCOF in implementing preparedness, response, and transition and recovery activities. This is in part explained by the fact that the implementation of the MCOF at these levels does not always imply additional allocation of resources. However, as the MCOF is a tool for fostering improved internal coordi-

nation and programmatic coherence at all levels, a strengthening of the internal coordination mechanisms and the allocation of resources on a consistent and ongoing basis are required for undertaking comprehensive assessments and developing response strategies at different stages of a crisis with mobility dimensions, including in anticipation of or in the wake of a crisis situation.

OUTCOME AND IMPACT: At the institutional and strategic level, MCOF has reportedly helped reinforce IOM's position as the leading agency on displacement and migration crises. At the operational level, the MCOF is viewed as being a useful reference tool in preparedness, response, transition and recovery, and migration management initiatives by increasing IOM's credibility. Other reported outcomes and impacts of the MCOF at the global, include increased stakeholder awareness about and the knowledge and capacity to prepare, respond to, and transition and recover from a crisis situation.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, this evaluation recommends a reflection around two options that emerged from the global MCOF analysis and the two cases studies (Libya and South Sudan):

- **Option one** is, in consultation with ROs and the Department of Operations and Emergencies, require COs, within a specific timeframe, to develop or adapt existing strategic plans for crisis response informed by the application of the MCOF;

- **Option two** is to maintain the MCOF mainly as an institutional tool/reference guide for comprehensive, coherent and synergetic operational responses and strategic planning, and for other purposes, including donor relations.

For either option, the MCOF will need to be reviewed and revised against all the developments that have taken place since 2012, internally and externally, in the humanitarian, transition and development fields. Once updated, the MCOF should be shared and discussed with Member States, as appropriate.

Given the evolvements internationally in the humanitarian and developments fields, such as IOM joining the UN system in 2016 and the current changes underway in how the UN development system works, as well as IOM's commitments since the adoption of the MCOF, this internal reflection and update of the Operational Framework is needed. This is especially the case if the Organization is to continue being at the forefront of operational, research, policy and advocacy efforts when it comes to addressing the mobility dimensions of crises.