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## **IOM ZIMBABWE**

# Migration In Times Of Crisis: Examples Of Migration Crises Management

Presentation for the African Regional Labor Administration Centre (ARLAC) workshop on Decent Work for Migrant Workers: Governance and Integration Dimensions

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## Outline of Presentation

- This presentation will cover the following:
- Background and definition of migration crisis
- Specific Vulnerabilities and protection and assistance needs of migrants caught in crisis situations
- IOM's role and response for migrants caught in crisis situations:  
The example of Libya
- Lessons Learned : A Framework for Coordinated Response to Future Mixed Migration Crisis



## Background

- Migration Crises: Complex, often large scale migration flows caused by a crisis which typically involves significant vulnerabilities for individuals and communities affected.
- Migration Crisis may be sudden or slow onset, and can have natural or man-made causes and can take place internally or across borders.
- Recent experiences i.e. 2011, Libya crisis and on going war in the Syrian Arab Republic have highlighted key areas and potential gaps in the endeavour to improve responses to the growing number of international migrants affected by crises and patterns of human mobility.



- The international system is less explicit on the roles and responsibilities for addressing the needs of crisis affected migrants.
- International frameworks contain provisions on the protection of migrants, norms and standards exist in human rights law, international humanitarian law and international migration law.
- However there is no international legal framework dedicated to the protection and assistance of migrants in times of crisis, and no single document consolidates and restates the principals involved as the guiding principles on Internal Displacement do in respect of IDPs.



- Migrants often experience special vulnerabilities during a crisis, including:
  - A lack of knowledge about or access to national assistance mechanisms,
  - Heightened exposure to violence and exploitation,
  - A shortage of personal resources for escaping crisis areas and
  - A lack of access to travel documents or consular services.



- Crisis have lasting implications on the wellbeing of migrants, e.g. lost livelihoods, economic difficulty, food insecurity and social instability.
- Improved capacities, coordination and partnerships between humanitarian and migration management systems are required to create a more reliable and effective responses for crisis affected migrants



- Among the international players involved in State led responses to migrants caught in crisis situations, IOM has a specific mandate, under its constitution and strategy to provide assistance.
- Article 1.1 (b) states that purpose of function of the organisation shall be to .. concern itself with the organised transfer of refugees, displaced persons and other individuals in need of international migration services for whom arrangements may be made between the organisation and the States concerned, including those States undertaking to receive them”



## Specific Vulnerabilities and protection and assistance needs of migrants caught in crisis situations:

- Similarly to the rest of the populations in situations of natural or man-made crisis, migrants will face hardships and distress and possibly even violence and abuse.
- Migrants unable to leave a crisis areas to seek safety elsewhere mostly due to practical barriers (language and lack of information)
- Migrants unwilling to leave potentially dangerous situations for fear of losing assets and income or being returned to the country or place of work after the crisis.





- Migrants internally displaced in the country of crisis
- Migrants unable to access humanitarian assistance in the crisis affected country owing to legal or practical barriers.
- Migrants forced to cross an international border to seek safety in a country which is not their country of origin.



- Migrants seeking to escape the crisis area and return to their country of origin and who either lack the means necessary to complete their journey or make their way home by themselves.
- Migrants exploited, targeted or discriminated against as a result of anti-immigrant sentiments or the breakdown of law and order during a crisis.



## IOM's Role and response for migrants caught in crisis situations: The example of Libya

- The number of migrants in Libya was 682,482 ( 10,4% of the total resident population) (UNDESA,2009)
- There were between 1 million and 1,2 million irregular migrants in Libya in 2006, the majority coming from West Africa and the Horn of Africa. (Human Rights Watch)
- Between 2 and 2.5million migrants (other sources) approximately 25% of the total population.



