
Humanitarian Border Management

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Needs and Gaps Assessment Report





IOM Development Fund
DEVELOPING CAPACITIES IN MIGRATION MANAGEMENT



International Organization for Migration

Humanitarian Border Management

REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA

Needs and Gaps Assessment
Report

Yerevan 2016

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCP	Border Crossing Point
BMIS	Border Management Information System
CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DMT	Disaster Management Team
DRRNP	Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform
EPI	Eastern Partnership Initiative
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HBM	Humanitarian Border Management
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LLRM	Local Level Risk Management
MCOF	Migration Crisis Operational Framework
MOD	RA Ministry of Diaspora
MFA	RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MLSA	RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MOA	RA Ministry of Agriculture
MOH	RA Ministry of Health
MTAD	RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development
MES	RA Ministry of Emergency Situations
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSS	RA National Security Service
PVD	RA Passport and Visa Department
SMS	RA State Migration Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assessment Background

Over recent years, a great deal of work has been done in Armenia in relation to modernizing and capacity-building within the migration structure, much of it by IOM and other international partners, in conjunction with the competent government agencies. The objectives of this report differ to the others on border management that have preceded it, in that it looks at Humanitarian Border Management (HBM), which is a sector of assistance identified within the *Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) of IOM*.¹ HBM covers border operations before, during and after humanitarian crises that trigger mass cross-border movements, when border posts may be confronted with extraordinary and protection-sensitive migration influx.

Of the 7 international Border Crossing Points (BCP) in Armenia, a field visit was conducted at Bavra land BCP on the Georgia border, which also involved crossing to the corresponding Georgian BCP at Ninotsminda and meeting with Georgian Border Guards. As the borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed, consideration of susceptibility to mass migrant movement is necessarily confined to the Georgian and Iranian borders, although relatively large scale but controlled movements by Syrians, principally those of Armenian origin, has occurred through Zvartnots airport over the past 5 or 6 years.

Armenia has traditionally been regarded as a source and to a much lesser extent, a transit country for migration, rather than a destination for economic migrants. The country suffers from negative net migration, which is of concern to government. Entry requirements for foreigners are comparatively relaxed, with a liberal visa regime for most countries, expedited procedures for residence and naturalization of foreign nationals of Armenian ethnic origin and employment regulations that allow those entering in other capacities to switch status in country if they find work. Whilst Armenia has hosted a large refugee population in the past, it has been largely as a result of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and involved Azerbaijanis of Armenian ethnic origin and as such, been regarded as internal displacement rather than a mass influx. Whilst mass influx at land borders is generally considered to be unlikely, the consensus of opinion amongst agencies and organizations in the migration and emergency response structure was that it could not be ruled out, particularly in view of the current instability in the Middle East.

¹ For more information, see International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2012) *IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework*. IOM Council, 101st Session, November 15, 2012. IOM, Geneva. www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/MC2355_-_IOM_Migration_Crisis_Operational_Framework.pdf



Policy and Legislation

Policy and legislation has tended to reflect the relaxed attitude of government to migration control engendered by the perception that the country is not a destination for economic migrants. This particularly applies to foreign nationals of Armenian ethnic origin, who qualify for citizenship immediately they provide proof of ethnicity. Other foreign nationals also benefit from relaxed entry requirements and internal control is generally only exercised when they exit the country, by means of fines levied on those that overstay. Although generic mechanisms for emergency, crisis and disaster response are highly developed and well-structured, policy has not tended to include provision for mass refugee movements across borders. Although border management plans have included aspects of crisis response, it is unclear how far they have been progressed.

Migration legislation is comprehensive and as it has been developed and implemented, it has been spread over various legal instruments that separately deal with aspects of migration, for example the Law on Foreigners, the Law on Refugees and Asylum and the Criminal Code. Previous studies have revealed that most legislation compares favourably with that practiced internationally, particularly in the EU and where it has lacked clarity, legislators have acted to make amendments. Provisions have been made to give temporary protection to nationalities seeking asylum from war zones and such like, which can be invoked in the event of a mass influx, although what constitutes a mass influx is not defined. Ideally, changes are still required, principally to combine the various migration related laws into one piece of legislation.

Administration

Coordination of disaster and emergency response is primarily the responsibility of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES) and other agencies seem content to be directed by it, depending on the nature of the emergency. All government agencies are required to participate in emergency planning and as a result, know how and where they fit into the structure. They also seem to work in harmony and there is no perception of friction between any of them. An emergency response exercise conducted in 2015 included a refugee influx scenario that brought agencies together and showed how well they could cooperate and complement each other, as well as identifying areas where more work was required. Reports indicate, however, that the exercise did not appear to extend to role playing the entry of refugees at the border and only dealt with how they would be processed later in a camp.

The Border Guard of the Republic of Armenia National Security Service (NSS) is responsible for administering migration controls at BCPs and on green borders. They receive training on HBM related subjects, but it is not clear what is conducted at induction level and what is provided later, although it is apparent that organizations such as the Red Cross are involved in providing training, as there is a programme due to start imminently. Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) for dealing with mass influx at BCPs are said to be available, but as they are confidential, could not be reviewed for HBM content. Whilst relations between Armenian and Georgian border guards are excellent, they do not have joint SOPs and lack formal MOUs or other bilateral agreements.



Operations

The three land BCPs on the border with Georgia are in the process of being redeveloped and the assessment of how Bavra BCP could be adapted to control a mass influx of refugees has been based on an examination of the plans for the new site, rather than a survey of the existing one. Various options have been identified for facilitating mass registration, both at the new site and in the immediate vicinity. Interagency contingency plans for disaster response have been developed, but those available for review, although detailed and comprehensive, do not specifically cover mass refugee influx across borders. Emergency response SOPs for Bavra were not available for review and those developed for the new BCP did not include mass influx response.

Rapid response teams were reported to have been established, but it was not clear what their scope of operation was or whether they were specifically trained in crisis management and responding to mass refugee influx. Cross-border relations were informal and border guards from both sides met personally and conversed by telephone when there were issues of mutual interest or concern.

Information Management

The Border Management Information System (BMIS) is the primary system for information management at borders and is reliable and technically advanced. However, it is not currently being used to collect biometrics and although appropriate for recording the movement of documented travellers, detecting fraudulent documents and checking alert lists, in its present configuration it would not appear to be an appropriate system for documenting refugees. Additionally, although mobile BMIS equipment is being used at railway stations, it can only currently operate offline and it is not available at other BCPs.

Registration of refugees at borders, particularly those without documentation, needs to be a central part of planning for crisis response to mass influx and decisions need to be made concerning which of the alternative information systems available, operated by PDV and SMS, would be best suited and/or most easily adapted for mobile deployment to registration points, whether at borders or in camps. Collection of biometrics from refugees, if not all cross-border travellers, also needs to be considered if whichever registration system is decided upon is to be fully effective.



1. INTRODUCTION

This report was produced under the IOM funded project “*Strengthening Capacities of Armenian National Security Service and Border Guards in their Response to Migration Crisis,*” which aims to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Armenian National Security Service and the Border Guards Troops to respond to migration crises and enhance their role in inter-agency cooperation.

As well as giving details of the assessment objectives, this chapter provides an introduction to the concept of Humanitarian Border Management (HBM), which has been developed by IOM within the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF),² and further information on HBM assessments and best practices.

1.1 Assessment Objectives

In specific terms, the objectives of the assessment report may be summarized as:

- Country-specific mapping and examination of the types of natural disasters occurring in Armenia (including the South Caucasus) that may force people to flee.
- Assessment of existing relevant national legal framework guiding the preparedness for and response to humanitarian situations.
- Evaluation of existing policy framework, including contingency plans and disaster risk reduction strategies guiding the command structure, cooperation and coordination among different governmental, as well as non-governmental stakeholders at times of crisis.
- Mapping of governmental and non-governmental entities concerned with migration crisis management, and analysis of their respective roles and responsibilities.
- Examination of existing crisis-response human resources and provisions for emergency deployment and temporary recruitment.
- Assessment of existing HBM-related training capacities.
- Review of capacities for setting up, managing and securing temporary accommodation/transit centres at the border.

