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IOM'S L3 Procedures and Practices Through the Lens of the Rohingya Response

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Acronyms

CMC	Conflict Management Consulting
CO	Country Office
CoM	Chief of Mission
CwC	Communicating with Communities
DOE	Department of Operations and Emergencies
EC	Emergency Coordinator
EPD	Emergency Post Crisis Unit
ERID	Emergency Response Induction Training
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GMI	Global Mentoring Initiative
HoSO	Head of Sub-office
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICP	International Cooperation and Partnerships (Dpt. of)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MCD	Media and Communications Department
MCOF	Migration Crisis Operational Framework
MEC	Migration Emergency Coordinator
MEFM	Migration Emergency Fund Mechanism
MEMTF	Migration Emergency Management Task Force
PRD	Preparedness and Response Division
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RO	Regional Office
RRT	Rapid Response Team
RTE	Real Time Evaluation
SDL	Staff Development and Learning
SSU	Safety and Security Unit
ToR	Terms of Reference
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: This report derives from a review of the implementation of IOM's internal L3 procedures in the Rohingya crisis response in Bangladesh (late August 2017-ongoing). It is part of a larger real-time evaluation of that response, which is documented in a separate report. This report's purpose, as per the ToR, is to help IOM consistently improve programming and operations. However, the Rohingya response review brings out various attention points that must be addressed at institutional, not at programme or operational level. The findings and recommendations therefore can feed into the internal review started, but now on hold until the outcomes of a general IASC review of L3 procedures are clear.

Appreciation: The report was developed in conjunction with a (focused) RTE of the Rohingya response. Both reports can usefully be read together. If only this L3 report is read, then care has to be taken ***not*** to equate the findings and reflections thereon with an overall appreciation or evaluative judgment of that Rohingya response.

Sources: The report draws on a variety of sources, which were consulted during a wider real-time evaluation of the response to that crisis. Its most significant omission is the absence of the perspectives and suggestions from IOM colleagues in the various resources and support functions (HR, finance, procurement and logistics, legal), from the CO and the Sub-office in Cox's Bazar, and from Bangladeshi national staff. It could draw on only one comparable review, the 2014 RTE of IOM's response in South Sudan.

Major findings

a. On the L3 activation in the Rohingya response

L3 mobilisation fully justified: Being one of the largest refugee crises in the world in 2017, and with a limited number of aid agencies on the ground when the crisis started in late August 2017, the L3 mobilisation was fully justified and critical to scale up IOM's response capacities. Given IOM's important role (in terms of sectors and scale of work/delivery) in the collective inter-agency response, that mobilisation had wider significance.

No whole-of-IOM mobilisation: At the moment, there is a strong perception among programme/DOE associated staff, that there is no 'whole-of-IOM' mobilisation in an L3 situation. Therefore, the internal 'coordination' has not been as smooth as desirable. The discrepancies between the level of surge in DOE/programmes and the resource and support functions, result in costly inefficiencies, avoidable stress and loss of credibility among agencies that rely on IOM delivering rapidly.

Transitioning out of L3: The L3 designation in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh is currently valid until the end of 2018. That is justified given the continued scale of the challenges for life-sustaining service deliveries, let alone stronger people-centred approaches, and the ongoing monsoon and cyclone-season 'emergency-within-an-emergency'. Yet as the RTE elaborates, medium-term thinking must start now, as critical major investment decisions will have to be made early in 2019, about the basic infrastructure (roads, water supplies and drainage systems, waste collection, community and social infrastructure location, electricity, telecoms network etc.), before the next monsoon and cyclone season. Critical here is the authorisation of the Government of Bangladesh to decongest at least the mega-site that currently houses some 600,000 refugees. In that context, a continuation of L3 designation cannot be allowed to equate with a continuation of (also needed) short-term and emergency response thinking. While specific to the Rohingya crisis, this observation has larger validity.

b. On the L3 procedures and practices

L3 procedures ambiguous: On critical issues, such as the allocation of roles, responsibilities and particularly authority, between HQ (and/or the Emergency Coordinator on the ground), the CO (and Sub-office) and the RO, the L3 procedures are problematically ambiguous. It is unclear whether de facto the emergency responders 'reinforce' or 'replace' the CO, and if this is decided on a case-by-case basis, what considerations must be taken into account and who is involved in that assessment? The same ambiguity holds for the 'deactivation' of L3 status. There is also an unresolved ambiguity between the authority of the MEC with regards to the Department of Resource Management, at least with those parts of the resource units that must support the L3 response.

Gaps in current procedures: Important dimensions of an L3 response are not addressed in the currently available procedures. Examples are: decisions on how IOM will position itself in a crisis response and what roles it should/will take on; protection and AAP; the value of a Programme Support Unit, when to initiate transition and recovery thinking. Though an L3 status can be 'deactivated', this is not followed by formal clarity of whether it then gets L2 status or not.

No evidence of documented and applied learning: The 2014 RTE in South Sudan made important recommendations for procedural development, which were not followed through. While individual staff undoubtedly carry with them their personal learning from past experiences, there is no clear evidence that this is institutionalised and shapes broader institutional practices. The potential learning from recent experiences L3 'de-activation' in South Sudan and Iraq have not (yet) been documented or its documentation is not known even to senior emergencies people.

Correspondence between procedures and practices: Contrary to the perception of some, a systematic comparison of the key procedures and practices reveals significant differences in the Rohingya response from the existing procedures. This is most notably regarding the deployment of a Rapid Response Team under a Rapid Response Team leader / Emergency Coordinator, and the streamlining of existing IOM procedures also by the various support functions. This is not necessarily a critique of the practice, only an observation that practice and procedures do not match.

Complementary contributions: The emergency response people and specialists may bring vitally needed extra capacity (extra people, other practices and competencies) to a crisis situation, that are in limited supply in the CO. But the observations that a CO is overwhelmed and/or does not have the necessary capacities (numbers, experience) needs to be matched with an appreciation of what COs and ROs continue to bring to an L3 response, as a basis for complementary rather than competitive attitudes.

The importance of the people dimension: Procedures, even if very detailed and closely followed, can never eliminate the human element in their application. That requires attention to people-skills (self-awareness, interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, cross-cultural aptitude, team building etc.), in the training, selection and management of staff in general, and for emergency settings in particular as stress levels tend to be higher. The 'savoir être' ('being') can be as important as the 'savoir faire' ('doing'), internally with IOM colleagues, externally with other agencies and officials, and in the interaction with affected populations.

c. On IOM's overall preparedness

IOM institutional emergency preparedness: IOM is now often involved in several L3s at the same time. This raises the wider question whether it is institutionally ready to support several such emergencies with adequate quantity and quality? This could not be examined in detail within the constraints of this exercise. The Rohingya response, was the 7th L3 response for IOM in 2017. IOM needs to have enough

mid-level and senior coordinators and managers, with strong grounding in 'humanitarianism', technical and thematic expertise, solid comparative experience, strong people-skills, and understanding of the 'eco-system' (and sometimes 'competitive arena') of relief actors, to handle several L3's simultaneously. To be a major player, now within the UN system, which exposes IOM to greater scrutiny, IOM may also need to access more flexible funding, have more senior people with strong political engagement skills that can argue the organisation's position where this is contested (as has been the case in the Rohingya response), and become an effective learning organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: Elaborate the procedures and criteria for decision-making

This includes:

- A reference to crisis anticipation and criteria for proactively enhancing emergency preparedness
- Explicit criteria that will make IOM declare an L3
- Explicit reference to the considerations that IOM will use to consider how it positions itself in a collective crisis response, and what roles it will take on
- Clarity about the maximum duration of an L3 status – also in relation to a protracted crisis;
- Greater clarity about the division of roles and responsibilities between HQ (and the Emergency Coordinator), the CO, RO and sub-office(s): if this is determined on a case by case basis, then there have to be agreed assessment criteria and a transparent decision-process
- Criteria to decide the physical location of the L3 coordinator, and possible implications for roles and responsibilities or ways of working
- Decide on the reference to a 'Rapid Response Team': It only makes sense if IOM can institutionally mobilise such as a coherent, prepared, team
- Explicit guidance on ethical surge practices to minimise undermining local and national capacities
- Integration of AAP and protection
- Reference to increased internal and external communications and reporting requirements, which may require a rapid deployment of a 'programme support unit'
- The practical meaning of 'deactivation', and criteria to decide the status of the situation afterwards
- An explicit reference to 'transition and recovery' and 'localisation', to ensure a crisis response retains a longer-term strategic perspective and the early inclusion of the TRD

R2: Ensure that the resource and support functions can effectively underpin an L3 operational response

This includes:

- Developing explicit and detailed accelerated procedures for resource support functions in an L3, visualising the adjustments in approval trajectories;
- Clarify the relationship between the MEC and the DRM in an L3 response.