- Mainly from neighbouring countries –
- Egypt: 1 million
- Chad/ Sudan: 400,000 each
- But also Asian Workers
- Bangladesh 60,000
- Philippines :30,000
- Vietnam: 20,000

Libya's migration policies over the last 20 years have been characterised by

- Pan Africa policies
- European Union (EU) cooperation aimed to combatting irregular migration to Europe



- While Libya is party to the 1969 OAU Convention, it is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- Libya also ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of Their Families in 2004.
- In 2011, the Crisis in Libya left migrants from 120 nationalities stranded in Libya and sought refuge across borders.
- Repatriation of more than 300,000 TCNs, 38,000 evacuated from inside Libya
- 98-99% were males, mostly aged 20-40 years old, mainly low skilled labourers



- Economic migrants, who had humanitarian and protection needs
- No pre-existing asylum system in a number of neighbouring countries which barred refugees from achieving local integration and had limited resettlement opportunities



## IOM took a leading role in responding to the needs of affected migrants

- By the end of February 2011, IOM was requested by 46 governments to assist affected migrant populations
- IOM operated at different levels, in different geographical areas despite precarious security situation using air, land and sea transportation
- Need to manage the large numbers of migrants who fled the country
- The crisis did not evolve into a refugee crisis but remained primarily a migration, combined with internal displacement



- The vulnerable situation of migrants facing life- threatening conditions in Libya.
- The collapse of some sectors of the Libyan economy that was strongly reliant on foreign labour, prior to the crisis.
- There was risk of displacement due to security deterioration
- Increased irregular migration due to lack of reintegration opportunities in countries of return





## Consequences of return :

- Double impact on the region due to the decrease on remittances and the pressure imposed on the local economy by the newly arrived population
- Limited reintegration opportunities for returning migrants due to the lifesaving focus of the operation
- The negative impact of massive returns in countries of origin such as the Sahel , where larger numbers of families were dependent on remittances
- The massive returns to Egypt and Tunisia, which posed challenges in terms of reintegration, as both countries were going through a transition phase.
- Necessity to clear the debts migrants had incurred to finance migration



## Lessons Learned : A Framework for Coordinated Response to Future Mixed Migration Crisis

- Timely evacuation as a protection mechanism, full respect for International Humanitarian Law and human rights.
- Reduce incentives to remain in border areas waiting for the situation to improve to return
- Prevent the creation of large camps that can burden receiving communities and lead to resentment and open rejection of the migrants there



## Importance of Operational Coordination

- Global Operation, more than 16 countries including transit and home countries of migrants fleeing Libya
- Consular authorities from numerous countries in Africa and Asia with or without a presence in Libya and transit countries
- Military and customs authorities at border points
- Early strategic high level decision of the IOM and UNHCR leadership to cooperate closely within a flexible interpretation of their mandates
- Undertake new types of coordination between governments , international humanitarian actors, migration management authorities , consular officials , military actors and transport services



## Importance of Strategic Coordination

- Support existing migration management services :  
Management of cross border movements , establishment of a referral mechanism for persons with special vulnerabilities or protection needs , and issuance of travel documents and Laissez- Passers
- In March 2011, IOM and UNHCR set up the Humanitarian Evacuation Cell ( HEC) which:
- Benefitted from the support of the EU Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) to support the coordination of assets received and in-kind contributions from 19 countries totalling an estimated USD23 million.
- Developed a position under OCHA policy guidelines on the use of civil military assets that prevented the utilization of military assets



## Security and Humanitarian Access

- The security context limited the international community's capacity to the affected population within Libya.
- Trade-off between assisting populations caught in life threatening situations and necessity to not expose humanitarian personnel to undue risks.



## Prioritization of Resources

- High degree of flexibility was required in terms of financial , human and material resources to meet challenges in a cost effective manner while maintaining high standards of accountability.
- Quick mobilisation of financial , human and material resources to sustain the massive evacuations of migrants to their countries of origin



## Considerations of returning migrants to Libya

- Infrastructure reconstruction projects valued at over EUR150 billion
- Migrants from Asia , North Africa and Middle East returning overseas to pay their debts
- Exposure to vulnerabilities (VoTs , temptation to reach European shores) given the fragile situation Libya is still experiencing.



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Thank you, Tatenda ,Siyabonga