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Context & Background

Timely, disaggregated data and contextual information related to populations on the move, stranded, or seeking asylum, is imperative to a well-informed, well-managed, protection sensitive and collective response across international borders, governments and regions. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees call upon all states to implement well-managed migration and refugee protection policies. To support states in meeting these obligations, there are increasing calls for stronger and more comprehensive data, analysis and actionable information to ensure that vulnerable groups, including migrants and refugees overall, as well as children, are not "left behind" in policy and operational responses.

In 2015, an increasing number of people risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea in search of safety and better lives. An effective coordinated response was needed to support the humanitarian community in making informed decisions in timely manners. Refugees and migrants arriving on the three Mediterranean Routes irregularly and then taking their journeys onward to their preferred destination countries posed significant challenges both for host governments, as well as humanitarian agencies, to understand their profile, protection needs and to respond in coordinated manners.

To respond to those challenges and to fulfil the information needs of the humanitarian community for evidence-based decision-making, a Regional Information Management Working Group (RIMWG) was established. Co–chaired by IOM, UNICEF and UNCHR, the fist RIMWG meeting was held in December 2015 in Geneva. The purpose of the RIMWG was to coordinate information management activities at the inter-agency level, exchange and harmonise datasets in mixed migration flows, and build IM capacities in each agency for further collaboration. The overarching objectives of the RIMWG was to support the humanitarian community with

relevant information in interagency coordination and response, as well as to support evidence-based policy making.

RIMWG Workshop

A day and half (21- 22 November 2018) inter-agency workshop on information management was organized at the IOM regional office in Vienna. The workshop was a first of its kind forum, bringing together regional and country IM/M&E focal points from UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM. A participant from Regional IFRC Office for Europe also attended.

The main objectives of the workshop were to take stock of information management practices, IM products and other best practices in the Europe refugee and migrant response. The workshop also served the purpose of facilitating networking and lateral exchange from within and between European countries who are involved in data collection and situation monitoring. The workshop also proved to be an opportunity for IM and M&E focal points to take stock of the regional experiences on information management and to take away lessons learned on the interagency approaches and use those to enhance partnerships and coordination at country level wherever feasible. The workshop agenda can be found here.

Discussion topics

To facilitate effective discussions, knowledge sharing and peer learning, the workshop was developed in a participatory approach, allowing colleagues to highlighting promising practices and experiences from their country contexts. They were also divided into groups to carry out exercises in interactive ways to ensure maximum engagement and results. Based on the workshop agenda, the following topics were discussed:

1. **Data Collection:** The objective of this session was to map existing areas of collaboration, identify synergies and define a broader, longer-term framework for collaboration, adapting to potential changes in the European context. Data collection tools and systems such as the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), Border Protection Monitoring (BPM), specific needs assessments and Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) - were discussed to understand their functionality and applications for future use for collecting information on refugee and migrant populations in Europe. The session also provided an opportunity for participants to map out who collects what type of data, where such data is collected (i.e. locations), what tools and strategies are used for data collection, and overall to collaborate for better data collection strategies. Materials from this session can be found here.

2. **Data Analysis:** The purpose of this session was to share experience, challenges and best practices on existing joint data analysis and collaboration (including engagement with national authorities), and/or identify areas/topics where joint analysis could be beneficial. Limitations such as available resources (both technical and human capacity), political factors (government institutes less willing to share data) and lack of granularities of data (age/gender disaggregation, UASC breakdown for instance) were also highlighted both in discussions and through presentations. In addition, during the group exercises, further opportunities were explored to strengthen existing efforts on joint analysis - to benefit the organization with better IM products as a result of such efforts. Materials from this session can be found here.

   Some good examples highlighted in this session included:

- **Research on the situation of refugee and migrant children turning 18 in Italy**: joint initiative by IOM, UNCHR and UNICEF.
- **Information management system for the placement of refugee and migrant UASC in Greece**: UNCEF support to EKKA aiming at building government capacity to manage data as part of case management and placement into accommodation for UASC.
- **MIRA - Interagency needs assessments in Bosnia and Herzegovina:** needs assessments undertaken by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), which proved to be a useful tool to identify needs and inform the planning and coordination by the UN agencies.

3. **Data Gaps:** Building on previous sessions, this one allowed participants to discuss and identify key data gaps that hinder UN and government ability to respond to the needs of refugee and migrant populations. Country IM focal points therefore discussed solutions and possible initiatives that could address these gaps through interagency approaches, using comparative strengths and capacity both at country and regional level. Materials from this session can be found here.