R3: Strengthen strategic and managerial practices

This includes:

- Explicit consideration of what value a CO, sub-office, RO and HQ Emergencies team can bring to a particular crisis response
- Regular strategic reviews to complement the operational management
- Record keeping of all relevant discussions and meetings, with a logbook tracing key decision and the considerations that informed them
- Timely and clear communications to all concerned about adjustments in roles, responsibilities and decision-making

R4: Actively foster enabling conditions for effective team work

This includes

- All staff who get mobilised in an L3 response will receive several mandatory organisational and contextual briefings, as well as detailed guidance on expected behaviour
- Explicit attention is paid to the relational dynamics between national and international staff
- Explicit attention is paid to stress management, including cumulative stress, also of national staff
- All possible efforts are made to limit staff turnover, as this generates financial and non-financial inefficiencies and risks impacting negatively on internal and external relations
- Junior staff with limited experience are not put in decision-making positions. If this is inevitable, a senior person is designated to exercise oversight over process and content of decision-making, and mentor the junior colleague.

HR have an important role to play in this (inasmuch as they do more than personnel administration), but a positive and enabling environment is the responsibility of every team and unit leader.

R5: Elevate the planned (continuation) of the organisational L3 review to the strategic and institutional level.

This needs to respond to broader questions such as

- How to ensure that an L3 mobilisation and acceleration is IOM-wide and not only or largely within the DOE?
- What practical adaptations are needed in the various resource management units, to be able to adequately support programme needs in situations of large-scale surge and scaling up?
- What calibre of staff does IOM need to be able to respond in a significant way to more than one L3 surge situation at the same time – in terms of numbers, competencies and depth of experience? What mechanisms and partnerships will ensure it will have the required numbers of experienced and capable staff when it needs them?
- What capacities does IOM need to take on larger inter-agency response responsibilities and roles¹, and to hold its own in the high-level interagency debates -and politics- in humanitarian and political capitals of the world?

The graph² visualises the interconnectedness/complementarities between operational and strategic response management, and the institutional capacities to provide both; but also how IOM's institutional capacities and practical L3 response are part of a broader international relief system (UN and non-UN).



¹ E.g. A commitment to be a provider of last resort for the CCCM Cluster in natural disasters.

² Developed by the Global Mentoring Initiative Ltd.

R6: Develop a comprehensive institutional plan to ensure IOM has the capacities to effectively respond to multiple L3s simultaneously

This includes:

- A clear articulation (if needed) of IOM's ambitions and objectives as an emergency response agency.
- A comprehensive staff development plan, based on scenario projections, that ensures adequate in-house expertise, complemented by human resources from partners.
- A structured programme of in-house and externally provided training and mentored on-the-job learning. This ensures the availability of enough senior and experienced staff to mentor and accompany more junior ones. The training includes colleagues from the resource support functions. The training needs to cover technical skills, self-awareness and self-management as well as interpersonal/intercultural skills, managerial but also people-management and team building skills, people-centred and participatory programming, 'coordination' skills and 'political engagement' skills.
- Proactive discussions with current and potential donors to ensure the right type of funding for such institutional development and the sustainability of the capacities thus created.

R7: Systematic learning from experience

This includes:

- Documenting the learning from each L3 activation and de-activation: This can be done by a key person or an external consultant being given the time to elicit, review and structure the learning, and/or by including an L3 review component in each RTE.
- Annually conducting a comparative review of practices and reflections across L3 responses.

I. Purpose, Scope and Methods of the Report

Purpose: The purpose of this report, as per the ToR, is to help IOM consistently improve programming and operations. The basis of this report is a review of the implementation of IOM's internal L3 procedures in the Rohingya crisis response in Bangladesh (late August 2017-ongoing). That review brought up a number of attention points which cannot be addressed purely at the level of programming and operations. They relate to broader and deeper institutional aspects of IOM's emergency response capacities and practices. Some of these were already mentioned in the 2014 RTE of the South Sudan L3 response and are further highlighted here. This can feed into a planned (continuation) of an organisational review of L3 procedures.

Target audience: IOM HQ, RO and selected CO.

Methodological observations:

- **Sources:** The report draws on the most current versions of the L3 procedures; conversations with selected IOM colleagues at HQ, from the Bangkok RO and in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar town in the context of a wider Real Time Evaluation (RTE) of the Rohingya response; a one-day listening into a 2-day 'L3 Rohingya review' in Cox's Bazar (7 July 2018) and a focused survey circulated to 15 IOM colleagues. The survey received 7 responses. It also refers to the findings and recommendations of the 2014 RTE of IOM's response in South Sudan, one focus area of which was the L3 response. Comments on a first draft also became a source of information, where exchanges between commentators showed that not everyone had all relevant information about IOM's institutional preparedness mechanisms or had a common understanding of certain aspects of the current procedures.
- **Constraints:**
 - *A broader exercise:* The inquiry into the internal L3 dimensions of the Rohingya response had to be conducted together with an RTE of that response. The RTE had a retrospective and forward-looking dimension. Such broader remit provides advantages but also multiplies what needs to be paid attention to within a limited time period.
 - *Key stakeholders not included in survey:* The L3 survey focused on the L3 response to the Rohingya crisis (see Annex 2). It was sent to 15 people, 7 of which responded. The 15 IOM colleagues are mostly from the Department of Operations and Emergencies (DOE), and the Regional Office in Bangkok (RO). Even if all 15 had replied, the survey results would still have missed out in important perspectives: those of the Country office (CO) and Sub-office (SO) in Cox's Bazar district, including national staff, and those of IOM colleagues in the Department of Resources Management (DRM) who supported the Rohingya crisis response.
 - *Key informants not interviewed:* Due to time constraints, the RTE team was also not able to contact and speak with many of the IOM staff (and consultants) who, in different roles and for variable duration, were part of the initial programmatic crisis-response of the first 4-5 months. A detailed inquiry would have sought to (partially) reconstruct the crucial history of the first 4-5 months (Sept. 2017-end January 2018). For the same reason, the RTE team was not able to speak with staff from the different support functions to L3 programming (HR, procurement and logistics, legal, finance).
 - *Learning not documented or not accessed:* Other than the 2014 South Sudan RTE, no reports were made available. From 2017 to 2018 IOM also deactivated two L3 responses (South Sudan and Iraq). The learning from those experiences is not (yet) documented or not made available.
- **Appreciation:** A proper appreciation of the L3 practices and their efficiency and effectiveness in the Rohingya response needs to consider important contextual factors:

- IOM had been operating in Cox's Bazar district prior to the crisis that started in August 2017, with emergency response being part of that preceding experience (following a new influx of some 87,000 Rohingya refugees between October 2016-February 2017 and Cyclone Mora in May 2017).
- In its response, IOM continued or assumed multiple responsibilities: 1. Sectoral and thematic work in direct implementation or with collaborating agencies; 2. Running a procurement and supply pipeline (Shelter and WASH products, fuel) for several agencies; 3. Lead or co-lead on two sectors (shelter and NFI; site development and site management) and a thematic working group (Communicating with Communities, CwC) and 4. Unprecedented, IOM found itself with the responsibility for coordination leadership of the overall international response, having been put into that lead role by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) in 2013.
- The Rohingya crisis response was the 7th L3 for IOM in 2017. This also must be taken into consideration in the appreciation of the performance of the IOM colleagues in support functions. For the CO Bangladesh staff, including national staff, in Dhaka but especially in Cox's Bazar, it is important to consider that they had to deal with a significant influx of refugees in late 2016, and a cyclone in May 2017, before a mega-crisis started late August 2017.

