



Stranded Ethiopian migrants waiting to board a boat in Al Hudaydah, Yemen for Obock, Djibouti. © IOM Yemen 2016

## THE MICIC INITIATIVE AND THE INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AGENDA

By **Anne C. Richard**, Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States and Secretary **Imelda M. Nicolas**, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Philippines

At a time when there is a clear call for better efforts to protect and assist migrants, we are nearing the culmination of a robust consultation process to develop principles, guidelines and practices ("the Guidelines") to help states, international organizations, employers, civil society, and others better protect migrants caught in countries experiencing a natural disaster or conflict. Many stakeholders (states, organizations, companies, and individuals) continue to engage in developing the Guidelines. Their input and advice are helping us to ensure that the Guidelines are useful and meaningful. The MICIC Initiative's voluntary and non-binding Guidelines are on track for publication in June 2016 and scheduled for a formal launch at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016.

We know that a natural disaster or conflict can disproportionately affect migrants. They are at greater risk of exploitation by smugglers or unscrupulous employers who, among other unethical practices, keep their passports. They are often targeted by human traffickers. Their home country might not have an Embassy in the country where they reside, or they might be afraid to turn to their own home country's authorities. Migrants face language barriers, restrictions on mobility, irregular status, or isolation (as with domestic work) that makes it harder to get to safety in a crisis.

Since we launched the MICIC Initiative in 2014, the world's attention has increasingly turned to migrants and refugees. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a target on facilitating migration

through planned and well managed migration policies. The UN Secretary General's report in advance of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) seeks to follow through on the pledge to "leave no one behind" by doing more for migrants and displaced persons. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees hosted major conferences in February and March of 2016 on support to and alternative safe pathways of admission for Syrian refugees. The UN General Assembly will, for the first time, hold a Summit on Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees on 19 September. In addition, US President Obama will host a high level meeting on 20 September seeking commitments from states to support all refugees across the globe.

We see clear connections between the MICIC Initiative and these international agendas and events. The MICIC Initiative seeks to articulate practical, concrete measures states and others can undertake to improve protection for migrants caught in crisis, which will help all of us achieve the goals from the 2030 Agenda and the WHS. The process in which we engaged – state-led, inclusive of all stakeholders, and focused on practical application – is also a model for future efforts seeking to improve more broadly the safety and dignity in migration and mobility.

When we publish the Guidelines in June 2016, we will ask that all stakeholders consider incorporating and using them. We encourage states to welcome them, including as a concrete outcome for the 19 September UN Summit. Finally, we ask states to consider how to build on the guidelines and improve protection and assistance for migrants in a wider scope of challenges and crises.

Thank you for your continued engagement in and support for the MICIC Initiative.

## PRINCIPLES, GUIDELINES AND PRACTICES: LEVERAGING MIGRANTS' STRENGTHS AND SKILLS

By **Michele Klein-Solomon**, Director, MICIC Initiative Secretariat, IOM

A recurring theme from the MICIC consultations is the importance of leveraging the strengths and skills of migrants in planning for, responding to and recovering from crisis. In crisis situations, migrants may require assistance, but they need not be passive. Migrants are resilient, and may have the capacity to take charge of their own wellbeing and to help others. They can be responsible for doing so, provided they have access to information and support. Creating the conditions that enable migrants to help themselves includes protecting migrants' human and labor rights, ensuring access to identity documents, and making sure crisis-related information reaches them. Tangible ways to engage migrants include:

- Involving migrants in developing disaster risk reduction policies. Consultations with migrants can test assumptions about what they may need, and ensure buy-in on plans.
- Reaching out to migrants through migrants. Migrant networks can play a key role in disseminating information on disaster preparedness and contingency plans, emergency services and contacts. Such networks are particularly helpful for getting information to irregular migrants who are often difficult to reach.
- Recruiting migrants as volunteers or staff to provide assistance to migrants. Migrants often trust each other more than other stakeholders, and may be able to reach those in isolated working conditions. They can help ensure that assistance is culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate.
- Engaging diasporas in emergency response and recovery. Diasporas can provide assistance to states and migrants in many ways: they advocate with their governments, facilitate business engagement, raise funds and contribute skills to rebuilding communities.

### ABOUT MICIC

The MICIC Initiative is co-chaired by the Philippines and the United States of America, supported by a Working Group composed of Australia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, the European Commission, IOM, UNHCR, ICMPD, Georgetown University Institute for the Study of International Migration, and the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for International Migration. IOM serves as the MICIC Secretariat.

