

Humanitarian border management

Maximilian Pottler

Humanitarian border management is one of the tools that can supplement the humanitarian response for migrants caught in a crisis situation

Not all patterns of mobility during crises and not all people on the move during crises are comprehensively covered by current frameworks at the international, regional and national levels. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recognises the need for improved coordination and capacities and has therefore developed a Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF); this focuses on the vulnerabilities of a variety of people on the move and affected communities, whose needs and specific vulnerabilities can be overlooked in crisis response.¹

The MCOF takes into account a number of migration management tools that can supplement the humanitarian response for migrants caught in a

crisis situation, among which is humanitarian border management. The police, immigration and border management agencies have key roles to play in the event of a migration crisis. When entire regions find themselves in turmoil, states facing political instability may primarily be concerned about security aspects of border management, closing affected borders as a measure to curb increasing cross-border mobility. States need to be equipped with alternative response mechanisms that recognise the crucial importance of upholding humane governance at borders in situations of increased pressure, in order to help protect vulnerable mobile populations in conformity with existing international law.

Building the capacities of border-managing agencies includes working on technical aspects such as sound contingency plans, early warning systems, search and rescue operations and mobile registration units,

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but also on developing an enhanced awareness of vulnerabilities among mixed-migration flows during crisis and referral systems for the protection of vulnerable individuals and groups. Institutionalised information exchange and joint operations have proven to benefit mobile populations as well as law-enforcement agencies. IOM intends to support states in building robust immigration and border management programmes supported by appropriate policies, laws, procedures and information systems to facilitate the movement of people which arises from a crisis. It has trained tens of thousands of immigration and border management officials around the world on topics such as human rights and refugee law, trafficking in persons and freedom of movement.

In late 2013 IOM's Tanzania-based African Capacity Building Centre carried out an assessment at the border regions between the DRC, South Sudan and Uganda. Based on that assessment a Training-of-Trainers for law enforcement officials in DRC

was carried out, encompassing an introduction to relevant international legal frameworks, techniques for interviewing vulnerable migrants, biometric registration of displaced populations, search and rescue, and elements of humanitarian response.

The utility and impact of humanitarian border management will depend largely on an active and innovative dialogue between all involved humanitarian actors on the one side and police, defence, immigration and border management services on the other to ensure that humanitarian principles and accepted international legal standards are increasingly applied by the security sector at times of migration crisis.

Maximilian Pottler mpottler@iom.int is Programme Officer in the Department of Migration Management of the International Organization for Migration. www.iom.int

1. Migration Crisis Operational Framework
<http://tinyurl.com/IOM-MCOF>