2 See International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2012) *IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework*. IOM Council, 101st Session, November 15, 2012. IOM, Geneva. www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/MC2355_-_IOM_Migration_Crisis_Operational_Framework.pdf



- Evaluation of identity management at times of crisis.
- Examination of information management procedures and capacities at times of crisis, including information sharing between various authorities, connectivity between border posts and headquarters and reporting systems.
- Appraisal of existing infrastructure and equipment, including specialized equipment for border surveillance and patrolling, communication, mobile registration, and search and rescue.
- Providing advice and guidance for the development of SOPs in humanitarian border management for Border Guards at Border Crossing Points.

Based on findings in these areas, recommendations have been made for the institutional development and capacity-building needs of the border guard troops and other relevant agencies, the legal and policy framework and possible improvements to raising awareness and cross-border cooperation during emergencies.

1.2 The Concept of Humanitarian Border Management

HBM, sometimes also referred to as “Crisis Border Management” or “Emergency Border Management” is a sector of assistance identified within the IOM MCOF. It is related to other areas of MCOF, in particular disaster risk reduction and emergency consular services.

HBM differs from traditional border management in that it concentrates on emergency or humanitarian crises, when border posts are confronted with extraordinary, protection-sensitive migration movements. Various types of crises may also result in a sudden influx of relief goods, equipment and personnel, while at the same time people may decide, or be forced, to flee across the border, and emergencies may threaten to spill-over to neighboring countries. Officials at the border are usually the first to be confronted with such unusual movement dynamics and border security can become affected. Therefore, the predominant focus of HBM is on improving the capacities of border officials to deal with emergency situations to help reduce uncertainty and provide adequate response mechanisms. HBM rests on the premise that well managed crisis response can help prevent the closure of borders and assist the international community in responding effectively to migrants’ humanitarian needs.

Border management agencies (immigration, police, customs, quarantine, etc.) need to be equipped with the appropriate legal and operational systems and mechanisms in order to respond to humanitarian crises and mass movements. For example, an efficient needs assessment and referral system (i.e. a support network of agencies and individuals) is necessary in order to more effectively assist migrants with a variety of vulnerabilities and protection needs when they are moving in large numbers across international borders. Protracted crises require responses from border and border control officials. States need to record migration movements so that they can be measured and understood, enabling government agencies and the international community to examine the cause and incentives for them and thus develop possible solutions.

Border authorities have a crucial role to play in assessing individual needs for emergency care, and referring vulnerable migrants to appropriate authorities, whether to other agencies nationally or to international humanitarian agencies operating on the ground. In purely generic terms, in many countries border areas are inhabited by minorities who may suffer from



oppression by foreign armed groups or get caught in the cross-fire of military actions to push back incursions. Therefore, these areas require specific and timely humanitarian protection measures to prevent any further victimization of already vulnerable populations. The concerned geographical areas are often likely to be affected by cross-border movements of combatants seeking logistical support lines, recruitment of supporters and/or a safe haven against persecution. Such crises can provoke augmented risks for smuggling and trafficking across borders including arms, drugs and persons. HBM therefore seeks to help States balance the tension between humanitarian responsibility and concerns for the safety and security of migrants and the countries of destination.

Managing protracted mass movements also includes regional and international cooperation on readmission, returns, economic development and integration, as well as respect for the international protection of migrants in need.

1.3 Humanitarian Border Assessment and Best Practice

This assessment follows a humanitarian border management assessment model, which consists of four main pillars/subject areas: regulatory framework; administration; operations; and information technology.

The first pillar, the regulatory framework comprises a review of policies, legislation and regulations related to migration emergencies or sudden changes in migratory movements precipitated, for example, by man-made or natural disaster. It also encompasses the government's approach to relationships with other States, particular neighboring States, and international organizations, in preparing for and managing mass movements.

National policy and legislation would ideally include provisions to cover mass migration movements. Relevant international conventions and protocols would be ratified and implemented in domestic legislation to ensure the protection of vulnerable migrants and respect for human rights. Measures to facilitate the deployment of international relief efforts would be built in, including the relaxation or suspension of visa and customs requirements for foreign workers and equipment, and exceptions for the registration and control of migrants. A policy of legally enabled registration and monitoring is central to establishing the extent of any influx, recording identity, managing accommodation, providing aid, protecting national security, disruption of organized crime and eventually, asylum or return/repatriation.

The administration part of the assessment requires mapping and identification of the security structure, number and locations of all official land, air and sea- border checkpoints. The administration pillar also covers trainings of border officials and related staff, to include HBM and interagency cooperation and oversight between relevant stakeholders active in the field of border management.

Comprehensive analysis of BCPs and their susceptibility to mass movements is essential. It is important for the authorities with whom primary responsibility for border control rests are aware of the operational capacity of all BCPs and in particular, the BCP's ability to react to mass migration driven by emergency. BCPs should be able to provide a humanitarian response which accords with international norms. It is therefore a good practice to map all BCPs to provide a comprehensive picture of resources - human, infrastructure and equipment - that are available for, or adaptable to emergencies. Whilst BCP mapping and integrated border management assessments have in the past covered day to day operational border



management in considerable detail, they do not often include projections or gap analysis for emergency response.

An integral part of mapping and analysis should also be identifying the susceptibility of borders and BCPs to mass migration, based on historical precedent, the regional political landscape and the threat from natural disaster. In order to be able to respond effectively to mass migration movements, an overarching contingency plan covering all agencies is essential. Often, contingency plans are prepared by individual national and international agencies and whilst some are also interlinked, it is unusual to find one that succeeds in covering all agencies with clearly defined areas of responsibility and networked operating instructions. Ideally, plans should include interaction with neighboring countries and be developed jointly.

In the operational context, an HBM assessment would determine whether clear and comprehensive SOPs for migration emergencies (precipitated by natural disasters, armed conflict, health crisis or other) exist, and are distributed to all BCPs. Furthermore, the assessment should make out the potential or the existence of joint integrated border management activities and operating procedures.

BCPs cannot routinely be resourced to deal with a mass influx of migrants, so the establishment of rapid reaction teams can help governments respond to crises. Rapid response teams of highly trained and experienced officers could be established to immediately mobilize in the event of emergency, to carry out screening and basic identity registration as close to the border as possible. Rapid reaction teams should ideally be multi-agency and should train and conduct joint exercises with relief and other agencies. They could provide training and support; assess infrastructure and communication needs; and collect information to convey to officials responsible for information analysis and intelligence.

All organizations should have some form of standard operating procedures and those in the migration structure are no exception. In the context of HBM, this particularly applies to border control agencies as it is essential that all officers comply with the law, especially in relation to human rights, protection and security. They should have available a consolidated source of reference material for when they encounter situations with which they are not familiar. SOPs should ideally be comprehensive, unambiguous, regularly updated and accessible to all officers in hard and soft copy. Where SOPs do not exist or are inadequate, full reviews of operating procedures, especially at BCPs, will be required.

Good governance at the border requires adequate training for border officials; this includes training on how to deal with mass movements at the border. SOPs (as discussed earlier) can be helpful in providing instruction to border officers to deal with unusual or unfamiliar circumstances, but there is little substitute for a well trained work force. Training relevant for HBM would include training on protection standards; role of international agencies, their staff and relief goods; a review of SOPs for emergencies; registration techniques and reviewing documents; identification of combatants and human smugglers; interviewing techniques; identification of migrants in need of assistance, including victims of trafficking.

For information management, a HBM assessment examines a country's procedures for identity and risk management and the existence of emergency passport/visa systems, including transit visas. This includes identity management and biometric registrations, and systems to record referrals to international organizations if necessary.

Lack of information and intelligence will at best hamper a response to mass migration and at worst, create chaos. Gathering of information takes many forms, ranging from technical systems such as BMIS and computerized registration of nationals, foreigners and refugees to



individual officers being aware of the need for the collection and reporting of events and incidents that occur on a daily basis. All information should be recorded, preferably electronically, on interlinked storage and retrieval systems capable of interrogating each other. BMIS is an essential tool in border management for many reasons, including understanding migration patterns and security. During crises, a BMIS that can manage a significant increase in registrations - using mobile equipment for example - is essential. A BMIS that collects biometric information can be particularly important in a crisis because some migrants can be travelling without, or adequate, identity documents.