II. Findings and Observations

2.1 The IOM L3 Procedures³

The primary references in this report are to following internal documents:

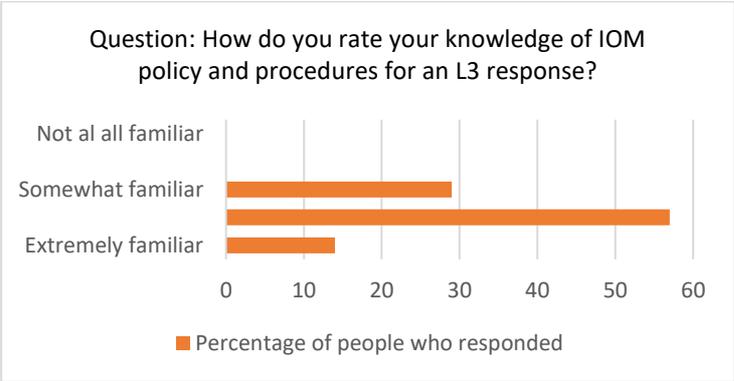
- IOM Classification of Level 1 and Level 2 Emergencies – guidance note (June 2015)
- IOM Level 3 Standard Operating Procedures – rationale and concept (June 2015)
- IOM Corporate Emergency Activation – Standard Operating Procedures (November 2016)
- Terms of Reference for Rapid Response Team on (to a particular context)
- Terms of Reference for the Rapid Response Team Leader.

There are other L3-related documents, but the above create the parameters of the organisational framework.

Reportedly, there is an intent to review the L3 procedures, expressed already in late 2017. At the same time, IOM also is awaiting the results of a review, by the IASC, of the collective L3 procedures, to ensure that its own are in line with that revised version.

2.2 Were L3 Procedures Followed in the Rohingya Crisis Response?

Knowledgeable respondents: The perceived level of knowledge about IOM L3 procedures among the seven respondents is high.



Practices in line with procedures? Survey Question 2 asked “To what degree did IOM in its response to the 2017 Rohingya influx in Bangladesh follow its L3 policy and procedures?”. All seven respondents concurred that they were followed ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’. Yet one respondent, in a comment, asserts that not many procedures were followed.

Based on a point-by-point comparison of procedural steps and what actually happened in the Rohingya response⁴ (Annex 1), procedures were largely not followed.

- **No Rapid Response Team:** This is explicit step in the L3 procedures. In this response many emergency support personnel with different skills were deployed for relatively short periods of time (6 weeks), this was not an intentionally constituted ‘Rapid Response Team’. In the end,

³ IOM has its own L3 procedures above the IASC ones. Its L3 declaration and deactivation decisions will not always exactly match those of the IASC.

⁴ Based on key informant interviews.

the various thematic areas of expertise mentioned in the procedures were on the ground, but not all quickly and of similar quality.⁵

- **Rapid Response Team Leader:** The term used in IOM conversations is ‘Emergency Coordinator’ (EC), no one in the conversations of this RTE used the term ‘RRT Leader’. For the first five months, the role was played by two individuals alternating⁶, from HQ and the RO respectively. A full-time EC started on 1 February 2018, having first had to complete work in Iraq. While valid as a pragmatic solution, the conversations identified several attention points: Possible differences in personal style that others must repeatedly adjust to; an increased need to ensure consistency and coherence in decision-making; possible confusion for other agencies about who in IOM is actually in charge. This may have been further fed by the regular presence, in October-November 2017, of the Deputy Director of the DOE. In this Rohingya response situation, the EC is responsible for IOM’s own operations, including the performance of the coordinators IOM provides for some sectors/thematic working groups. Possible additional confusion, certainly in the eyes of other agency staff (and perhaps GoB officials?), may have resulted from the fact that IOM, prior to the start of the acute refugee crisis, had a person in place to lead the Interagency Coordination Group (ISCG). Later, that person’s role would evolve to Manager of the ISCG Secretariat.
- **Prolonged ambiguity over spheres of authority:** Within the Rohingya response, there was prolonged ambiguity over sphere of authority, particularly between the MEC or rather the Emergency Coordinator(s)/ RRT leader and the CoM and HoSO. Emergency coordinators bear significant responsibility (and accountability) and are likely to insist of being given full decision-making authority over the operational aspects, with the CO leading on the broader political aspects. COs will have their own concerns of others coming in for a limited period of time and taking over. Discrepancies in ‘rank’ (grading) can become an additional factor in what is an unresolved ambiguity in the procedures.
- **Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure?** DOE staff at HQ and in Cox’s Bazar speak consistently about: the inability and sometimes perceived unwillingness of the various support units (HR, procurement and logistics, finance, legal), to also scale up and accelerate their functioning and, as much as possible, shorten the procedural steps to the necessary minimum, rather than trying to do the usual multiple steps a bit faster. From the programme staff perspective, it currently appears as if “*L3 procedures are for the DOE but not for the organisation as a whole.*”⁷ The support functions not following pace leads to constant delays in signing contracts, hiring and deploying people when needed, procuring vital operational supplies, and making financial transfers when the cash is needed. The consequences are important for IOM programme colleagues and others: Necessary staff and supplies are not in place on time, slowing down and hampering operations of IOM and of its collaboration agencies (reduced effectiveness); already overburdened and stressed staff spend unjustifiable amounts of time on chasing up orders and requests (reduced effectiveness, avoidable additional stress); and loss of credibility in the eyes of collaborating agencies (reputational damage). The impression⁸ is that the scale of this ‘inefficiency’ within the Rohingya response has been significant, with a major negative impact on the overall cost-effectiveness of the

⁵ One KI signals that IOM has never actually deployed such intentionally constituted ‘Rapid Response Team’.

⁶ Reportedly because neither could make themselves available to be full-time in Cox’s Bazar.

⁷ Interview at HQ.

⁸ Based on the frequency of references to the delays experienced by programme people in the services of the support functions.

performance. Most of such ‘internal wastage’ does not show up in normal financial account but would be revealed by a management audit.⁹

- **Confusion over RO adjusted role:** Reportedly, it was not always clear, to notably the support units, what the adjusted role of the RO means in practice: RO authorisation was no longer required for various authorisations, which continued to be presented to it. At the same time, the RO signalled that it doesn’t want to be side-lined, as in future it will retake responsibility. The RO “*will be out of the accountability line but cannot be out of the information loop.*”¹⁰
- **Programme support unit:** Reportedly very relevant and helpful in the Rohingya response, has been the Programme Support Unit to help with increased internal and external information management and communications requirements. This is not an institutional function but considered vital in an L3 response. It took quite a while however to obtain the required number of staff and to have its leadership position filled by someone on a longer-term basis.

2.3 Divergent Views

The L3 survey respondents, particularly in their comments, express divergent views on two other critical aspects of any IOM L3 response.

The relationship HQ-CO-RO: For some, the L3 response creates a “shared burden” between the CO, RO and HQ. Others highlight the lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities between the Migration Emergency Coordinator (MEC) and the Emergency Coordinator (Rapid Response Team Leader) on the one hand, and the CO (and Sub-Office) on the other hand;

The functioning of the Resources Management units: For some respondents, IOM got in a lot of surge capacity “*without too much problem*”. Others point at what they see as the limited surge capacity within the key DRM units or divisions, where there was no acceleration of service provision to the level required.

For some, these two issues are the result of shortcomings in the ‘procedures’, for others of shortcomings in their ‘implementation’.

2.4 Procedures and People

a. Procedures

A review of the key procedural documents, complemented by Key Informant Interviews (KII)¹¹ and a referral to the recommendations of the 2014 South Sudan RTE, points at weaknesses in the written procedures:

⁹ A management audit, under supervision of the Office of the Inspector General was conducted just prior to the field work for the wider RTE. Its findings were not available to the RTE team.

¹⁰ Interviews RO Bangkok colleagues.

¹¹ The seven respondents to the L3 survey, in response to the question “*What needs to be changed in the current L3 policy and procedures?*” pointed to many issues highlighted in this report: The commensurate mobilisation of Resource Management, clarity of responsibilities and authority through more detailed procedures, ensuring the RO remains sufficiently involved, and more formally involving the Transition and Recovery Division.

Ambiguity

- **Reinforce or replace?** The procedures are not explicit on whether in an L3 the Migration Emergency Coordinator (MEC)¹² and her/his RRT will reinforce or replace the CO? If this is decided on a 'case-by-case' basis, then an explicit listing of key considerations would help.
- **Possible organigrams?** There is no document that shows possible options of the organigram after an L3 RRT is active. These could visualise more clearly the centres of authority and reporting lines, and -via dotted lines- who needs to be kept closely involved.¹³ In some instances (e.g. Syria, Libya), the L3 coordinators are actually located in HQ rather than close to the crisis zone, though this has not been institutionalized. A more comparative L3 review exercise would consider the relative advantages of either option. The SOP consulted do not include any reference to Sub-offices. While obviously under the authority of the CO, localised responses such as in the Rohingya crisis, may have implications for one or more sub-offices but not for others. Related to this is the issue of ranking within IOM: In principle, an Emergency Coordinator should not be of lower rank than those s/he supports / replaces.
- **Duration of L3 Status:** The declaration of an L3 emergency in this part of Bangladesh was communicated in a message of 20 September 2017, initially for 6 months. It was extended, now till the end of 2018, in a communication on 23 April 2018. The question of L3 duration is -generally- pertinent: Is the declaration of an L3 situation for 3 months relevant i.e. are there crises of that magnitude that are largely responded to after 3 months? If not, duration of 6 months would indeed be the minimum. On the other hand, should an L3 situation be maintained for several years on end – if there is not a succession of 'new' emergencies within the same area? What then is the purpose of an L3 status?¹⁴ Prolonging L3 status may also create a disincentive to think more medium-term and elaborate a transition and development perspective and strategy.