Funding for the MICIC Initiative is generously provided by the United States of America, the European Commission, and Australia.

The outcome of the Initiative will be a set of non-binding, voluntary principles, guidelines, and practices ("the Guidelines") to better prepare for, respond to, and address the longer term consequences of migrants caught in countries experiencing a conflict or disasters.

### TIMELINE OF CONSULTATIONS

**IGC PLUS CONSULTATION**  
Geneva, 2–3 February 2015

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR SOUTH,  
EAST AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA**  
Manila, 23–24 March 2015

**BRIEFING FOR PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS**  
Geneva, 17 April 2015

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR  
EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**  
Brussels, 25–26 June 2015

**PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTATION**  
Geneva, 2–3 December 2015

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR WEST  
AND CENTRAL AFRICA**  
Dakar, 8–9 December 2015

**CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION**  
Geneva, 28–29 January 2016

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR  
CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA**  
San José, 17–18 February 2016

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR  
NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST**  
La Valletta, 14–15 March 2016

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS  
CONSULTATION**  
Geneva, 16–17 March 2016

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION FOR EAST  
AND SOUTHERN AFRICA**  
Kigali, 3–4 May 2016

*Civil Society organizations hold parallel regional MICIC consultations prior to the governmental meetings, to which their representatives participate as standing invitees.*

*EC/DEVCO is funding the six dedicated MICIC regional consultations, assisted by ICMPD.*





Migrants being evacuated from Libya, April 2011 © IOM Libya / Nicole Tung

## THE MICIC INITIATIVE AND THE REFUGEE PROTECTION REGIME: THE CASE OF LIBYA (2011)

By **Sumbul Rizvi**, Head of Unit (Asylum and Migration), Division of International Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The MICIC Initiative and the international refugee protection regime both strive to protect and assist non-nationals in crisis situations. On the one hand, the MICIC Initiative aims to provide governments and other stakeholders with tools to protect and assist migrants caught in countries experiencing conflict or natural disasters. On the other hand, the refugee protection regime aims to assist refugees fleeing conflict and persecution, as laid out in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Libyan crisis in 2011 provides a good example of how emergency responses to migrants and refugees can complement one another.

The armed conflict in Libya generated a massive exodus, with around a million people leaving the country in a matter of months, crossing mainly into Tunisia and Egypt, but also into other neighbouring countries. Migrant workers who had found employment in Libya counted for a large part of the outflow; and while many of them were actually able to return to their countries of origin in the neighbourhood, those coming from further distant countries in Asia and elsewhere in Africa were stranded.

Aside from these migrants, there were also over 100,000 Libyans seeking protection from violence outside their country, as well as other refugees from Eritrea and Somalia who had sought refuge in Libya over many years. For fear of persecution, and because of on-going conflict, these refugees could not return home to their countries of origin or habitual residence. Application of the principle of non-refoulement (non-return)

remained a critical component for their protection. There were also potential asylum-seekers who had not sought asylum in Libya because they had found employment opportunities and protection against refoulement. However, during Libya's acute crisis, they found themselves in need of access to asylum and protection, including against refoulement.

From the start of the Libyan crisis, UNHCR and IOM cooperated closely to identify and facilitate solutions for both migrants and refugees. Joint evacuation of migrants to countries of origin was initiated within a Humanitarian Evacuation Programme, which facilitated the repatriation of some 218,000 migrants, making it one of the largest air-evacuations in history. Throughout this process, refugees and asylum-seekers were identified and directed to UNHCR assistance mechanisms.

In UNHCR's experience, the absence of a predictable response system for migrants in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster can have an impact on the asylum systems and protection space for refugees in the affected or neighbouring countries to which people flee. Migrants who do not have access to basic assistance and protection in the midst of a crisis frequently seek recourse to the asylum process in an attempt to obtain shelter, medical aid, food, and in some cases to benefit from UNHCR's resettlement and voluntary repatriation processes for refugees. It follows that the more effectively governments respond to the needs of migrants caught in countries in crisis, the more effectively stakeholders will be able to preserve protection space for asylum-seekers and refugees.

## REPORT FROM THE WORKING GROUP: CONSULTATION FOR LATIN AMERICA

By the **Government of Costa Rica**

The Government of Costa Rica was pleased to have hosted the Regional Consultation for Latin America on 17–18 February 2016, with participants from more than 20 governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. The high level of engagement demonstrated the importance of the Initiative, particularly in light of the frequency of natural disasters in the region.