1.4 Assessment Scope and Methodology

This assessment has included desk research on legislation, regulatory frameworks and policies for emergency and disaster management, with the primary focus on how the emergency response structure is geared towards managing mass migrant movements at BCPs, in compliance with the principles of HBM. The study commenced with open source research, which included a review of legislation, policy documents, reports and studies provided by the IOM Mission in Yerevan, together with open source websites related to migration and asylum in Armenia. This was followed up by a 5 day in-country programme, between 8 and 12 February, 2016, of meetings with representatives of government departments with responsibilities in the migration structure and non-governmental organizations operating within it (annex A).

- The in-country visit involved meetings and interviews in Yerevan with representatives from;
- Republic of Armenia Border Guards and National Security Service;
- Police of the Republic of Armenia;
- Republic of Armenia State Revenue Committee;
- Republic of Armenia Ministry of Emergency Situations;
- Armenian Red Cross Society;
- Republic of Armenia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
- Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health;
- Republic of Armenia State Migration Service;
- Republic of Armenia Ministry of Diaspora;
- Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- United Nations Development Programme;
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Additionally, on 9 February, a field visit was conducted at Bavra border crossing point.

There is a great deal of research material available on disaster risk reduction, disaster planning and strategy development in Armenia, emanating from a wide range of government agencies, non-governmental organizations and international agencies. This is to be expected, given the susceptibility of the Country to natural and potentially, man-made disasters. The



World Bank considers Armenia among the 60 most disaster prone countries in the world.³ There are many different hazards that may be considered applicable to Armenia, and some of them are considered to be more frequent and dangerous for human life and health: earthquakes, floods, landslides, rock-falls, mudflows, lightning, hail, ground subsidence and forests fire. To a large extent, this is explained by the fact that Armenia has a complex landscape, with a territory formed by steep mountain chains and valleys in one of the most seismically active regions of the world. According to data of MES Armenian Rescue Service, taking the country as a whole, susceptibility is:

- 100% - to severe earthquakes;
- 30% - to mudflows and floods;
- 17% - to hailstorms, etc;
- 15% - to drought;
- 12% - to frosts;
- 4.1% - to landslides;
- 0.5% - to collapse and rock-falls.

More than 80 per cent of the country's land is exposed to erosion, salt accumulation or alkalization, over-moisturization and watering.

It is against this background that the susceptibility to mass migration movements of the country in general and BCPs, in particular, is assessed, with a view to suggesting how capacity to respond and manage may be enhanced. Included in the assessment is a review of the significant progress made in integrated border management over the preceding 5 or 6 years and the continuing development of policy and legislation to meet the needs of displaced persons and refugees.

1.5 Country Background - Political and Economic Considerations

The geopolitical and economic situation of Armenia has been comprehensively covered in previous reports and this section is therefore intended as a synopsis for ease of reference, with updated statistics where applicable.

The Republic of Armenia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. It is a small landlocked country of 29,800 square kilometres with limited natural resources and currently relies solely on Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran for land access to the outside world. Population is in the region of 3,056,382,⁶ with a *per capita* gross domestic product (GDP) of \$8,400. Growth in GDP has declined year on year from 3.5% in 2013, to 3.4% in 2014 and was estimated at 2.5% in 2015. Sectors contributing to GDP are split between agriculture (39%), Industry (17%) and services (44%)⁷ Unemployment was estimated at 17.8% in 2014, but as benefits are so low, not everyone registers when unemployed and the true rate could be

3 Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management in Armenia: Global Facility For Disaster Reduction And Recovery "Armenia: Institutional Arrangements For Disaster Risk Management And Reduction," World Bank, 2009.

4 CIA World Fact Book 2015 - Estimated.

5 Ibid.



up to 30%. At the same time, the population is estimated to be falling by 0.15%.⁶

Armenia is bordered by Georgia in the North, Islamic Republic of Iran to the South, Turkey to the West and Azerbaijan in the East. Total border length is 1,728 km, broken down as 265, 45, 328 and 1090 km respectively.⁷ Turkey closed the border with Armenia in 1993. In 2009, senior Armenian leaders began pursuing rapprochement with Turkey, aimed at re-opening the borders, but Turkey has not yet ratified the protocols normalizing relations between the two countries. The entire length of the Armenian/Turkish border is fenced and patrolled by Russian border guards. There are currently no functioning BCPs.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began in 1988 and escalated after both countries attained independence from the Soviet Union. By May 1994, when a cease fire was negotiated, Armenian ethnic forces held the region and have been in place ever since. The border with Azerbaijan is closed and patrolled by the Armenian military. There are no BCPs in operation.

The Armenian/Iranian border, stretching for 45 km, is also fenced and patrolled by Russian border guards. It has one BCP operating at Meghri Karchevan and cross-border relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran are described as excellent, as are relations with Georgia to the north, where there are 3 BCPs at Bavra, Bagratashen, Gogavan and one at Ayrum railway station. BCPs also operate at Yerevan Zvartnots International, Yerevan Erebuni and Gyumri airports.

Armenia is a partner country of the Eastern Partnership, which is geared to bringing the countries closer to the EU and increase political, economic and cultural links with it. In January 2015, the Government of Armenia joined Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

Armenia's economy can be characterized by high energy intensity and consumption. The country is dependent on the import of hydrocarbons and electricity generation.⁸ Approximately 40 percent of Armenia's electricity is generated by the Metsamor nuclear power plant located west of Yerevan. Although the power plant was not damaged after the 1988 earthquake, it was shut down in 1989 and restarted in 1995. In 2013 "stress tests" were conducted at the power plant in accordance with the approach of Western European Nuclear Regulation. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, the preliminary results of stress tests and assessment of safety margins allow the safety of the power plant to be stated.⁹

1.6 Migration Patterns and Dynamics

The value in looking at migration patterns in Armenia in a historical context lies in the potential for past experience to give an insight into what, in terms of significant migrant flows, may happen in future.

Armenia is almost universally regarded as a source country for migrants and informed opinion is that when the media reports on migration issues, it generally calls on the government to take measures to stop emigration, not immigration, because of concerns about the declining population. Official statistics show that substantially more people have left the country than

6 Ibid.

7 The figures reflect the borders of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, excluding the territories *de facto* under Armenian control now.

8 Armenia-UNDAF, 2016-2020, p. 99.

9 IAEA, <https://cnpp.iaea.org/countryprofiles/Armenia/Armenia.htm>



entered it, virtually every year since 2000. The figures from 2012 to 2015 indicate that net migration was -42,800, -31,200, -41,700 and -43,400 respectively, although it has to be said that these numbers relate to the total of travellers passing through BCPs and do not differentiate between purposes of travel.¹⁰ However, when the extent of the Armenia diaspora is taken into account, it is reasonable to accept these figures as a fairly credible indicator of the disparity between immigration and emigration. Of all the former Soviet States, Armenia has the largest global diaspora community, in proportion to the size of its national population, by some margin. Whilst precise figures are open to debate, it is generally reckoned that there are around 8-10 million people of Armenian descent currently living outside Armenia. The largest Armenian communities are based in the Russian Federation, the United States, France and the Lebanon, with sizeable populations also residing in Ukraine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Argentina, Poland, Turkey, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Canada. Migration surveys¹¹ have consistently shown that Armenian migrants are primarily economically motivated, with figures of over 70 per cent looking for employment or to increase their income. The ever growing diaspora gives encouragement to those aspiring to migrate through the support and sponsorship of Armenian communities in host countries, thus providing a relatively unthreatening departure route from high unemployment and a comparatively low standard of living at home. While such economic conditions prevail in Armenia, incentives for economic migrants from elsewhere to target the country as a destination will be low, but it is evident that the country is being used as a transit hub, usually by foreign nationals, often of Armenian ethnic origin, with ambitions to head west.