Whole-of-IOM Applicability

- **Streamlined procedures for the support functions:** Reportedly, no streamlined procedures have been developed for the support functions (HR, finance, procurement and logistics in particular) during an L3. A very first instruction on HR procedures in L3 scenarios only entered into force on 21 June 2018.¹⁵ A MEC, typically the director of DOE, is nominally in charge of and accountable for, the overall L3 response. But at institutional level, that position is equivalent to that of Director of Resources Management. That raises the question who ultimately is responsible for the effectiveness of the support functions to an L3 response.

Procedures Gaps/Underdeveloped Areas

- **Positioning, roles and scale:** An important consideration in a crisis for which many other agencies will mobilise, is how IOM will position itself, what diversity and scale of programmes it will take on, and what roles it wants – and can- play. The SOPs consulted make no reference to the issue and offer no considerations as guidance. Some IOM colleagues interviewed for the Rohingya response RTE felt that IOM had taken on too much in too many sectors, with

¹² In the large majority of instances, the director of the Dpt. of Operations and Emergencies is designated as MEC. Rarely will it be someone else, as was the case for Nigeria, with the nomination of the head of the RO in Dakar.

¹³ Our understanding is that for the Rohingya response, a DCoM position is created in Cox's Bazar. That can be an aspect of one option: however, this is happening 11 months after the response started, and 6 months after a permanent Senior Emergency Coordinator was in post.

¹⁴ Some interviewees suggested that it is convenient heading under which to demand priority attention from the global Resources support units. If that is also a consideration, then L3 status would be -partially- used to overcome institutional functionalities.

¹⁵ Instruction IN/261: Recruitment in L3 emergencies for graded positions (through VN and SVN).

additional coordination roles for 3 sectors/working groups, the ISCG Secretariat and the overall response. The consideration of 'overstretch' against available organisational capacities probably had to be weighed against the fact that there simply were not that many agencies on the ground when the crisis started, and those who were all had to scramble to scale up. At the same time, there are indications that the opportunity to grow was a consideration, at least for some senior people. This will obviously be a situation-specific choice, but one around which the CO, RO and HQ may have different ideas that need to be discussed in a coherent and explicit manner.

- **Protection, participation and AAP:** These are not referred to in the current procedures, even though they figure in the first IOM Appeal for the Rohingya response.
- **Programme support unit:** Not an institutional function but considered vital in an L3 response. The current procedures have no reference to such.
- **Localisation:** IOM has institutionally endorsed the 2016 Grand Bargain which resulted from the World Humanitarian Summit. Its second commitment is to 'localisation', the essence of which is to 'reinforce' rather than 'replace' local and national capacities. There is no reflection of this in the current procedures.
- **De-activation/hand over back to CO and RO:** The June 2015 and November 2016 reference documents have a paragraph on who jointly decides on the recommendation to the Director-General to deactivate the L3 status. However, they do not spell out what key criteria and considerations would be taken into account. One interviewee referred to this as a "*much more subjective decision.*" Another perceived occasional reluctance to de-activate: "*missions grow used to L3s, we need to wean them of this.*" There is also no guidance on what the status becomes after an L3 deactivation: L2?
- **Transition, recovery and protracted crisis:** The current L3 procedures have no reference to when and how transition and recovery programme becomes part of an L3 response, or to what happens in a protracted crisis. This is an issue that the IASC is considering at the time of this review and which is currently referred to as the SUSTAIN classification.

b. People

Even with enhanced procedures, the 'people' dimension will always come to play a role in their implementation. The human dimension is often experienced more as a source of complications and tensions than of joy. Difficult situations get easily personalised, creating blockages in the working relationship. One KI's take on this was: "*An L3 is an extreme situation. We put in all resources: this may hurt someone's feelings.*" Other comments in the survey response signal that frictions have been part of the Rohingya response.

IOM's decentralised character and organisational culture give more leeway for key individuals to negotiate the interpretation of the procedures, than a strongly centralised and hierarchical organisational culture would.¹⁶

Such dynamics are normal, to be expected, and not automatically problematic. To keep them constructive, soft skills related to emotional intelligence, working across cultures, team building, team coaching, and relationship coaching are relevant and helpful. IOM teams on the ground -under heightened stress- are certainly a priority, but such skills are equally relevant for IOM-nominated coordinators and key people in HQ, the CO and RO, who need to work together in new configurations

¹⁶ We heard from one Chief of Mission how he had negotiated a "high degree of autonomy" with the DOE director.

around new challenges. Also the ISCG Secretariat Manager expressed interest in this, as the dynamics among Secretariat staff remain challenging.¹⁷

c. Learning

Many of the above observations, and ensuing recommendations, resonate with those of the 2014 RTE of the South Sudan L3 response, restated in the text box.¹⁸

RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2014 SOUTH SUDAN RTE

- Current L3 SOP is vague and should be translated into practical, streamlined and specific guidelines/checklists for different functional areas_ HR, Resource Management, Procurement/logistics, Legal, ITC, security etc. Staff needs to understand how the usual rules and regulations will be different in L3 emergencies (i.e. waivers of rules) to enable fast and effective response;
- Create L3 specific focal points at HQ/Manila Administrative Centre/Panama Administrative Centre for functional areas to facilitate guidance/coordination/technical assistance and support;
- Make L3 SOPs more widely available and increase staff knowledge (including training) of L3 procedures and guidelines;
- Improve and expand capacity of the internal expert roster (including AAP, protection, WASH, security, cluster staff etc.). Ensure that IOM has adequate senior, experienced and trained L3 capable and deployable staff to also support the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism;
- Strengthen the linkages, collaboration and integration of the Transition and Recovery considerations at the global level into the L3 SOPs and at the country level into the programming and L3 deactivation;
- Define strategy, vision and focus for the mission beyond L3 including transition and recovery;
- Increase training, mainstreaming (programming) and staffing of AAP (not just CwC) and protection beyond clusters both at the global and country level. Increase monitoring of programming, including collection of feedback in order to adjust assistance as needed;
- Incorporate specific guidance on AAP mainstreaming into the internal L3 SOPs to ensure compliance with the existing IASC AAP operational framework;
- Incorporate IASC protection mainstreaming and key humanitarian cross-cutting considerations into the L3 protocols;
- Avoid deployment of inexperienced TDY and surge staff which can become a liability rather than a productive asset for COs.

¹⁷ Note that there is a difference between coaching of individuals and coaching of teams. The latter require training in organisational and relationship coaching.

¹⁸ Caldwell, A. & A. Oliver-Burgess 2014: Real-Time Evaluation of IOM's Humanitarian Response to the South Sudan Crisis. Final report, p. 9

2.5 Surge: Key Topics Unpacked

a. *'Reinforce' or 'Replace': Dynamics between CO, RO and an Emergency Response Team*

Perceived and portrayed imbalance: The mobilisation of L3 human (and other) resources is based on the premise that the CO is 'overwhelmed', which carries connotations of diminished/insufficient capacities. The perceived lack of capacity may be in terms of a CO's competencies (and mindset) to adequately respond, and/or sufficient number of staff to take on the extra workload.

There is no immediate clear distinction between a CO that has real emergency response skills, but the scale of the crisis is still too much, and a CO that does not have significant emergency response experience and competencies.

There may be a tendency among emergency specialists, typically hands-on and action-oriented people, to 'replace' rather than 'reinforce' the CO (and RO). The probability of this happening is much higher when larger numbers of emergency specialists are deployed, typically the case in an L3 situation.