Key points raised during the consultation included:

- Establishing coordinated support and training for consular services can prepare them to act as first responders to assist migrants. Cooperation agreements and networks among consular services can help to share resources and information.
- Communication is essential in order to raise awareness of local emergency procedures, provide contact information or encourage migrants to register. To reach diverse migrant communities, targeted outreach with migrant communities and civil society are most effective.
- Migrant returnees will need targeted support to facilitate their economic re-integration, including trainings, financial support for entrepreneurs, and recognition of qualifications acquired abroad.
- Cooperation on migration and crisis response can be reinforced by building on existing regional platforms such as the Regional Conference on Migration (“Puebla Process”) or the South American Conference on Migration.

We encourage governments and others of the Latin American region to remain engaged and help raise awareness about the needs of migrants caught in countries undergoing crisis. The inclusive, state-led process followed by the MICIC Initiative will lead to practical, concrete guidance for improving migrant protection, and we hope that governments see this as a model for developing further guidance on supporting vulnerable migrants more broadly.



### *Del Gobierno de Costa Rica*

El Gobierno de Costa Rica está complacido de haber albergado la Consulta Regional para América Latina los días 17 y 18 de febrero 2016. Participaron más de 20 gobiernos y representantes de organizaciones, sociedad civil y el sector privado. El alto nivel de compromiso demostró el interés en la Iniciativa, en particular en lo relativo a la vulnerabilidad de la región y los desastres naturales.

Algunos de los temas más relevantes que se abordaron durante la consulta fueron:

- Establecer apoyo coordinado y formación para servicios consulares que les permita intervenir inmediatamente para asistir a los migrantes. Los acuerdos de cooperación y redes de servicios consulares pueden ayudar a compartir recursos e información.
- La comunicación es fundamental para fomentar la sensibilización sobre los procedimientos de emergencia a nivel local, dar la información de contacto o motivar a los migrantes a registrarse. Se resaltó la importancia de llegar a las comunidades migrantes diversas de manera eficaz a través de actividades de divulgación selectivas con las comunidades migrantes y la sociedad civil.

- Los migrantes retornados necesitarán apoyo específico para facilitar su reinserción económica. Esto podría incluir capacitaciones, apoyo financiero de empresarios y el reconocimiento de habilidades adquiridas en el extranjero.
- La cooperación sobre migración y respuesta a crisis puede ser reforzada aprovechando las plataformas regionales existentes como la Conferencia Regional de Migración (Proceso Puebla) o la Conferencia Sudamericana sobre Migraciones.

Instamos a los gobiernos y otros actores de la región de América Latina a continuar implicados y contribuir en concientizar a la población sobre las necesidades de los migrantes en países en crisis. El proceso inclusivo, liderado por Estados de la Iniciativa MICIC nos llevará a una guía práctica, concreta para mejorar la protección de los migrantes, y se espera que los gobiernos lo miren como un modelo para continuar desarrollando directrices para apoyar a los migrantes vulnerables en términos mas amplios.



## BRIEFING FOR PERMANENT MISSIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

On 7 April 2016, the United States and the Philippines hosted a briefing for permanent missions to the United Nations and organizations in Geneva on the MICIC Initiative, providing an update on the consultations process, a review of what we have learned so far, and a preview of next steps for the Initiative, including the launch of the Guidelines, and connections to the UN Summit on Large Movements of Migrants and Refugees on 19 September 2016. A video recording of the briefing is available on the [MICIC website](http://micicinitiative.iom.int/migrant-stories).



## MIGRANT STORIES

The MICIC website now contains a section featuring Migrant Stories — real life stories of migrants caught in countries in crisis. This is the story of one migrant caught in crisis highlighting the need for better protection that the MICIC initiative seeks to address. Other stories are available here: <http://micicinitiative.iom.int/migrant-stories>

### Alma: A Woman to the Rescue

*By the Center for Migration Advocacy, Philippines*

Alma Guiao, 35, emerged as an unexpected heroine in the siege of Homs during the devastating civil war in Syria.

In 2009, Alma left her home in the Philippines and flew to Syria in the hope of finding greener pastures overseas. Alma dutifully worked in the field of domestic care, looking after an elderly woman in the city of Homs in Western Syria. At the time, Homs was a vibrant city with the country's largest oil refinery. In 2011, soon after the civil war erupted, it quickly became a ghost town tainted with bloodshed.



At the height of the armed conflict, Alma had no idea that she would be instrumental in saving the lives of fellow Filipinos trapped in the city.

"They called my cell phone. They asked me to help them. I asked them to send me their address so that we could reach them, then I called a taxi driver who I knew so that they could be brought to the Embassy," she explains. Alma began the amazing feat of taking several dangerous trips in and out of Homs and Latakia to escort fellow Filipinos to safety in the Philippine Embassy in Damascus.