Historically, mass migration movements within and into Armenia have involved displacement by natural disaster or armed conflict, so what has occurred and what is currently taking place needs scrutiny. In doing so, the definitions of what constitutes a refugee or an internally displaced person (IDP) need to be clarified:

- A refugee is a person who is outside the country of their nationality and unwilling or unable to return there for fear of persecution or harm;
- An IDP is a person who has been forced to flee their place of habitual residence but has not crossed an internationally recognized State border.¹²

Armenia has faced two substantial waves of migration, the first being internal displacement following the devastating earthquake around the city of Spitak in 1988, which resulted in at least 25,000 dead and 19,000 injured. It was estimated that 550,000 people were made homeless and 200,000 left the country, the vast majority to republics in the European part of the USSR and the rest to several other European countries. Most of them (approximately 150,000 people) returned before or soon after the breakup of the USSR.¹³ The second major movement followed the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, which led to 420,000 (360,000 out of these fled from Azerbaijan) refugees as well as 72,000 conflict internally displaced persons, left without shelter as a result of bombing of the Armenian settlements neighbouring with the

10 National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia: see www.armstat.am/file/article/sv_03_13a_530.pdf

11 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2008. Report on sample survey on external and internal migration in RA, Yerevan; Yunosov A. 2009.

12 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office paper 9/12/14. Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) In the South Caucasus: The Numbers Game.

13 Migration and Human Development: Opportunities and Challenges. Armenia, 2009. National Report 2009, UNDP.



border of Azerbaijan, and inhabitants from those areas taking refuge in other areas of Armenia.¹⁴

In 2008, the IOM report “Review of Migration Management in the Republic of Armenia”¹⁵ concluded, inter alia, that:

“Armenia’s geographic position in the region, which faces possible instability, has created an imminent threat of flows of refugees and displaced persons across its borders. According to the UNHCR’s Global Report 200637, Armenia is the second top host country with the largest number of refugees per capita (38 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants) after Jordan. According to the 2005 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook, there were 219,550 refugees and 70 asylum seekers in 2005. 219,324 out of these refugees were from Azerbaijan and 218 from Iraq. There were 140 applications filed to seek asylum in 2005 (all by people from Iraq)¹⁶ ... According to data from the Migration Agency, 360,000 persons deported from Azerbaijan have received the status of a refugee during 1988 to 1992. From among these refugees more than 80,000 have become citizens of the RA.”

Subsequent events created further trepidation over the stability of the region, with the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in 2008 over the enclaves of South Ossetia and Abkhazia resulting in minor increases in border traffic, but within manageable limits. Discussion with representatives from NSS revealed that this traffic was not categorized as a mass movement and was principally comprised of Georgian nationals of Armenian ethnic origin seeking temporary refuge, before soon returning to Georgia.

Not surprisingly, the most recent migrant movement of any significance has been from the Syrian Arab Republic, although much lower displacement has occurred from Iraq and Ukraine, which was concisely summed up by UNHCR Representative Mr Bierwirth in a statement made on 30 July 2015:

“Armenia, having already received several hundred thousand refugees from Azerbaijan and over one thousand persons from Iraq, is presently in particular facing displacement from the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine. About 15,000 persons fleeing the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, primarily of ethnic Armenian background, have sought and found protection in Armenia. More than 100 persons from Ukraine have filed their asylum application with the State Migration Service, but the actual number of Ukrainians seeking refuge in Armenia is considered to be higher as many do not register, instead making use of the visa free regime. Moreover, Armenia also hosts smaller numbers of refugees from a variety of countries. While these figures sound small if compared to the over 1.4 million refugees hosted in Lebanon or about 750,000 in Jordan, they constitute a significant challenge for a small country such as Armenia, which is still suffering from the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, closed borders, isolation and a difficult economic situation.”¹⁷

Figures produced by UNHCR for 2015 show that numbers of Syrian refugees rose from 14,450 at the beginning of the year to 16,000 at the end.¹⁸ It is important to note that the vast majority of Syrian refugees were of Armenian ethnic origin and recorded in the statistics as being in a “refugee-like” situation, in view of the expedited entry, residence and naturalization process. In fact, in 2015, 4,000 were recorded as “refugee-like” and 87 as refugees.

14 See Yeganyan, Gagik, “Migration Situation in Armenia: Challenges and Solutions,” in Rios, Roger Rodríguez (ed).

15 Pier Rossi-Longhi, Therèse Lindström, Kristina Galstyan - March 2008 – funded by the Swedish Migration Board.

16 See www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4641835e0.pdf

17 Full text of the interview of Mr Bierwirth can be found at www.un.am/en/news/303

18 UNHCR – Refugee population and changes.



1.7 Risk Factors - Border Crossing Points Vulnerable to Potential Migration Crisis

Armenia has relatively few BCPs, for the simple reason that the two longest borders with the neighbouring countries of Turkey and Azerbaijan are closed, which suggests that any migrant mass movements are most likely to occur on the borders with the Islamic Republic of Iran or Georgia. In terms of humanitarian border management, land borders are the most vulnerable to crisis driven migration. They are more accessible than other routes and the difficulty of effective policing over often inhospitable terrain leaves them open to clandestine crossing. They also provide access for vehicles, including trains, which enable migrants to travel quickly and carry more of their possessions with them. Additionally, indigenous communities straddle borders and there are established community networks already in existence prior to an emergency exodus. This applies particularly to the border communities in Georgia and Armenia, where enforcement of green border controls outside of BCPs is regarded, at best, as something of an inconvenience and at worst, a significant impediment to family life and trade.

Airports

There are two Airports in Armenia with operational international BCPs in Yerevan (Zvartnots International) and Gyumri (Shirak International). Airports are not generally regarded as susceptible to crises caused by mass migration movements, for various reasons; access to aircraft can be controlled, thus the number of migrants permitted to travel will depend on the availability of seats and be subject to the agreement of the destination country to receive them. Reception of migrants can be arranged in advance, thereby mitigating the crisis element of movements by air and documentation can be provided before travelling. This was the case in Armenia in respect of the influx of Syrians, mainly of Armenian ethnic origin, which started in 2011, when there were direct flights to and from Yerevan to Aleppo. Flights were scheduled and while the relatively large influx was underway between 2011 and 2013, the Ministry of Diaspora were able to deploy officers to the airport to meet refugees, along with the Red Cross and UNHCR. In the Syrian Arab Republic, as Syrian nationals require visas, ethnic origin was established before migrants travelled and Armenian consular staff were deployed to Aleppo airport to help filter and assist travellers. Relaxed identity requirements allowed ethnic Armenian Syrians to establish their status through documents such as family books, church records and baptism certificates, while non-ethnic Syrians were subjected to stricter scrutiny when applying for visas and credibility tests were applied.¹⁹

The Armenian community in the Syrian Arab Republic went from around 80,000 to 15,000 and between 2012 and 2015, 22,000 arrived in Armenia. 4,000 to 5,000 of these went back or travelled back and forth, while an estimated 16,000 settled in Armenia.²⁰ After the flights were suspended for security reasons, approximately 100 refugees drove overland through Lebanon, Turkey and Georgia, until Turkish authorities closed the border in 2014, effectively sealing off the land route. Since then, the main migration route has been through Damascus and on to Beirut to catch direct flights to Yerevan. As direct air routes closed down, the numbers of refugees arriving dwindled and are no longer considered to be significant.

¹⁹ Interviews at the Headquarters of the Border Guards, Yerevan – 8 February 2016.

²⁰ Information obtained during interviews at the Ministry of Diaspora, Yerevan, 11 February 2016.



Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran

Primary access to seaports is through Georgia to the Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti which, in a straight line, lie approximately 150 km from Armenia. The commercial Black Sea port of Poti is the main arrival point for international sea freight destined for Armenia. Additionally, cargo from Turkey to Armenia crosses Georgia, generally through Sarpi checkpoint and 264 km further on to the Ninotsminda-Bavra border crossing point on the Georgian-Armenian border. In total, there are 4 BCPs with Georgia, Bavra, Gogavan, Bagratashen and Ayrum, located on the Ashotsk-Ninotsminda, Tashir-Bolnis, Bagratashen-Sadakhlo highways and Yerevan-Tbilisi railroad respectively.