Strengths and assets of the CO: It is relevant however to consider explicitly what the CO and country programme have to offer that the L3 responders cannot (easily) bring? For example:

- National and local level connections with government institutions and key government officials; there may also be national staff with political connections (as is the case in the Cox's Bazar office);
- A good understanding of how the government institutions and bureaucracy function, where the political (and personal) sensitivities lie, and how to navigate this;
- In-depth understanding of national labour legislation, as well as of the professional and social profile of the national staff;
- Deeper contextual understanding, also with historical depth, which often also shapes the perspectives and behaviours of national counterparts, staff and partners;
- A more nuanced and better understanding of local and national non-governmental actors and resource institutions, and the capacities they can offer;
- National language skills, which can make a difference in the interactions with government officials (e.g. the CoM and HoSo in place when the Rohingya L3 was mobilised, are both Bangla-speakers);
- Understanding of the social and cultural patterns of behaviour that influence how nationals will interact with foreigners, and how they work;
- Knowledge of what equipment is best suited to that particular operating environment, because maintenance skills and spare parts are available locally (which may not be the case for all items in IOM's catalogue);
- Programmatic experiences that can be highly relevant in the crisis-environment (e.g. irregular migration and counter-trafficking for Cox's Bazar district), and that the emergency responders are unlikely to bring.

Legitimate concerns of a CO and RO: In the face of many new colleagues coming in, often for limited periods of time, and taking authority over significant decision-making, CO and RO have legitimate concerns, such as:

- The wish to remain sufficiently involved -and have some influence on key decisions- as at some future point the CO and RO will again assume full responsibility also for this operation;
- Negative impacts of outsiders, coming for short periods of time only and with other priorities and often only limited knowledge of the society and culture, on the national staff and on important but also sensitive relations with e.g. local and national authorities; collaborating agencies etc.
- To avoid neglect of other components of the country programme.

There is also an assumption or connotation that the Regional Office is overwhelmed, which may or may not be correct. Any similar elaboration of what the regional office has to offer to an emergency response is equally relevant. Some of the obvious aspects are:

- Similar familiarity with the CO colleagues, the country programme and its history;
- Involvement in earlier, smaller-scale emergencies, as was the case in late 2016-spring 2017 in Cox’s Bazar;
- A regional perspective, that can be particularly appropriate in case of population movements, be it through irregular or mixed migration or forcible displacement;
- Certain relevant competencies. Etc.

Maintaining operational and strategic perspectives: In any situation, but also a crisis one, close attention to the operational response needs to remain complemented with a broader (and longer) strategic perspective (in-country and possibly regionally). It is typically not easy for the same entity to do both. A scenario can occur in which a CO underestimates that a major crisis unfolding requires not only major operational adjustments but also a significant shift in strategic perspective and external engagements. Business-as-usual, with modest adaptations, will not be enough to face a situation of major disruption. An HQ-led intervention then can/must help recalibrate the IOM presence and actions in-country. On the other hand, over time, an Emergency Coordinator and other emergency response staff, may also find themselves absorbed into the ‘new normal’ of mounting and managing emergency response operations, and lose broader and somewhat longer-term perspective (for which the RO and CO then again may be better positioned). No entity, HQ, CO, RO or emergency response team, will always be able to combine operational and strategic mastery. The challenge is to keep an eye open that both are happening and complement each other. In principle, it appears an RO may be best placed to do so.

b. Surge

IOM scaled up significantly in the Rohingya crisis response, in terms of funding and numbers of staff (see table, figures provided in late June 2018) as well as expanding its programmatic activities in various sectors/areas of work. With an increase from some 15 to some 135 aid agencies in Cox’s Bazar district, its overall coordination responsibility also multiplied massively.

Description	National		International			Total
	IOM Staff	3rd Party	International Staff	TDY/STA/Secondment	Consultant	
Before August 2017	55		4	1	0	61
June 2018	269	669	56	30	25	1,049

One purpose of the extensive use of Temporary Duty (TDY) and Short-Term Assignment (STA) and others on a consultancy contract, and of recruitment of yet more people (especially national staff) outsourced to a 3rd party, is to avoid the slower internal recruitment procedures.¹⁹

Surge needs to be organisation-wide: As mentioned, the main internal conversation point in the Rohingya L3 response (especially for programme staff) are the frustrations and stresses resulting from the various support functions (HR, procurement and logistics, finance, legal), not scaling up (in terms of numbers of staff dedicated to this particular emergency) and accelerating (prioritising requests from

¹⁹ In violence-prone contexts, it may also serve to bypass restrictive safety and security regulations.

this emergency and simplifying procedures so that requests get more quickly expedited) their support function.²⁰

Ethical surge practices: For months, Cox's Bazar has been the setting of a veritable recruitment bonanza, as many agencies sought to scale up dramatically and were hiring. The negative impacts of this cannot be ignored: Local and national CSOs at times lost significant numbers of their best qualified staff in whom they had invested sometimes for years, without references taken or notice periods respected; teachers and students in local schools also left to take up jobs with aid agencies; the competitive hiring created salary inflation. Staff mobility between agencies continued for months, with also international agencies losing newly recruited staff to others offering better terms and conditions. Reportedly, not too many government employees in service were hired away – more retired ones. Because of its negative impacts of 'local capacities', these practices are coming under increasing global scrutiny and criticism, and alternatives are being discussed to reduce their occurrence or impacts.²¹ The RTE team did not see any reference to it in the procedures, nor heard it acknowledged in any of the conversations.

High staff turnover: A significant proportion of those deployed in the first five months, were deployed for relatively short periods, sometimes only a few weeks. While filling gaps, there tend to be high costs to this: lack of time to familiarise with the context, need to build new relationships with team colleagues and counterparts in other agencies; no awareness of previous discussions internally and in sector or thematic working groups. The risks of inconsistency in the evolving internal and collective thinking, and incoherence in decision-making are high. As people come with different styles and each brings their own ingredients to the chemistry of relationships, it introduces a high degree of internal (and inter-agency) instability into an already unstable context.

The result is expensive (negative impact on cost-efficiency),²² and an increased likelihood of frictions, tensions and stresses between team members and agencies.²³ There is also a risk that short-term staff feel less concern about the consequences of their decisions (and behaviours) as they will not experience them.²⁴

Calibre of staff: As per the consultations conducted during the RTE, IOM deployed staff of very variable calibre: several were highly experienced, mature and appropriate for the challenges of the situation. Too many however were perceived, also by other agencies and donors, as too young and too inexperienced (yet unjustly overconfident about their presumed experience) and not suitable for often positions of influence and responsibility. This reiterates a recommendation from the 2014 South Sudan RTE: "*Avoid deployment of inexperienced TDY and surge staff, which can become a liability rather than a productive asset for COs.*" Leading the coordination of a variety of agencies, without formal authority, requires skills and experience beyond the technical sectoral or thematic expertise. Not all of IOM's coordinators were seen as having the required combination of competencies to fulfil what is undoubtedly a challenge role.²⁵ Certain areas of expertise (e.g. AAP, countertrafficking) were not covered until many months into the response.

²⁰ As per the L3 survey responses, the interviews conducted and the conversations during day 1 of an L3 review in Cox's Bazar on 7 July 2018.

²¹ E.g. in the Charter for Change signed up to by a slowly growing number of INGOs. See also Tordoff, J. 2017: Ethical Recruitment Guidelines. Start Network/CHS Alliance, and L. Austin & G. O'Neil 2017: The Future of Humanitarian Surge. Start Network (Transforming Surge Capacity project) and CHS Alliance.

²² A point particularly noted by local civil society organisations, who often have difficulty getting quality financing from international 'partners'. It also becomes a concern of donors after a while, as overall funding for a crisis response declines.

²³ The RTE team could not systematically inquire into this but heard enough anecdotal references to retain this as a -generic-attention point.

²⁴ A point highlight by interviewees.

²⁵ Conversations with donors and other agencies involved in the Rohingya response.

An underlying but important question that can be asked here, is whether IOM's ability to attract and retain high calibre, experienced, staff in challenging situations, is affected by its comparatively lower salary scales than other UN agencies – as one factor among others.²⁶

Systematic briefings on arrival: In the Rohingya response, there has not been a practice of systematically briefing all staff, national and international, quickly after coming into post, on such issues as

- The policies, institutions and capacities on crisis-management in the affected country (governmental and non-governmental) in a balanced and non-generalising (stereotyping) manner;
- Behavioural customs and norms in that country, which is more specific than a global code of conduct;
- The history of IOM's activities and roles in the country and in the affected area, and the components of its overall country programme; the short-term and medium-term objectives of IOM's roles and interventions in the affected area;
- The profile of the 'affected populations';
- Fundamentals of protection-in-practice, AAP and people-centred approaches;
- IOM's position on current difficult challenges around which different opinions exist.

