

Real Time Evaluation – European Migration Response 2015-2016

Executive Summary / February 2017

Background

The Real Time Evaluation (RTE) of the European Migration Response 2015-2016 was commissioned by the IFRC to: “assess and provide lessons to inform the IFRC response to the ongoing migration crisis affecting Europe, as well as its response to migrants’ needs beyond Europe.”

The RTE focuses on challenges and opportunities both at National Society and IFRC levels. The report draws findings from four country visits - Finland, Austria, Greece, Serbia - triangulated with interviews with German, Hungarian, Swedish and Italian NS as well as interviews at IFRC headquarters to draw overarching conclusions and recommendations.

The RTE field visits and interviews were conducted over a six-week period in June-July 2016. The IFRC Management Response to the evaluation report finalized in September has been prepared in consultation with participating NS’s during late 2016.

Key findings and recommendations

Preparedness and planning

Along with partners, notably European governments themselves, the IFRC and NS assessed were underprepared for the scale and longevity of the European Population Movement.

Recommendations:

- Extract, connect and embed existing migration related resources and expertise throughout the Movement
- Assess and plan for migration with a long term, flexible approach: collectively build and regularly revisit regional contingency plans and revisit the appropriateness of the short term ERU model for a protracted situation.

Assistance and relief

The response has emphasized material assistance of which substantial amounts were provided and NS adapted to the situation by adjusting relief items to be more appropriate for migrants on the move. Immediate first aid was reliably provided during the surge. NS recognized but only partly responded to the information needs of migrants.

Recommendations:

- Deliver material items on the basis of what and how much is needed
- Ensure services are culturally appropriate and relevant to migrants.
- Promote the use of cash as a relief modality for migration
- Invest in two-way communication and respond to migrants’ feedback and complaints.
- Revise operational support systems to be more timely and efficient for protracted emergency operations.

Protection

Despite protection being a core pillar identified in the European Migration Framework, the response in this area requires greater attention. Restoring Family Links (RFL) services varied along the migratory route with notable accomplishments.

Recommendations:

- Demonstrate the commitment to protection with greater urgency and dedicated resources, ensuring that it is a central measure of the success of RCRC's efforts and is embedded in migration operations from the outset.
- Clarify what the IFRC can offer in terms of protection and embed mechanisms which ensure basic protection measures are taken at all points of contact with migrants. Document and create an evidence base of protection-related incidents and issues to advocate for and respond to.

Social Integration and Inclusion

Although context greatly dictates the feasibility of social integration and inclusion activities, they should be incorporated in the response when appropriate, but as early as possible and with a long term outlook. There is a further need to identify the RCRC's core priorities in this area.

Recommendations:

- Facilitate practical support for transitioning from a short term emergency response to a longer term integration approach including co design practices with the host community. Ensure regular NS activities for local populations are not diverted by migration activities.
- Outline ways to capitalize on external partnerships to combat xenophobia and promote solidarity using media outlets and activating the volunteer network. Integrate social cohesion in domestic and regional advocacy and fundraising priorities.

Advocacy and the Auxiliary Role

NS have been challenged in their auxiliary role to balance Government political agendas versus upholding humanitarian standards and principles in their migration response. Strong advocacy was exercised by IFRC at the EU level but greater evidence based advocacy is needed.

Recommendations:

Engage in targeted advocacy to address the critical and evolving migration issues:

- Identify and communicate positions on priority domestic and regional advocacy issues
- Invest in evidence based advocacy
- Engage RCRC actors and partners in the IFRC [Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy](#) to specify roles, responsibilities and actions for migration advocacy.

Volunteer Engagement

Volunteers play a central role in the migration response, but some NS struggled with their recruitment and management. The recruitment of migrants as volunteers has been successful, an example of a positive social integration activity.

Recommendations:

Ensure that volunteer engagement is carefully planned and managed:

- Develop Volunteer Management Plans tailored to today's volunteer profile
- Ensure a volunteer focal point during operations
- Listen to, support and recognize volunteers for their well-being and retention.

Coordination and Collaboration

At the NS level, the migration situation brought domestic and international units together operationally. New avenues of peer NS collaboration emerged and coordination between NS and external actors was effective.

The launching of individual Emergency Appeals as opposed to a Regional Appeal challenged consistent information sharing, and the potential that came from NS being positioned along the migratory route was not harnessed.

Recommendations:

- Ensure key decision makers are brought together for planning.
- Identify migration-related competencies within the RCRC and finalize surge support roster
- Continue to foster and strengthen peer NS relationships built during this response.
- Pre-negotiate and develop MoUs with government and other external actors.
- Establish rapid and streamlined information sharing protocols for NS' migration response.