Bagratashen BCP is located in the Armenia province of Tavush on highway M6 approximately 200 km from Yerevan. It is on the banks of the river Debed, which marks the border line between Georgia and Armenia. This is the main transport corridor connecting Armenia with the Republic of Turkey and the Russian Federation. It is an important route for sea cargo when Bavra is inaccessible. Bavra BCP is located in Shirak province, Ashotsk region, on highway M1, approximately 150 km from Yerevan. The BCP is 2150 meters above sea level in mountainous territory, with an inhospitable climate of cold, long and severe winters, extensive snow cover, strong winds, frequent fog and snowstorms. Gogavan BCP is located in Lori province at a distance of 170 km from Yerevan, in the Tashir region. It is located at an elevation of 1,750 meters above the sea level and has a temperate climate of long, cold winters and cool summers.

Armenia has just one BCP on its 45 km southern border with the Islamic Republic of Iran, at Meghri Karchevan in Syunik province, which benefits from a much milder climate than the Georgian BCPs in the north. It is located approximately 370 km from Yerevan.

During the course of interviews with representatives of government departments, opinions were sought as to where potential crises precipitating mass migration movements might originate. General opinion supported by past experience was that any mass migrant influx would come from ethnic Armenian communities, as large scale movements by non-ethnic foreign nationals had never been experienced. Possible source countries were quoted as the Syrian Arab Republic, Azerbaijan and Ukraine, although it was considered most likely that they will occur by air, as only Azerbaijan has a border with Armenia and it is currently closed.

Representatives from the border guards and NSS,²¹ as the frontline migration agency, were in agreement that neither the Islamic Republic of Iran nor Georgia were seen as likely to suffer any crisis leading to mass migration to Armenia, other than border communities of ethnic Armenians seeking sanctuary, probably just temporarily. Georgia was described as a friendly neighbour and not seen as a threat, thus the possibility for conflict with Armenia was not even worth considering. It was pointed out that both Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran had sizable Armenian communities, estimated at 500,000 and 300,000 respectively, which had lived in harmony with their host countries for many years. The Georgian conflict with the Russian Federation in 2008 was raised and it was acknowledged that it had resulted in an increase in ethnic Armenians crossing the border, but not on a scale that might be considered a mass influx and thus outside of the immediate capabilities of the Border Guard to maintain normal migration controls.

Neither Georgia nor the Islamic Republic of Iran was seen as a possible route for migrants

21 Interviews at the Headquarters of the Border Guards, Yerevan – 8 February 2016.



coming to or transiting Armenia. Its location to the North East of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and the closed border with Turkey preclude it from being part of the Eastern Mediterranean route into Turkey and the Greek Islands, currently being used by mass migrant movements into the EU and there is no practical possibility of it becoming so, even as a diversion should other routes be closed down. It was acknowledged that the Islamic Republic of Iran could possibly be drawn into a wider Middle East conflict but again, it was felt that mass migrant flows into Armenia precipitated by such events would be predominantly ethnic Armenians. The chance of civil conflict within the Islamic Republic of Iran was also considered to be remote, especially as international sanctions have recently been lifted.

Experience of large scale displacement across borders due to natural or man-made disasters involved migrant movement out of Armenia and there were no examples quoted or found through research to suggest that disasters in neighbouring countries would be likely to precipitate mass movement into the country across land borders. In reaching this conclusion, the emphasis is on *mass* movement, as it is quite likely that ethnic Armenians caught up in such events would seek refuge in their ancestral homeland, due to shared language, culture and family connections. However, again from experience, such movements are probably going to be on a relatively small scale and involve temporary, rather than permanent, residence.

Turkey and Azerbaijan

The Armenia-Turkish border was unilaterally closed by Turkey in 1993 and the 2 BCPs of Margara road crossing and Akhurik railroad crossing are not functioning. The border with Azerbaijan has been effectively closed since the early 1990's, as a result of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Logically speaking, if both borders are closed, they are not at risk from mass migrant movements. However, the conflict caused large movements of ethnic Armenians from Azerbaijan and *vice versa*, prior to the ceasefire in May 1994 and efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution for the resolution of the conflict continue to this day. There remains a possibility that armed conflict will erupt again, but although ceasefire violations occur, given domestic economic problems and the focus on growth and development, it does not seem to be in the interest of either country to escalate the situation. However, should the war restart, it is reasonable to assume that the ethnic Armenian civilian population will move away from the seat of the conflict, in what would effectively be internal displacement back towards the centre of Armenia. Border management would not be an issue for the control authorities other than, perhaps, a monitoring role and such a movement would become the immediate responsibility of the competent relief agencies, both national and international.

During interviews with both the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Health and the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,²² there was speculation about the susceptibility of the Turkish border to crisis driven mass movement and it was suggested that an internal escalation in military action by Turkey against Kurds could possibly provoke cross-border movements, even though the border is closed. However, should such a situation arise, it seems extremely unlikely that Turkey would reopen BCPs with Armenia to allow Kurds to cross and any displacement would therefore occur clandestinely across land borders. Given the extent to which the border is fenced and policed, it is likely that any cross-border movements would be by individuals or small groups on an opportunistic basis and thus not constitute a crisis situation.

22 Yerevan 10 February 2016.



1.8 Evaluation - Background

Both research and interviews with government and non-governmental agencies in Armenia indicate that in any mass migration movements into Armenia, the vast majority of migrants would be of Armenian ethnic origin. This contention is supported by the ethnic breakdown of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic, who have arrived progressively since 2011, predominantly by air, in a largely controlled and orderly manner. Consensus of opinion amongst interlocutors was that, under current international circumstances, a migrant influx crisis was unlikely, particularly on the border with Georgia. However, it would be a mistake to be complacent and events in the Middle East over the last five years have shown how quickly relative stability can degenerate into civil conflict, which in turn fuels mass migration. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran was also perceived as stable, its proximity to Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in conjunction with its support for the Assad regime, would suggest that there is at least a possibility that it could be dragged more actively into the regional conflict.



2. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Much has been written about migration policy and legislation in Armenia over the past 8 or so years and a convenient starting point is an IOM review of migration management in 2008,²³ which covered the whole spectrum of legislation in some detail. This was followed, in 2011, by a review report of progress on recommendations made in the first assessment.²⁴ In 2013, a report to compare Armenian migration legislation with that of the EU was commissioned by IOM, the scope of which was wide and comprehensive.²⁵ Since then, ad hoc updates, especially in relation to humanitarian issues, have been reported, principally by UNHCR. With such comprehensive material available for reference, for the purpose of this assessment, policy and legislative issues will concentrate on where they are applicable to HBM considerations relating to crisis management of mass migrant movements at borders.

2.1 Policy

Migration policy development in Armenia, certainly in terms of humanitarian border management, reflects the commonly accepted assumption that it is a primarily a source country for migration, with a secondary role as a transit point for westward migration. There is considerable concern in government over negative net migration, which most probably has an influence on the relative ease with which foreigners, especially those of Armenian ethnic origin, can qualify for residence and naturalization. Having established that large scale migrant movements into the country have historically involved migrants of Armenian origin, coupled with the recent and ongoing experience of Syrian nationals arriving by air, it is therefore understandable that government policy has centred on facilitating their entry and integration, to encourage them to stay. The government response to the Syrian influx provides a real time demonstration of how policy develops and adapts in the face of, if not a sudden crisis, at least an unusual migrant movement. Lessons have clearly been learned at policy formulation level, which will assist in mass movements arriving at borders in future.