Nor have staff new to IOM systematically received initial briefing on the organisation, its mandate, its relationship to the UN, and its essential processes and procedures.

Such briefings enable staff to understand why IOM is where it is in a specific context, and where it wants to go. All staff, certainly through informal but also formal conversations, communicate outside and therefore are 'ambassadors' of the organisation.

Obviously, briefings are time-consuming and not a life-saving priority. A time-effective way of doing some of this, is through an audio- or video recording which must be absorbed.²⁷ That will be quickly tested with some questions asked. Involving national staff in the briefings sends an early signal of their acknowledged importance to the organisation and mission.

c. Interpersonal Dynamics

Interpersonal frictions: Reportedly, certainly in the first months of the crisis-response, there were enough interpersonal frictions among IOM staff, to be remembered as a negative experience. These cannot be avoided in this type of situations, but the frequency and intensity can be reduced through pro-active and experienced people-management.

National-international staff relations: This aspect was not examined in the Rohingya response RTE but is often a source of friction and frustration. A particular structural expression of it can be whether international staff will always be in charge of national staff, or whether a national staff member can be managing international colleagues.

²⁶ Conversations with staff show that IOM's lower salaries and project-based contracts can be compensated for by attractive aspects of its organizational culture: the 'can-do' attitude, the fairly high degree of autonomy that staff have, the opportunity to move from 'intern' into a more formalized programming position etc. But these factors may appeal less to somewhat older, more experienced, professionals, with families and more financial obligations.

²⁷ Recently, an on-line training has been developed on the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), providing the overview of IOM response activities in a crisis. This is a good example, but also needs to be complemented with context-specific briefings.

Stress management: Acute emergency responses are high-stress situations. How well does IOM as an organisation, and managers on-the-ground, attend to this, and try to mitigate it? Experienced staff, being -temporarily- deployed from other missions, may very well come with already accumulated fatigue and stress. Internal inefficiencies cause frustration complicate the programme work and add to the stress.²⁸ National staff will point out that internationals, coming for a few weeks or months, may well set a pace that leaves them exhausted by the time they leave, but that national staff will continue and cannot sustain such pace.²⁹

²⁸ In recent years, 'mindfulness', particularly in the form of meditation-oriented practices, is also being introduced in the relief sector, to better manage stress. See H. Solanki 2015: Mindfulness and Wellbeing. Mental health and humanitarian aid workers. A shift of emphasis from treatment to prevention. CHS Alliance. Note has to be taken that the private sector has been criticized for introducing mindfulness as a palliative, without simultaneously reducing the stress-creating conditions.

²⁹ An attention point picked up from conversations with an INGO country director in Bangladesh (of Bangladeshi origin), during earlier non-IOM related fieldwork in February 2018.

2.6 Deactivation: Standing Down and Scaling Down³⁰

Learning from experience: Between 2017 and 2018 IOM's number of L3s has reduced from 7 to 5. It has 'deactivated' in 2 contexts. Reportedly, the learning from those experiences is not (yet) documented or was not (immediately) available.

Scaling down: While generally (not only in IOM) much attention is paid to 'surge' and scaling up, there is comparatively little guidance and documentation on how to handle the challenges of significantly scaling down. Often there are assumptions about 'handing over', which in practice may turn out not to be realistic. Thinking only in terms of 'exit strategy' is limiting: it can be helpful to also think about progressive 'role changes' between in this case IOM and other actors. Reportedly, the issue is not adequately covered in the current IOM Emergencies Manual.

Prepared for localisation: The current prevailing thinking in IOM about 'localisation'³¹ i.e. a situation in which local and national actors lead, with international actors in support roles, is of a hand-over to such actors when the international funding is decreasing. This goes with the grain of the 2016 report 'Too Important to Fail – Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap', which strongly influenced the Grand Bargain resulting from the subsequent World Humanitarian Summit. Decline in funding for international organisations is a poor motivation however to invest in stronger local and national capacities. A more productive perspective is to see the strengthening of local and national capacities, governmental, non-governmental and of communities-at-risk, as a strategic objective from the outset.

³⁰ 'Scaling down' is different from 'standing down'. IOM may 'stand down' from its L3 designation, and hand full management authority back to the CO and RO, without the programme actually 'scaling down'.

³¹ Based on conversations in the RTE of the Rohingya response. A useful introduction is GMI 2017: *Understanding the Localisation Debate*. Available on <https://www.gmentor.org/localization/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1: Elaborate the procedures and criteria for decision-making

This includes:

- A reference to crisis anticipation and criteria for proactively enhancing emergency preparedness
- Explicit criteria that will make IOM declare an IOM
- Explicit reference to the considerations that IOM will use to consider how it positions itself in a collective crisis response, and what roles it will take on
- Clarity about the maximum duration of an L3 status – also in relation to a protracted crisis;
- Greater clarity about the division of roles and responsibilities between HQ (and the Emergency Coordinator), the CO, RO and sub-office(s): if this is determined on a case by case basis, then there have to be agreed assessment criteria and a transparent decision-process
- Criteria to decide the physical location of the L3 coordinator, and possible implications for roles and responsibilities or ways of working
- Decide on the reference to a ‘Rapid Response Team’: It only makes sense if IOM can institutionally mobilise such as a coherent, prepared, team
- Explicit guidance on ethical surge practices to minimise undermining local and national capacities
- Integration of AAP and protection
- Reference to increased internal and external communications and reporting requirements, which may require a rapid deployment of a ‘programme support unit’
- The practical meaning of ‘deactivation’, and criteria to decide the status of the situation afterwards
- An explicit reference to ‘transition and recovery’ and ‘localisation’, to ensure a crisis response retains a longer-term strategic perspective and the early inclusion of the TRD

R2: Ensure that the resource and support functions can effectively underpin an L3 operational response

This includes:

- Developing explicit and detailed accelerated procedures for resource support functions in an L3, visualising the adjustments in approval trajectories;
- Clarify the relationship between the MEC and the DRM in an L3 response.

R3: Strengthen strategic and managerial practices

This includes:

- Explicit consideration of what value a CO, sub-office, RO and HQ Emergencies team can bring to a particular crisis response
- Regular strategic reviews to complement the operational management; an RO may be well placed to lead these
- Record keeping of all relevant discussions and meetings, with a logbook tracing key decision and the considerations that informed them
- Timely and clear communications to all concerned about adjustments in roles, responsibilities and decision-making

R4: Actively foster enabling conditions for effective team work

This includes

- All staff who get mobilised in an L3 response will receive several mandatory organisational and contextual briefings, as well as detailed guidance on expected behaviour
- Explicit attention is paid to the relational dynamics between national and international staff
- Explicit attention is paid to stress management, including cumulative stress, also of national staff
- All possible efforts are made to limit staff turnover, as this generates financial and non-financial inefficiencies and risks impacting negatively on internal and external relations
- Junior staff with limited experience are not put in decision-making positions. If this is inevitable, a senior person is designated to exercise oversight over process and content of decision-making, and mentor the junior colleague

HR have an important role to play in this (inasmuch as they do more than personnel administration), but a positive and enabling environment is the responsibility of every team and unit leader.

III. Broader Institutional Emergencies Preparedness

If IOM is responding to more L3s, and on a larger scale/in more important roles than say 10-15 years ago, the question becomes: *What overall organisational preparedness is required, to effectively respond to at least X L3s simultaneously? Does IOM have those institutional capacities at the moment?*

The RTE of the Rohingya response brings to the foreground four aspects: contextual crisis anticipation and preparedness; organisation-wide mobilisation; the ability to mobilise enough staff with the required spectrum of competencies; and the institutional capacity to hold one's own in the politics of crisis response.

3.1 Contextual Emergency Anticipation and Preparedness

The timing and scale of major crises can rarely be accurately predicted, but in many cases of man-made disasters, there are warning signs. A relevant question for the Rohingya crisis situation is: Did IOM anticipate a further significant influx of Myanmar refugees in the spring and summer of 2017, and did it strengthen its emergency preparedness capacity in anticipation? What are IOM's general practices and decision-processes around anticipatory scenario thinking and emergency preparedness?

The RTE of the Rohingya response did not have the time to also look into this, but the question is a wider institutional one.

3.2 Organization-wide Mobilisation

As mentioned, an effective rapid response requires also the scaling up of the various support functions. They may need more staff and clear authorised instructions on which procedures are shortened to speed up the service provision. Their ability to service and support several L3 responses simultaneously also must be looked at.