"We looked for other routes in the desert. We would pass through those routes to avoid military checkpoints. We would also rescue early in the morning so that the guards would still be asleep," she explained. From October 2011 until March 2012, Alma successfully assisted over 25 Filipina workers out of the conflict zone, most of whom she had never even met before the rescue.

Aware of the risk of being captured and killed for every trip, Alma said that her sole motivation was to bring her 'kababayans' (fellow Filipinos) to safety. "They would be so pitiful if they were not able to escape... I thought, 'This was all for my fellow Filipinos'. They were in need of help," she said.

Alma came home to the Philippines in March 2012, welcomed as a heroine by her countrymen and lauded for her bravery and selflessness. Upon her return to the Philippines, the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Overseas Workers' Affairs presented Alma with a Certificate of Commendation for her amazing acts of bravery in saving kababayan workers from Syria.

In December of 2012, the Department of Foreign Affairs in the Philippines raised its Alert Level 4 over Syria, prompting the immediate repatriation of more than 1,600 workers from the conflict-stricken country. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Damascus provided the plane tickets for the Filipino workers.

## ISSUE BRIEF: MICRO-INSURANCE

The MICIC Initiative is publishing a series of issue briefs expanding analysis on key topics identified through the consultations. Issue briefs on disaster risk reduction strategies, trafficking in human beings in the context of crisis, and insurance mechanisms to protect migrants (summarized below), can be accessed on the [MICIC website](#).

### Insurance Mechanisms to Protect Migrants Caught in Countries Experiencing Crises

By **Emily Zimmerman** and **Barbara Magnoni**, *EA Consultants*

Insurance can mitigate migrants' risks before, during, or after a crisis by offering coverage for specific crisis related costs like for evacuation, and can also enable migrants to manage broader risks related to health care, death, disability, or unemployment. The challenges in delivering insurance products for migrants include affordability, especially for low-income migrants, commercial viability and timely delivery of benefits.

The issue brief discusses these challenges and makes recommendations on designing effective insurance programs, including to :

- Use exploratory research to design programs. Research can determine the most relevant and salient risks that are not otherwise met, effective channels for distributing products, and the information and support migrants need to avail themselves to benefits.
- Consider insurance as a partial solution. Insurance is unlikely to cover all of a migrant's needs, but can complement other financial and non-financial tools, such as disaster relief from governments, savings, and support from migrants' families and communities.
- Consider ways to effectively reach irregular migrants, who can be particularly mistrusting of financial service providers. They also lack some of the standard documentation requested by insurers to enroll and receive benefits. This requires creative approaches to product design, delivery, and documentation requirements.
- Monitor effectiveness. There are limited examples of existing insurance products targeting migrants, so studies of pilot initiatives should be used to guide interventions over time to understand the value that insurance offers.

## ENGAGE IN THE MICIC INITIATIVE

### Share your practice

As a consultative and collaborative process, the MICIC Initiative will be collecting information from a variety of sources and through different processes as the basis to produce non-binding, voluntary principles, guidelines and practices ("the Guidelines") for all relevant stakeholders – governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and migrants themselves.

You can contribute to the Initiative by sharing your practice through our [online form](#) on the MICIC website: <http://micicinitiative.iom.int/>

## INTEGRATING MIGRANTS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION: A MICIC WEBINAR

On 25 February 2016, the MICIC Initiative hosted a global webinar dedicated to the integration of migrants in disaster risk reduction and disaster management strategies. The event featured speakers from the Bureau for Consular Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, the U. S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the California State University San Marcos, and the Community Language Information Network Group (CLING) in Christchurch, New Zealand. The speakers highlighted that:

- The inclusion of migrants in the 2015 Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction marks a crucial shift in thinking, and translating it into practice requires the engagement of many actors at all levels.
- Providing migrants with the knowledge of their rights, of risks and of available services, as well as the resources to help themselves and each other can supplement the support that migrants receive from embassies and host countries.
- In preparing crisis responders, more work needs to be done on cultural sensitivity to overcome any obstacle to migrants' access to services such as language barriers or the lack of identity documents.
- Messages should be translated in migrants' languages to ensure they are understood, and communication tools should include use of social media.
- Collaboration and partnership between stakeholders, including migrants themselves, should be established ahead of time, updated regularly, and be based on mutual trust and understanding.

A video recording is available on the [MICIC website](#).



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Assessing vulnerability to climate-related hazards, 2014

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