A broad outline of events was provided by the RA Ministry of Diaspora.²⁶ A coordinating centre was set up in 2012 by representatives of Syrian-Armenian community organizations, which liaises closely with the ministry, to provide a forum of stakeholders to decide how aid is distributed. As part of its function, the ministry lobbied for entry procedures to be revised for Syrian refugees, which achieved relaxation of the visa requirement to allow for them to

23 Review of Migration Management in the Republic of Armenia – IOM – Assessment Mission Report 2008.

24 Progress Review of Migration Management in the Republic of Armenia – IOM - 2011.

25 Analysis of Armenia Migration Legislation and Practice as Compared to EU Standards – IOM - 2013.

26 Interview at the Ministry of Diaspora, Department for the Middle East, Yerevan – 11 February 2016.



be issued on arrival and identity documentation required to qualify for naturalization was streamlined to include family books, church records and baptism certificates as proof of Armenian ethnicity. Fees for resident permits and naturalization were waived and cars and property could be brought in duty free. Access to education was also made easier, with the recognition of Syrian qualifications and diplomas for continuing education in Armenia, enabling children to follow a Syrian curriculum and be gradually integrated into the Armenian system.

Development of migration policy in general was first consolidated in 2000, when the Armenian Government approved the first “*Concept of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia.*” This Concept paper was revised and adapted in 2004 as changes in the migration situation in Armenia occurred, principally with the inclusion of two new priorities:

- Preventing illegal migration from the Republic of Armenia and supporting the return and reintegration in the Republic of Armenia of Armenian citizens illegally staying abroad;
- Preventing smuggling and trafficking of humans from the Republic of Armenia and developing victim protection arrangements.

With increasing European integration under the framework of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and Eastern Partnership initiatives (EaP), new migration priorities were identified. These were based on slight changes in irregular migration patterns, including human trafficking issues. The new “*Concept of State Regulation of Migration in the Republic of Armenia*” report was approved by a government protocol decision in December 2010, which included an action plan specifying 14 priority migration related issues and giving guidance on progressing them. The 2010 Concept paper essentially filled gaps in migration management identified by different international stakeholders, such as IOM²⁷ and was adapted to take account of commitments to the EU.²⁸ The action plan was designed to run from 2011 to 2016 and aimed to harmonise, as far as possible, the legal and administrative migration framework with relevant EU legislation and institutional structures, taking into account national State interests. The purpose of the document was given in it as:

“During the next five years, the application of the Action Program for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the RA in 2012—2016 will lead to: improvement of the system of protection provided for humanitarian reasons by the RA for foreign citizens and individuals without citizenship, regulation of workforce emigration, prevention of chaotic migration, facilitation of integration of refugees in the country, development of migration policy, effective and systematic work of bodies responsible for coordination and implementation of this policy, including development of their skills, separation of their functions, ensuring their effective cooperation, collection of reliable data through analysis and statistical procedures.”

Whilst all issues covered by the plan are relevant to integrated border management, some are particularly relevant to HBM, such as Issue 9, which deals with “*Improving the System of Providing Asylum in the AR. In case of Recognising the Foreign Citizens as Refugees Ensuring Their Effective Integration to the RA Society*”. Activities under this section include improving legislation in line with European standards, having asylum case workers at BCPs, improving

27 IOM, Progress Review of Migration management in the Republic of Armenia, Follow-up on the 2008 Migration Management Assessment Report, 2011.

28 Ibid.



standards for asylum accommodation, developing integration programmes for recognized refugees and supporting the voluntary return of failed asylum seekers. This said, in terms of HBM, the action plan has deficiencies and whilst Issues 11²⁹ and 12³⁰ deal with internal displacement, mass influx from outside of the country is not addressed. It has to be said, however, that activities included in these two sections have relevance to migrant crises at borders. Activities 11.2 and 3 deal with creating attractive conditions in border areas to encourage border dwellers to remain there, rather than moving to urban centres and encouraging internal streams of migration to border areas, which could also be applied to migrants in a mass movement by providing incentives for them to remain near borders. Activities 12.1 and 2 specify modelling possible mass displacement of the population based on risk assessment and regulation and registration of displaced persons to facilitate their return when disaster situations have been settled. Again, both activities have relevance to cross-border movements and could perhaps be adapted and included in any revised action plan.

An equally important document, in terms of migration policy, is the “*Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation of The Border Security and Integrated State Border Management Strategy of The Republic of Armenia (2011 — 2015)*,”³¹ which sets out, predominantly at an operational level, what is required to meet the governments ambitions on integrated border management. Some of the actions relevant to HBM include:

- Develop and adopt a joint plan of actions for ensuring the public safety at the State border during emergency situation (Action 2.26);
- To develop and adopt joint contingency training programs, regular training events, emergency drills aimed at ensuring successful joint operations in emergency situations (2.34);
- To organize regular trainings on joint use of facilities and equipment by the agencies represented in BCPs (2.36);
- To create a joint electronic database for agencies authorized to issue certificates and licenses in the area of border security and integrated border management and to integrate those data into the BMIS (2.39);
- To provide the Ministry of Emergency Situations with a capacity for real-time data receipt on entry and exit of transportation means subject to registration and control at all BCPs (2.41);
- On the central level, provide for technical means and staff for centralized input and analysis of data in BMIS or TWM on pandemic areas, harmful organisms accompanying plants, hazardous food produce (as well as data specified by International Health Regulations), and dissemination of this data to BCPs (2.45);
- To give the opportunity to enter data on persons deported to or from Armenia, as well as on persons seeking asylum in the Republic of Armenia into BMIS or TWM;

29 Guidance Of Internal Migration Processes In Line With The Requirements Of The Ra National Security And Sustainable Development Of The Country.

30 Regulation Of Possible Mass Displacement Of The Population In Emergency Cases.

31 Appendix to RA Government Decree no. 482 of April 21, 2011.



- To develop and sign agreements with Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran on cooperation at the relevant BCPs that will include provisions on harmonizing working hours at BCPs in order to facilitate uninterrupted movement of persons and vehicles, as well as joint contingency plans for emergencies such as pandemics, massive flow of people, earthquake, etc. (3.12);
- To ensure the inter-operability of IT systems used in Armenia (BMIS, TWM) with appropriate Georgian IT systems (ASYCUDA, PIRS) (3.20).

As far as the assessment team are aware, there is no update available, at least open-source, to show which actions are yet to be started, are work in progress or have been completed. It would be extremely useful in assessing HBM capability if the action plan could be updated to give a clear indication of how the policy on IBM has progressed.

Disaster Management

Policy in relation to disaster management is constantly being developed and might be expected to include provision for mass influx of migrants. However, while the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations (subsequently merged with the Ministry of Territorial Administration to become the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations (MTAES), later they were split and the Ministry was again renamed the RA Ministry of Emergency Situations. (MES)) was established in 2008, to take overall responsibility for disaster management, it did not specifically deal with the issue, although internally displaced persons were covered by provisions. This may be an acknowledgement that natural disasters within Armenia do not generally involve cross-border displacement, but it should be something that the MES reviews in future. While existing plans do not relate directly to migrant crises at borders, there is value in gaining an overview of what has been developed and now exists, perhaps with a view to broadening the scope of future work in the field of disaster risk reduction and management, as a mass influx should still invoke a multi-agency approach to an emergency, even if the event occurred outside of Armenia.

Following the establishment of the MTAES, Armenia engaged UNDP experts to work with the Ministry to design and facilitate a Capacity Development process for the national Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) system in January 2010. The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005—2015 was selected as a basis for designing actionable indicators to identify the required capacity for the DRR system. A key recommendation to emerge was the establishment of a Disaster Risk Reduction National Platform (DRRNP), which was actioned and is now in operation. It is a non-governmental organization providing opportunities for State, non-governmental, private and international institutions to participate in decision-making and consultation processes. At the same time, it provides opportunities for organizing and controlling day-to-day operational activities and implementing long-term projects. The main players of the DRR NP are government authorities of Armenia, MES, international and donor organizations working in the field of DRR, UN, Armenian Red Cross society, as well as scientific institutions, civil societies and experts. At different stages, other participants may be involved in the process, including representatives of various State and public agencies and organizations, private sector and religious institutions. The activities of the NP are managed by a board of trustees that includes representatives from MES, the National Security Council,



the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Defence, the Republic of Armenia State Revenue Committee and the Republic of Armenia Police.

