



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

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

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

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SUMMARY REPORT ON THE THEMATIC EVALUATION OF THE IOM'S MIGRATION CRISIS OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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. For example, Libya – a country of destination and transit for regular and irregular migrants from the Saharan and Sahel regions – experienced high levels of forced migration during the 2011 revolution. The crisis was compounded by armed confrontations (2014-2016) and resurgent bouts of instability and violence since 2017, which have led to continued internal displacement and other complex migratory flows (e.g. labour migrants, migrants seeking onward travel to Europe, migrants who are long-term residents of the country, and returning internally displaced persons (IDPs)). However, existing international, regional and national level frameworks do not recognize all patterns of mobility during crises such as that in Libya.

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. Specifically, the MCOF was developed with the intention to improve and systematize the way in which IOM supports its Member States and partners in responding to the assistance and protection needs of crisis-affected populations.

As outlined in the IOM Council 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 Operational Framework (2013 and 2015) and brief discussions in the yearly reports to the IOM Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (SCPF), 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, including IOM joining the UN system in September 2016. It is against this background, as well as the importance of the MCOF for responding to crises and for managing IOM's responses in such contexts, that the present thematic evaluation was conducted.

Findings of the Evaluation

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 (SOPs). Most IOM staff at Headquarters (HQ) that participated in the evaluation exercise reported IOM policies, frameworks, strategies, SOPs, programmes and fundraising efforts as promoting the MCOF as a reference tool for crisis management and post-crisis transition and recovery. Figure 1 provides an overview of the institutional and strategic relevance of the MCOF. Operationally, 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. Most participating IOM staff at HQ, Regional Offices (ROs) and COs reported being familiar with the MCOF, however, to different degrees, highlighting the need for more training and awareness-raising activities. 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.

Overall, the MCOF and those developed at the RO and CO levels have helped IOM achieve the four objectives of the Operational Framework at these respective levels, with the fourth objective faring best (i.e. MCOF has helped IOM build on its partnerships with States, international organizations, and other relevant actors in the fields of humanitarian response, migration, peace and security, and development) at all levels (CO, RO and HQ). In contrast, the ten Member States that participated in this evaluation found the MCOF as having helped IOM first and foremost improve and systematize its response to migration crises by bringing together its different sectors of assistance within a pragmatic and evolving approach (Objective 1). Utility-wise, IOM staff at HQ, ROs and COs reportedly use the MCOF: a) to justify and clarify IOM's activities; b) build new and sustain existing partnerships; c) as an internal reference, guidance, and background information; d) for programming; e) to inform national policies, strategies, plans and institutions; and f) for planning purposes. 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). Externally, one of the barriers to using the MCOF is the existence of other strategies and systems such as the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) coordination system and the cluster approach. However, the MCOF is reportedly most effective for facilitating collaboration with governments, followed by donors, and less so with United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society actors.

EFFICIENCY

Looking at how resources have been converted into outputs, data reveals that few IOM staff at the country and regional levels have in fact analysed 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 coordination 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, almost half of the participating Chiefs of Mission (CoMs), Regional Directors (RDs), Senior Management and departmental staff at HQ mentioned that MCOF has helped reinforce IOM's position as the leading agency on displacement and migration crises. When looking at whether and how the perception of governments/Member States, donors and UN agencies has changed regarding the usefulness of the MCOF as a reference framework for preparedness, response, and transition and recovery efforts in crisis situations since its approval in 2012, the lack of assessments of the MCOF rendered this question difficult for IOM staff to answer. At the operational level, most IOM staff at the COs and ROs that have reportedly applied the MCOF, along with the IOM staff at the HQ level, viewed the MCOF as being a useful reference tool in preparedness, response,

transition and recovery, and migration management initiatives in their respective contexts by increasing IOM's credibility. Other reported outcomes and impacts of the MCOF at the global, regional, and country levels include increased stakeholder: a) awareness about and the knowledge and capacity to prepare, respond to, and transition and recover from a crisis situation; and b) interest in obtaining IOM support for preparing, responding to, and transitioning and recovering from crisis situations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the findings reveal that 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. Moving forward, this evaluation recommends a reflection around two options that emerged from the evaluation (for more details, see next page).

