

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
1 – 3 JULY 2015 - International Conference Center Geneva**

THEMATIC SESSION

BACKGROUND PAPER

***Towards Evidence- Informed Responses to Protection at Sea –
Local, Regional and Global Initiatives***

Thursday 02 July 2015, 09h00 – 10h45 - Room 3

Background

Today, over 51 million people are on the move, fleeing conflicts and persecution - the largest number since World War II. They are part of an increasing number of people moving in mixed migratory flows who are risking their lives at sea. Refugees and stateless persons often use the same routes and means of transport for access to asylum and protection.

Increasingly, state responses to mixed migration are viewed through a ‘deterrence’ lens, motivated by security, border control and law enforcement perspectives. It is pertinent that with increased number of conflicts globally and protracted refugee situations, any tightening of migration policies place refugees at further risk. These risks include exposure to exploitation by smugglers, trafficking for labour or for sexual purposes, among others. The lack of adequate safe alternative pathways to access asylum and protection feeds the growing transnational criminal networks engaged in smuggling and trafficking in persons. It also puts further pressure on the protection systems and frameworks that were established for those in need of international protection.

Mobility is often the only option for survival, even if it entails dangerous land and sea crossings with all the accompanying risks. The recent incidents on the Mediterranean Sea, as well as those reported from the Gulf of Aden, from the Red Sea, and from the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea, once again reveal the vulnerability of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons. As discussions for comprehensive approaches and solutions to address the dangerous sea crossings gain momentum, the importance of data, information and evidence comes into play. As most of the onward refugee movements occur in mixed flows, the collection of data and its speedy analysis is made more difficult.

In order to be effective, responses must rely on the analysis of updated information and data reflecting the scale, scope and complexity of mixed migratory movements. Irregular movements across land enroute through seas to access protection need to be tracked. This is particularly difficult as not only are most of these movements managed secretly, but migratory routes are prone to shift rapidly as states enforce deterrence measures. It is nonetheless noteworthy that deterrence not only serves to shift the routes, but it also places refugees and other groups of people at greater risks, with people choosing alternative routes and embarking on more risky, hazardous journeys using irregular methods and routes,

The session “*Towards Evidence-Informed Responses to Protection at Sea – Local, Regional and Global Initiatives*” will focus specifically on the issue of *data and information collection and its analysis to inform response and solutions*. In order to enable effective protection-sensitive responses, improved data, information and analysis is important. In this context, key aspects aimed at improving the response and the protection situation of those at risk are outlined below:

- **The root causes and drivers of movements:** While there is awareness of the cause of flight of refugees from countries of origin, there is continued need for improved understanding of the profile of refugees and asylum-seekers moving onwards from countries of asylum or from where they could have potentially sought asylum. Understanding the root causes and drivers of mixed migratory movements is important as it will provide insights to responses that may be undertaken to ensure the availability of protection where they are, rather than necessitate their onward hazardous movement.
- **Tracking mixed migration trends:** Migratory movements are impacted by both supply and demand, as well as by state reactions to these. Deterrence measures result in rapid shifts in the migration routes and may include enhanced risks for those using the services of smugglers to access protection and safety. Improved monitoring and analysis capacities would allow for quick identification of shifting patterns of movements, as well as new travel routes, entry and transit points. Very importantly, trends tracking has the direct impact of real-time understanding of protection challenges faced by refugees and migrants. Timely knowledge greatly facilitates prevention and appropriate response.
- **The scale of the phenomenon:** Mixed maritime movements have been ongoing across the world, and have increased rapidly in particular in the Mediterranean, in the Gulf of Aden, and in the Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea. By their very nature, embarkations are clandestine and anecdotal reports indicate that many boats that set out do not necessarily make it ashore. The absence of evidence of the scale of this defies urgent and effective solutions.

The search for actions and solutions at the various steps of the journey needs to be based upon real time information. The collection of both qualitative and quantitative data is essential to understand the complexities of this phenomenon, taking into account ‘the full cycle’ of mixed migration and the environments in which it takes place. Different groups of people move for different reasons, and their situation (and status) may well change along the way. Precise information, followed by its processing and analysis, is crucial in

order to design, implement and evaluate more effective policy and programmatic responses and interventions.

The session will be an opportunity to share and learn from a variety of experiences on mixed migration data collection and its analysis, especially for sea related movements. The session is conceived as a “practical” one aimed at sharing concrete ideas, tools, and good practices with a view to spread the experience and enable improved approaches in the collection of data and its analysis in the context of mixed migratory movements by sea. A key outcome will be recommendations for the way forward to enable strengthened gathering, analysis and use of data on drivers and trends of mixed movements by sea. These efforts will facilitate an evidence-informed approach to the design of comprehensive and effective solutions.

Moderator: Kathrine Starup, *Global Protection Advisor, Danish Refugee Council (DRC)*

Speakers:

Melissa Phillips, *Senior Research Associate, Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS)*

Dr Melissa Phillips is a project manager with the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat in Kenya and has previously worked in Ethiopia and Libya. She is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Melbourne and has authored publications on migration, transit and multiculturalism. Previously, she worked in Australia on an Academic Expert Panel presenting a series of evidence based articles in support of a humanitarian response to the arrival of asylum seekers in Australia.

Focus of the presentation: The importance of data and analysis of the drivers and migratory trends of sea crossings. A model and tools for data, analysis and research.

Chris Lewa, *Coordinator, The Arakan Project*

Chris Lewa is the founder and coordinator of The Arakan Project based in Bangkok. Since 1999, she has been engaged in research-based advocacy on the situation of the Rohingya minority in Burma/Myanmar, as well as on their situation as refugees in Bangladesh and other countries in the Asian region. She has also provided consultancy services to international human rights organisations, UN agencies and donor governments.

Focus of the presentation: Voice from the ground on good practices and strategies to collect and analyses information and data on irregular movements by sea.

Sumbul Rizvi, *Head of Unit (Asylum and Migration), Division of International Protection (DIP), UNHCR*

Sumbul Rizvi heads the UNHCR Policy Unit on Asylum and Migration. She has worked with UNHCR for 18 years with over 15 years spent in the field, including Afghanistan, Darfur, India and several emergency operations. Prior to this, Sumbul spent over a decade as a litigation counsel in India working in the field of corporate criminal law and on rights based issues.

Focus of the presentation: Inter-agency initiatives on information gathering, analysis and coordination to inform protection responses for protection at sea.