Key data gaps highlighted during the session could be grouped around:

- **Irregular population movements (and especially secondary population movements), presence of unregistered refugees/migrants and push-backs at borders:** common across Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and the Western Balkans. The overall lack of common framework on the data collection methodologies in the Balkans region has led to silos approaches when it comes to data analysis.
- **Disaggregated demographic data, specifically on children and especially UASC**: common across BiH, Turkey, Serbia, Spain and Italy. Secondary movements in the EU pose additional challenges for integration planning and understanding specific protection needs for programming.
- **Vulnerabilities and access to services such as education and health:** mostly in the Western Balkans.
- **Voluntary and forced returns**: specific to Spain and Italy.

Throughout these three sessions, a prioritization matrix (see here) was used to facilitate the group-work and to map out datasets collected and analyzed at the country level, as well as identify data gaps. Categories such as 'Difficult' to 'Easy' and 'Quite Important' to 'Critical' used in the matrix to sort group outputs. Short summary of main data gaps and priorities per country can be found here.

4. **Partnership:** Noting multiple stakeholders (including a number of EU institutions) are involved in data collection and/or analysis on migration, partnerships and engagement with such actors were discussed to enhance not only collaboration and build expertise on methodologies, but also influence partners' data collection in a context of ever shrinking funding opportunities. The UNICEF-UNHCR Recommendations to the EU on the improvement of data on children in migration were brought as a concrete example of advocacy efforts that can help address key data gaps in EU MS, as well as other neighbouring countries. Materials from this session can be found here.

Key take-aways

- *All agencies possess knowledge, expertise and experience that, when brought together, can address many of the bottlenecks and challenges individual agencies face in their daily work.*

- *Engagement with government authorities to provide technical support – if/ when needed – should be looked at as a solution to addressing many of the current data gaps- e.g. demographic profile of new arrivals, including UASC, and people in reception facilities.*

- *The regional IM working group can provide a platform to discuss any country-related challenges and identity solutions to strengthen knowledge generation and evidence-based decision-making.*

- *There is a strong need for further data harmonization to improve situation monitoring and response using consistent information in timely manner. This implies building stronger partnership with Government authorities and key European institutions. It also requires UN agencies and other partners working more together on methodologies for data collection and validation, building on their respective expertise and capacities.*

Interagency IM Priorities for 2019

Based on discussions and interactive sessions during the workshop, the following priorities were agreed upon with participants for 2019:

1. **Improve quality of data:** Through new and existing partnerships, advocacy and technical support to government authorities improve disaggregation of data on arrivals, as well as refugees and migrants present. Agencies involved in site profiles, vulnerabilities assessments and needs assessments to streamline activities by designing joint data collection tools and joint products.

2. **Stronger inter-agency coordination at country level**: Agencies should aim at establishing formal or informal IMWG at country level (or use other already existing forums) to facilitate data sharing among the humanitarian community, to share good practices and knowledge on methodologies and tools and help respond to the information needs of the responders, donors, research and academia.

3. **More internal information sharing:** There was a shared interest to improve internal information/data sharing among the three agencies. This should also include better contingency planning at the country level and early warning on arrivals, emerging migration routes, etc. Agencies should also aim towards joint data analysis to support coordination and response activities. To address concerns over internal data sharing, the regional IMWG shall conduct an analysis of respective data protection and sharing policies and provide guidance to country staff from all three agencies on best ways to do so.

4. **Capacity Building:** IM focal points require additional support to build their capacity and that of government counterparts; UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM regional focal points will compile and share with COs training materials and courses existing within agencies that can benefit others. Whenever possible, in-person trainings undertaken by individual agencies could be expanded to invite participants from other sister agencies.

Participants' feedback

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to provide their feedback – an opportunity to provide specific comments or questions, and describe how the workshop can support them in their IM work, or identify other areas in which they could need further support. All participants found the workshop very useful.

The key feedback points which the RIMWG will follow up on further with the IM community in Europe include:

- assisting in the implementation of strategies for identifying data gaps at country level;
- identifying efficient data collection methodologies;
- encouraging internal data sharing and collaboration;
- facilitating best practices exchange (tools, strategies, partnerships);
- reinforcing country level advocacy for inter-agency collaboration;
- developing joint data products with harmonized datasets;
- conducting regular workshops to provide a platform for further exchange and cross-fertilization of ideas and knowledge on thematic areas of common interest.

Annexes

Participants

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