Various disaster response plans and directives have been produced by government, NGOs and international organizations, amongst them “*Plan of Organization Of Protection Of Population Of the Republic of Armenia in Case Of A Severe Earthquake*,”³² which is a comprehensive document listing the roles and responsibilities of virtually all ministries and departments of government in the event of a devastating earthquake. As the scenario envisaged is an internal disaster, the Border Guard is not specifically mentioned in the plan, although NSS is specified as the organizations responsible for maintaining security. Guidance on cross-border movements is confined to the entry of foreign aid and international rescue personnel. Communications are covered in some detail and a short wave radio network is specifically mentioned to maintain contact between agencies and organizations, but it would appear that the border guard may not be part of this.

“*The Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy of the Republic of Armenia*” together with the “*Action Plan for implementation of the Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy of the Republic of Armenia*”³³ deals in more general terms with the strategy for responding to all types of possible disasters, not just earthquakes and concentrates on internal issues rather than events, crisis or otherwise, at borders.

Joint governmental and international publications include the “*Local Level Risk Management (LLRM) Manual*” produced by the Ministry of Emergency Situations and UNDP in 2012, which is a highly detailed model for mapping the risk and impact of disasters on individual communities that is particularly effective in raising awareness of how infrastructure and services might be affected, thus informing response.

Additionally, the “*Inter-agency Contingency Plan, Armenia*” was prepared by the Technical Group on Emergencies on behalf of the extended Disaster Management Team (DMT)³⁴ in the Republic of Armenia, in collaboration with MES in Yerevan. It describes most likely hazards in Armenia, capacities to respond to consequences of these disasters, roles and responsibilities of various actors in preparing for and responding to a disaster, and basic preparedness measures of the international humanitarian community. It consists of sections covering situation analysis, overview of the risks and hazards, scenarios and planning assumptions, overall management and coordination arrangements, including standing arrangements and the cluster approach, arrangements for communications in emergencies and preparedness and maintenance actions of the contingency plan.

This is not and is not intended to be, a full picture or review of the diverse range of reports, plans and assessments of the emergency disaster anticipation and response structure in Armenia. Rather, it is an indication of the scope and volume of what material is available and the level of planning in place. It also indicates, however, that gaps do exist at all levels in planning for mass migration influx at borders, whatever the driving factors behind it.

32 Annex N 1 of the decision N 919 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated on 2010.

33 Government of RA Decree N-281 March 2012.

34 The extended Disaster Management Team is a mechanism for emergency preparedness and response coordination in Armenia. The extended DMT includes UN agencies mandated with humanitarian response and international and local humanitarian NGOs based in Armenia. The extended DMT acts as an HCT prototype providing special arrangements for its smooth transition to HCT when required.



2.2 Legislation

Armenia does not have a comprehensive policy covering all migration issues. Various aspects of migration in Armenia are governed by separate laws and government decisions. Often, these laws tend to leave discretion to the implementing authorities and thus, in effect, raise questions about the feasibility and efficacy of democratic oversight over migration issues. The main legislation on border control and entry is stipulated in the Republic of Armenia Law on Foreigners, Republic of Armenia Law on State Border³⁵ and the Republic of Armenia Law on Border Guard Troops.³⁶ The Law on Foreigners from 2006³⁷ regulates the legal entry, transit, stay and exit of foreigners from Armenia, as well as other areas related to foreigners. This legislation can be described as baseline legal governance for migration that underpins the control of borders, conditions for regular migration and residence and response to irregular migration. However, the Law on Foreigners is not applicable to persons seeking international protection in Armenia³⁸ and it is the Constitution, the Republic of Armenia Law on Political Asylum and the Republic of Armenia Law on Refugees and Asylum that provide the legal basis for granting asylum and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees. It is the asylum legislation that will be most applicable during mass migrant movements across borders, but it cannot be operated in isolation and must be taken in conjunction with normal regulations for entry. This is one of the reasons why it would be helpful if all these separate pieces of legislation could be reviewed and redrafted into one legislative instrument, thus providing a single legal governance document for ministries, agencies and other stakeholders in the migration structure.

Migration legislation has been the subject of various reviews, the most recent and certainly most definitive being the “*Analysis of Armenian Migration Legislation and Practice as Compared to EU Standards*,” 2013. This study was prepared under the auspices of the Armenian Ministry of Justice under the project “Strengthening Evidence-Based Management of Labour Migration in Armenia” which was funded by European Commission Thematic Programme “Cooperation with Third Countries in the areas of Migration and Asylum” and the IOM Development Fund. It was implemented by the International Centre for Human Development and the IOM Mission in Armenia. The study identified gaps and ambiguities in legislation, in conjunction with EU migration law and procedures, and made recommendations on how the two systems could be brought more in line with each other. With such relatively recent reference material to draw on, it is not necessary to examine all migration legislation in depth in this assessment, but rather to look at what law will be predominantly applicable to managing a mass influx of migrants in a legally compliant and humanitarian manner. This said, it is relevant to review, in abridged form, the provisions of the law on foreigners to clarify normal requirements for entry in conjunction with how they are or can be adapted to respond crisis mass movements.

35 Law of the Republic of Armenia on State Border, Official Journal of Armenia (OJA), No. 41(173), 25 December 2001 (hereinafter Law on State Border).

36 Law of the Republic of Armenia on Border Guard Troops, Official Journal of Armenia (OJA) No. 41(173), 25 December 2001.

37 Republic of Armenia Law on Foreigners, adopted on 25 December 2006 and amended on 2 February 2010.

38 Article 1/3 Law on Foreigners.



Entry Requirements

Starting with basics, the Law on Foreigners specifies that a valid passport, valid visa or valid residency permit is required to enter the country.³⁹ A passport or travel document is defined as an internationally recognized travel document verifying identity, issued by a foreign State or international organization, which authorizes the foreigner to cross international borders.

Visa Requirements

Visas are legally defined as an authorization by the public administration body of Armenia, which entitles the foreigner to either entry or transit through Armenia, stay in Armenia and exit from Armenia within terms indicated therein.⁴⁰ It should be noted that visas do not currently require submission of biometric data i.e. fingerprints. Citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (with the exception of Turkmenistan), citizens of the EU and citizens of Schengen countries benefit from a visa waiver and are allowed to stay for a maximum period of 180 days in one year⁴¹ without a visa.

Nationals of 63 countries need to obtain a visa at consular posts of the Armenian embassies abroad, based on an invitation letter, in which a sponsor in Armenia needs to guarantee support and accommodation expenses related to the stay of the invited foreigner.⁴² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs processes visa applications made abroad and the approval and registration of invitations is regulated by Decree 62-N. Visa applicants do not need to provide other supporting documents, such as proof of accommodation, documents indicating the purpose of the journey, proof of sufficient means of subsistence or medical insurance, which is not in line with international best practice.

Under certain circumstances, in accordance with Decree Number 1154-N of 8 October 2008, foreigners may obtain visas without an invitation letter:

- Nationals of Armenian origin of foreign States based on documents proving Armenian origin provided by religious and community organizations, as well as State entities;
- Close relatives of Armenian nationals and foreign nationals of Armenian origin (parent, brother, sister, spouse, child, grandmother, grandfather, grandchild) based on official documents proving the relationship;

39 Article 6.

40 Article 3.

41 Pursuant to the Governmental Decree of the Republic of Armenia No. 1255-N dated October 4, 2012, the citizens of the EU Member-States and the Schengen Acquis States shall be exempted from the visa requirement for travel to and stay in the Republic of Armenia beginning from January 10, 2013. Furthermore, there is also a visa free regime with the CIS countries established by the Agreement on Visa-free Movement of Citizens of the CIS-Countries on the Territory of the Member States ratified on October 9, 1992 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Armenia has signed a bilateral agreement with Georgia in 1993 about visa-free regime for their citizens.

42 Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No. 329-N of 4 April 2008 on the list of the States whose citizens can apply for an invitation-based entry visa only in the consular and diplomatic authorities of Armenia in foreign countries, Official Journal of Armenia No. 24 (614), 23 April 2008, subsequently amended on 14 July 2011 by the decision No. 966-N, on 28 June 2012 by the decision No. 823-N, on 26 July 2012 by the decision No. 941-N (hereinafter Governmental Decision No. 329-N).