3.3 Broad Spectrum of Required Competencies

The RTE of the Rohingya response underscores the importance of a range of competencies required for emergency personnel deploying to a -typically complex and multi-actor- L3 crisis:

- **Rights-based programming:** The foundation of all original UN agencies was the UN Charter of Human Rights, expanded with other subsequent rights-based Conventions (Refugees, Children...). Our understanding is that IOM historically was created as a 'service provider' to its Member States. That does not preclude rights-based programming but can lead to a different relationship with Member States.
- **People-centred approaches:** deep practical and comparative experience of protection, 'accountability to affected populations'; 'participatory approaches'; facilitation skills; skills in having difficult conversations. A similar recommendation had been made in the 2014 RTE of IOM's response in South Sudan;
- **Coordination skills and collaborative leadership:** This implies understanding the mandates of different agencies, particularly in the UN, some feel for the particular (and diverse) cultures of INGOs, but also an ability to work with government institutions and senior civil servants; knowledge of the global humanitarian 'coordination' models; the ability to encourage collaborative attitudes and behaviours; strong interpersonal skills; strong inter-cultural skills;

team building; running effective meetings; information management; a readiness to develop a solid understanding of 'the context'; an understanding of different styles of 'leadership';³²

- **Dilemma management:** Dilemmas arise in situations that require choices and no obvious 'best choice' seems available. They frequently occur in crisis situations, where 'principle' and 'pragmatism' do not easily marry. Decision-makers can benefit from a framework that support ethical decision-making in such instances;
- **Mentoring and team building skills:** For anyone expected to lead smaller or larger teams of colleagues;
- **Self-awareness and emotional intelligence:** general self-awareness, listening, art of asking powerful questions etc.;
- **Working in cross-cultural environments;**
- **Stress management;**
- **Organisational capacity-development:** 'Organisational development' requires more than relatively stand-alone training course and workshops, often focused on technical/thematic skills of a limited number of staff. Their impact is known to be very limited.

There are two primary mechanisms to avail itself of the necessary competencies: the internal roster and Stand-by Partner Arrangements. The internal roster is mostly made up of graduates from IOM's annual Emergency Response Induction Training (ERIT). This is a week-long course for junior international and senior national staff, with some 20-25 participants per year, mostly programme people, though also a few from the support units. Participants are volunteered by their country and regional offices. Participation in the ERIT training implies agreement from the participant's manager that the person can be deployed elsewhere, if needed, for up to six months. At the moment, the depth and breadth of experience of those putting themselves on the roster, is not separately assessed by specialists. At the moment that roster process has been put on hold while changes are considered. One change will be technical experts assessing new applicant on their declared areas of expertise. Former graduates of the ERIT programme are however on a temporary roster and considered for deployment.

Reportedly, a Migration Crisis Management Training course for more senior level staff such as CoM, RO advisers and prospective or actual Emergency Coordinators, was run in 2011-2012 but discontinued afterwards.³³ The ERIT course is not an equivalent replacement for it.

An induction course of a week is not enough preparation to develop certain competencies, nor to take on important responsibilities in complex emergencies that L3 situations always are. The lack of in-house training for senior management roles in a crisis response is a strategic gap. Survey respondents also recommended a dedicated roster for Resource Management colleagues, also ready to be deployed in emergencies.

In addition, IOM currently has MOUs with nine standby partners: CANADEM; Danish Refugee Council (DRC); U.K. Department for International Development (DFID); emergency.lu (Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs); Information Management and Mine Action Programmes (IMMAP); Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB); Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); RedR Australia; White Helmets Commission, and Argentina. Between September and August 2017, 38 deployments came through

³² A senior staff member observed that there is not enough investment in the development of coordination skills, and that they are in short supply within the organisation.

³³ KII, the reasons for discontinuation were not clear to the person interviewed. Another senior staff member sees the organisation as not having enough experienced people ready to be 'Emergency Coordinators' in L3s.

standby partners.³⁴ Note the point made in the Emergencies Manual: *“Stand-by Partners support should be seen as complementary to other existing sources of preparedness and should not be used to replace poor staff planning.”*³⁵

The strategic question is: Does IOM have adequate institutional mechanisms to ensure that enough staff, with solid experience and the required broad spectrum of skills, is available to support at least the initial (6-12 months) response to several L3 crises simultaneously? The next section addresses this issue.

3.4 IOM: A Major Emergencies Response Agency

IOM is itself in a period of major ‘transition’: Globally it has grown enormous in annual budget and staff numbers. It is active in more and more domains of work.

The global policy environment, with the Sustainable Development Goals, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the (draft) Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, provides a favourable environment for the organisation to play more influential roles.

The recent trend has been for IOM to respond to more major emergencies, on a larger scale and with this ‘Rohingya crisis’ even in a leading role for the fastest and largest refugee crisis of 2017. This creates institutional opportunities but also challenges beyond the further development and fine-tuning of ‘L3 procedures’. As some interviewees point out: *“The DOE has grown rapidly, the rest of the organisation has not followed”*, and *“we may be biting off more than we can chew”*.

If IOM wants to be able to respond effectively to multiple crises simultaneously, various organisational developments may be required:

- **A larger pool of more experienced people:** That it can draw on for deployment for longer periods of time, ensuring greater continuity. This reiterates the 2014 South Sudan RTE recommendation to *“improve and expand capacity of the internal expert roster (...) ensure that IOM has adequate, senior, experienced and trained L3 capable and deployable staff to also support the Inter-Agency Rapid Response Mechanism.”*
- **More flexible funding:** Which will require strategic engagement with member states and donors, particularly those that are used to providing IOM with project funding; and joining in the conversation for more multi-year and less earmarked funding (Grand Bargain commitments).
- **Political engagement skills:** In the Rohingya situation, IOM has found itself in an unprecedented coordination leadership role, and has been fiercely challenged over this, in key Western capitals. This may not be the first and the last time. The organisation needs a sufficient pool of experience people with strong political engagement skills in all these key locations, to argue and defend its narrative. Here too the issue of formal rank comes into play. Even if IOM is not overtly rank-conscious, other UN agencies may be more so. A comparatively lower rank may hamper IOM staff’s ability to hold their own in debates with other agency representatives.³⁶

³⁴ This raises the question whether IOM assumes full responsibility for the performance of an individual, deployed by a stand-by partner but paid by IOM? Including an individual e.g. in a sector coordination role?

³⁵ IOM Emergencies Manual.

³⁶ The same holds for IOM staff in interagency coordination functions, where lower rank/status may be used -unfortunately- against them. The ISCG Secretariat Coordinator in Cox’s Bazar, for example, as a P3 was supposed to manage staff seconded

- **Learning organisation:** IOM is aware of the fact that there is a lot of reinventing the wheel, and that transfer of learning happens largely via interpersonal networks, but not much through institutional mechanisms. There are still gaps in the documentation of important learning – and translating good recommendations from various learning sources into practice.

R5: Elevate the planned (continuation) of the organisational L3 review to the strategic and institutional level.

This needs to respond to broader questions such as

- How to ensure that an L3 mobilisation and acceleration is IOM-wide and not only or largely within the DOE?
- What practical adaptations are needed in the various resource management units, to be able to adequately support programme needs in situations of large-scale surge and scaling up?
- What calibre of staff does IOM need to be able to respond in a significant way to more than one L3 surge situation at the same time – in terms of numbers, competencies and depth of experience? What mechanisms and partnerships will ensure it will have the required numbers of experienced and capable staff when it needs them?
- What capacities does IOM need to take on larger inter-agency response roles, and to hold its own in the high-level interagency debates -and politics- in humanitarian and political capitals of the world?

R6: Develop a comprehensive institutional plan to ensure IOM has the capacities to effectively respond to multiple L3s simultaneously

This includes:

- A clear articulation (if needed) of IOM's ambitions and objectives as an emergency response agency
- A comprehensive staff development plan, based on scenario projections, that ensures adequate in-house expertise, complemented by human resources from partners
- A structured programme of in-house training and mentored on-the-job learning. This ensures the availability of enough senior and experienced staff to mentor and accompany more junior ones. The training includes colleagues from the resource support functions. The training needs to cover technical skills, self-awareness and self-management as well as interpersonal/intercultural skills, managerial but also people-management and team building skills; people-centred and participatory programming; 'coordination' skills and 'political engagement' skills
- Proactive discussions with current and potential donors to ensure the right type of funding for such institutional development and the sustainability of the capacities thus created

R7: Systematic learning from experience

This includes:

- Documenting the learning from each L3 activation and de-activation: This can be done by a key person or an external consultant being given the time to elicit, review and structure the learning, and/or by including an L3 review component in each RTE
- Annually conducting a comparative review of practices and reflections across L3 responses

from other agencies, some of whom were P4s. It took IOM a year to accord her a P4 rank. Emergency Coordinators from other UN agencies tend to be P5s or even D1s.