For either option, the MCOF will need to be reviewed and revised. Once updated, the MCOF should be shared and discussed with Member States, as appropriate. Institutionally and strategically, IOM may need to better define its mandate in crises situations (i.e. articulate its comparative advantage), which may also help avoid running into conflicts with external partners when applying the MCOF. Likewise, if IOM has the intention to reinforce its position as a reference to addressing mobility dimensions in crisis contexts, the Migration Crisis Working Papers may be essential to achieve that. Revising the MCOF should be done against all the developments that have taken place since 2012, internally and externally, in the humanitarian, transition and development fields, for example, updating the 15 sectors of assistance based on the realities on the ground (e.g. the inclusion of WASH and humanitarian protection as sectors) and possibly including more development-oriented sectors (e.g. livelihood and employment generation). Moreover, MCOF should be mainstreamed in all future relevant IOM policies, strategies and frameworks. Similar to better defining IOM's mandate in crises situations and what it will take the lead on, the Organization needs to reflect upon the use of the concept of "migration crisis" and consider using another term in the title and body of the document. "Migration crisis" can lead to the understanding that migration leads to crises which is not what IOM intends to convey through this term, but rather the migration dimensions that emerge in crisis situations. Operationally, an internal reflection is also recommended for exploring the usefulness of and the purposes that the MCOF serves given the existence of other strategies and systems, such as the Cluster System and HRPs, that IOM currently applies and engages in. Moreover, given the variation in staff familiarity with the MCOF, more trainings and awareness-raising efforts should be considered, especially at the CO and RO levels.

Once revised and updated, IOM should share and discuss the MCOF with Member States, as appropriate. Following its adoption, the Operational Framework will need to be systematically rolled-out internally at all levels of the Organization and externally with governments and other key stakeholders to ensure buy-in and knowledge about it, as well as to promote its use either as a strategic plan or an institutional tool/reference guide. The option that will be selected in terms of the purpose of the MCOF will determine which of the recommendations presented in this report should be considered moving forward at the institutional, strategic and operational levels. The following is a broad discussion of the key the recommendations for each option, the details for which can be found in the body of the report.

Option One: In consultation with ROs and DOE, require COs, within a specific timeframe, to develop or adapt existing strategic plans for crisis response informed by the application of the MCOF.

If it is decided, in consultation with Member States that the MCOF, approved through the IOM Council Resolution No. 1243, should continue being used in the format of a strategic plan for crisis response, internal coordination mechanisms between different departments and/or units at the HQ, RO and CO levels need to be strengthened and sufficient human and financial resources allocated. The latter are required for conducting comprehensive assessments and developing or adapting existing response strategies at different stages of a crisis, including in anticipation of or in the wake of such an event. For MCOF strategic plans especially, integrating existing national strategies, plans and frameworks may help establish linkages between the governments, humanitarian and/or development community and what IOM is doing in a given context. In turn, promoting the strategic plans in IOM country strategies, project documents and discussions with external partners and donors may strengthen and increase partnerships and funding. As part of its institutionalization, IOM may consider making it mandatory that all project proposals, at a minimum in crisis contexts, have a paragraph on how the project fits under the MCOF and its contribution towards one or more of the strategic objectives. The IOM may consider developing some tip sheets or key messages that field staff can use towards these purposes. Continuous mentoring and guidance from HQ and the ROs is crucial for institutionalizing the MCOF. One-off trainings or simply sharing documents about the MCOF are not sufficient for staff to understand the MCOF and be able to apply it in their work. In this regard, the MCOF online training should be made mandatory for all new staff as part of their induction, as well as for (senior) staff already on board. This should be followed-up on with more tailored face-to-face training to maintain and build upon the knowledge and skills of IOM staff. Similarly, workshops and joint-capacity assessments need to be regularly organized with relevant governments and partners to strengthen their capacities in preparedness for, response to, and transition and recovery from crisis situations. Finally, existing MCOF management and related monitoring mechanisms require further improvement if these are to be effective for reporting on specific and the overall performance and impact of the Operational Framework, as well as to generate recommendations for future strategic moves, including resource mobilization.

Option Two: 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.

If it is decided, in consultation with Member States that the MCOF should be kept mainly as an institutional tool/reference guide for comprehensive, coherent and synergetic operational responses and strategic planning, and for other purposes, including donor relations, internal and external communication products will need to be updated and/or developed to convey the content of the MCOF in a practical, user-friendly way. The information products will then need to be continuously shared to keep IOM staff, Member States and external partners informed about and interested in the Operational Framework. Towards this end, the products should be translated, as appropriate, so that they can reach these target audiences in the various regions around the world where IOM is active.

Given the evolvments 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.

FIGURE 1. Overview of the Institutional and Strategic Relevance of the MCOF