Annex I: L3 Procedures (November 2016) and Practice in the Rohingya Response

L3 Procedures	Practice in the Rohingya Response
<p>The Director General will appoint a Migration Emergency Coordinator (MEC). The MEC could be the DOE Director, the Head of PRD Division or the Regional EPC specialist.</p>	<p>The Director of DOE was nominated as MEC. Reportedly, this is the most common practice. In one reported instance, the Head of the Regional Office (Dakar) was nominated as MEC.</p>
<p>The MEC is responsible for managing and overseeing the implementation of IOM response to the emergency and coordinating with HRM and PRD for the deployment of experienced staff to the affected area for a period up to 3 months.</p>	<p>In the Rohingya response, the initial period may have been 6 months. It is not clear whether, in the review to extend the L3 status, attention is also paid to the practical ability of the initial MEC to continue playing that role?</p>
<p>The MEC will develop a work plan for the first 4 weeks of the emergency response based on DOE / PRD guidelines, to be updated and revised after the first two weeks. This will include mobilization and deployment of a Rapid Response Team and establishment of necessary coordination structures.</p>	<p>No ‘Rapid Response Team’ as such was deployed as a deliberately constituted unit. In practice various people from HQ went to Cox’s Bazar, most of them for some six weeks. The procedures envisage a RRT Leader (and have ToR) for the role. In practice, for the first five months, that role was played by two alternating people, one from HQ and one from the RO, as none could make themselves available full time. The permanent Senior Emergencies Coordinator also had to finish off work in Iraq, before being able to take up this position in the Rohingya response as of 1 February 2018. It is not clear whether a permanent SEC position is part of an L3 response and its procedures, or should be considered separate from it, as one commentator suggested.</p>
<p>When necessary, a Migration Emergency Management Task Force (MEMTF) will be established to support and advise the MEC. The MEMTF will be chaired by the MEC and will ensure the effective implementation of the SOPs and a fully coordinated and speedy corporate response.</p>	<p>Meetings of senior managers with the MEC took place at HQ, but their composition and agendas were not formalised into a MEMTF. There is also no standardised documentation of these meetings, which hampers organisational learning.</p>
<p>A Rapid Response Team (RRT) will be appointed by the MEC in consultation with PRD and HRM and deployed to the affected area or to a regional hub as dictated by the nature of the emergency. Deployment of the RRT, in coordination with the concerned Chief of Mission(s) and Regional Director(s), will take place within 48 hours of the declaration of the Global Emergency in accordance with section C above and for a duration of up to 3 months. The length of stay of individual RRT members will depend on the needs and availability. If clusters are activated by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, cluster leadership staff will be deployed separately.</p>	<p>Reportedly, IOM has never, or not in recent times, mobilised and deployed such ‘RRT’. Its practices do not correspond to its procedures. One commentator associates this with lack of donor support for dedicated RRTs. Has IOM asked for such, or can as part of a broader institutional strategy to strengthen its overall L3 response capabilities?</p>

<p>The RRT will be drawn from the DOE Experts Roster with identified technical expertise and previously trained to work as a team, to the extent possible from the regional level. The training of the experts in the roster, together with the signed commitment by Chiefs of Mission to release them upon request from DOE, is a responsibility that will befall DOE-PRD in coordination with HRM, SDL and the EPC Regional Thematic Specialists.</p>	<p>The current roster is not able to deliver what is needed and under review. It is predominantly made up of IOM staff who have the interest in being deployed in emergencies. Their stated qualifications have not been cross-checked. A significant proportion of the names on the roster are graduates from IOM's internal Emergency Response Induction Training. This is only a 5-day introductory course, not enough to provide enough 'expertise'. An emergency preparedness course for more senior IOM staff was discontinued some years ago (for reasons unclear).</p>
<p>As a minimum, the RRT should comprise officers with the following expertise: needs assessment, operations, logistics and procurement, IT and telecommunications, resource management, security, reporting and information management, project development, external relations and liaison, media and communication. RRT roles and responsibilities will be determined by the MEC in coordination with the COM, the Regional Director(s) and the DOE/PRD. The RRT will report directly to the MEC keeping the COM, Regional Director(s) and PRD informed.</p>	<p>Over time, people with those different profiles became present in Cox's Bazar, but not always quickly, not in a coordinated manner, and of variable quality.</p>
<p>In exceptional circumstances, the Director General may decide to implement an Enhancement Procedure that will segregate the emergency response from other mission duties. It will require the deployment of a Senior Emergency Operations Coordinator under the direct MEC supervision to take on longer term responsibilities for the emergency response at country level. The decision to invoke the enhancement procedure will be made on the recommendation of the DOE Director, the Regional Director and the Chief of Mission.</p>	<p>That did not happen in the Rohingya response. The issue in any case raises the question of the relationship between the MEC and the CoM. The roles and responsibilities of the Emergency Coordinator were never clarified by HQS nor shared with staff in the mission.</p>
<p>All existing IOM procedures related to emergencies must be streamlined to enable an effective response, especially with regard to human resources, resource mobilization, procurement, supply and logistics, financial management, IT, communications, security, humanitarian policy development. Where such procedures exist, they shall be updated to reflect the present Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure. A brief and standardized list of key tasks to be performed during an emergency will be developed in all key sectors to ensure effective implementation and support to the emergency response at HQ, regional and country level.</p>	<p>No streamlined procedures exist. The first potential such, on HR procedures in L3 situations, entered into force on 21 June 2018.</p>

<p>Deactivation</p> <p>The MEC in coordination with DOE, the COM(s) and the Regional Director(s) will make a recommendation to the Director General to deactivate the procedure for an emergency through an official communication. The MEC and the Regional Director will propose a phase out strategy for the emergency response in the weeks prior to the deactivation of the Global Level Emergency.</p>	<p>For now, the L3 status is Cox's Bazar is till end 2018.</p>
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Annex II: Questionnaire on IOM L3 Procedures and Practice through Rohingya Response

1. How do you rate your knowledge of current IOM policy and procedures for an L3 response?
 - Extremely familiar
 - Very familiar
 - Somewhat familiar
 - Not so familiar
 - Not at all familiar

2. To what degree did IOM in its response to the 2017 Rohingya influx in Bangladesh follow its L3 policy and procedures?
 - A great deal
 - A lot
 - A moderate amount
 - A little
 - Not at all

3. What were the most helpful aspects of the current L3 policy and procedures for the Rohingya crisis response?

4. What were the most important areas where the actual response was not/ does not seem to have been in line with the policy or procedures?

5. Which aspects of the current L3 policy and procedures were simply fit/ not appropriate the type of challenge represented

6. How would you rate the INTERNAL IOM communications on the Rohingya response, between end August and end December 2017?
 - Extremely effective
 - Very effective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Not so effective
 - Not at all effective

7. How would you rate the overall IOM internal decision-making in the Rohingya response between end August and end December 2017?
 - Extremely effective
 - Very effective
 - Somewhat effective
 - Not so effective
 - Not at all effective

8. How do you rate the overall quality of IOM's initial response, until December 2017?

- Very high quality
- High quality
- Neither high nor low quality
- Low quality
- Very low quality

9. What should NOT change in IOM's current L3 policy and procedures?

10. What needs to be changed in the current IOM L3 policy and procedures?

Annex III: Overview Recent L3 Emergencies

		L3 EMERGENCIES																																																																							
		system wide												internal / corporate																																																											
		2013												2014												2015												2016												2017												2018											
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
SYRIA		[Orange bar]																																																																							
YEMEN		[Orange bar]																																																																							
IRAQ		[Orange bar]																																																																							
SOUTH SUDAN		[Orange bar]																																																																							
CAR		[Orange bar]																																																																							
PHILIPPINES		[Orange bar]																																																																							
EBOLA		[Orange bar]																																																																							
DRC		[Orange bar]																																																																							
NIGERIA		[Orange bar]																																																																							
LIBYA		[Orange bar]																																																																							
BANGLADESH		[Orange bar]																																																																							