- Persons having diplomatic and service (official, special) passports of foreign States, if there is no arrangement with the foreign State for visit of such people without an entry visa;
- Members of official delegations of foreign States based on note from the MFA of the foreign State or diplomatic mission or consular office of the foreign State accredited to the host country of the diplomatic mission of the Republic of Armenia;
- Nationals of foreign States working at international organizations having diplomatic status based on notes from the headquarters or representations of these organizations;
- Nationals of foreign States, whose activities in the Republic of Armenia contribute to the development of economic ties;
- Persons of any other category - in accordance with agreement between the foreign State and Armenia based on the instruction of the MFA.

The exemptions above, which simplify the visa application process, are a first step in recognizing that there are benefits to facilitating the entry of specified categories of migrants and from the HBM point of view, given that it has been established that the most likely composition of mass movements will be foreign nationals of Armenian ethnic origin, it is a welcome provision. Any claim to Armenian ethnic origin, according to the Order No. 1/1199-N,⁴³ should be supported by indicators such as a passport, knowledge of Armenian language, an Armenian name and baptism certificate.

Visas can be issued at BCPs by the Police for nationals of approximately 20 countries, among them, for example, citizens of the United States. These nationals are also entitled to apply for a visa electronically (e-visas). Armenia introduced e-visas in 2002 and was one of the first countries to do so. The application process normally takes 2 days. The procedure is as follows:

- A foreigner applies at home;
- pays the visa fee;
- tracks his/her application through a unique reference number online;
- prints the visa confirmation and presents it on arrival.

The e-visa is downloaded to the Border Management Information System (BMIS) and checked against the alert list.

Requirements for Resident Permits

A residence permit is issued by the Armenian authorities after the period of validity of the visa expires and other preconditions are met. There are three different types of residence status:⁴⁴

- **Temporary residence status** - issued by the police (for the purpose of study, work, entrepreneurial activities, marriage with a citizen of Armenia, close relatives of Armenian nationals and for those of Armenian

43 Order on the procedure on submitting the document confirming Armenian identity/origin to a diplomatic mission or consular institution of the Republic of Armenia in foreign States and certification of the submitted document by a diplomatic mission or consular institution of the Republic of Armenia.

44 Articles 14-18 of the Law on Foreigners.



origin), and documented by the issuance of a temporary residence card with a validity of a maximum of one year and the possibility of extension;

- **Permanent residence status** - issued by the police (for foreigners with close relatives in the Republic of Armenia, for those with accommodation and means of subsistence, if they resided in Armenia for three years)⁴⁵ which is documented by the issue of a permanent residence card for a renewable period of five years;
- **Special residence status**⁴⁶ - (for foreigners of Armenian origin and other foreigners who carry out economic or cultural activities in Armenia) which is documented by the issue of a special passport for a renewable period of 10 years.

In theory, if a foreigner wants to take employment in Armenia, according to the Article 22 of the Law on Foreigners, he/she requires a work permit. In practice, the police issue temporary residence cards to foreigners for employment whenever a potential migrant worker is sponsored by an employer. This means that access by foreigners to the labour market is only loosely controlled or regulated and the labour market is, in effect, relatively easily accessible to foreign citizens, except for specified categories of employment reserved for Armenian nationals. It reflects the reality of the situation of Armenia being a source country for migrants, not a destination, and an acknowledgement by legislators that skilled labour from outside the country is a benefit to the economy.

As far as irregular migration is concerned, there is no definition in Armenian legislation. Policy documents define it as those who:

- entered the given country without permission;
- entered the given country on a legal basis but have not renewed their work permit;
- remain in the country after the rejection of their application for asylum;
- stay in the country does not comply with the goal specified in the entry permit;
- stay in the given country longer than declared in the entry permit or the term defined by laws.⁴⁷

Illegal border crossing is defined in article 329 of the Criminal Code as “Crossing the guarded State border of the Republic of Armenia without relevant documents or permits.” According to the Criminal Code, other offences related to irregular migration besides the illegal entry include:

- Illegal entrepreneurial activity without appropriate residence status/work permit;⁴⁸

45 According to Article 16/1 of the Law on Foreigners, the permit can also be granted to a foreigner of Armenian origin and to a foreigner carrying out entrepreneurial activities in Armenia.

46 Issued by the police or by the diplomatic or consular entity of the Republic of Armenia in a foreign country based on the decision of the President of Armenia.

47 Extract, Session Minutes, Republic of Armenia Government, On approving the Concept on Studying and Preventing Irregular Migration Originating from the Republic of Armenia, p.4.

48 Article 188 of the Criminal Code.



- Swindling,⁴⁹ theft and damage to documents/stamps/seals;⁵⁰
- Forgery, sale or use of forged documents/stamps/seals/vehicle licence plates;⁵¹
- Sale, purchase of official documents or State decorations.⁵²

Foreigners those crossing the border illegally outside of the official border crossing points or in a clandestine manner (for example hidden in trucks).⁵³

Article 329.1 of the Criminal Code⁵⁴ deals with people smuggling and contains following definition without specifying the meaning of “mercenary ends” and penalises irregular entry, transit, stay and exit:

1. The organization of a person’s illegal entry into the Republic of Armenia, or illegal exit from the Republic of Armenia, or illegal stay in the Republic of Armenia, or illegal transit through the Republic of Armenia, which was done for mercenary ends is punished with imprisonment for maximum three years.
2. The organization of RA citizens’ illegal exit from the Republic of Armenia, illegal entry into the Republic of Armenia or illegal stay in the Republic of Armenia which was done for mercenary ends is punished with imprisonment for maximum three years.
3. The same act within 1 Article and 2 Article, committed:
 - towards two or more persons;
 - by a group of people with prior agreement or by an organized group;
 - in the conditions dangerous to human life and health or in the conditions humiliating human honour and dignity;
 - by exploitation of position.

is punishable with imprisonment for three to eight years, with confiscation of property or without it, with being deprived from the right to hold certain positions or be engaged in certain activities for a maximum three year period, or without it.

Asylum Legislation

Asylum legislation is the most relevant to a response to mass migration in a crisis at borders and is contained in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, the Law on Political Asylum and the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Refugees and Asylum. It provides the legal basis for granting asylum and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in Armenia. It distinguishes between two different forms of asylum: “political asylum” that is granted

49 Article 178 of the Criminal Code.

50 Article 324 of the Criminal Code.

51 Article 325 of the Criminal Code.

52 Article 326 of the Criminal Code.

53 Criminal Code Section 12 “Crimes against military service”, Chapter 32 “Crimes against military service”, and Article 329 “Illegal State border crossing.”

54 Non-Official Translation from Armenian, Draft Law of the Republic of Armenia on Amending the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, Addition to the RA Criminal Code dated 18 April, 2003 with the Article 329.1.



according to the Law on Political Asylum to publicly well-known foreigners who experienced persecution in their countries of origin and is granted by the decision of the President of Armenia.⁵⁵ At the same time, the Law on Refugees and Asylum of the Republic of Armenia (Law on Refugees and Asylum) provides protection to foreign nationals or stateless persons in accordance with the provisions of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Convention), in accordance with the principle of non-refoulement⁵⁶ as well as to foreign citizens or stateless persons recognized as a refugee by another State, if he/she has legally entered Armenia and has a valid residence permit in Armenia.

Under Article 13/2 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum, it is possible to claim asylum both at the border and within the territory of Armenia and applications can be made in writing or communicated orally.⁵⁷ Different procedures apply to asylum seekers claiming asylum at the border, those staying illegally in Armenia and those staying legally in Armenia. When an asylum claim is made at the border, the Border Guards register the asylum request and inform the State Migration Service (SMS). Documentary procedures for regulating registration of asylum seekers at borders and their subsequent referral to SMS were established by joint decree between the police, MTA and NSS in 2009. SMS, as well as being responsible for development, coordination, monitoring and implementation of migration policies, is also the competent authority for the centralized registration of asylum seekers and refugees, processing of asylum applications and in the first instance, making asylum decisions. It is a special public operational agency of the MTAD. Currently, there are no formal SOPs outlining the functions of border guards in identification and referral of asylum seekers at borders. The recently established “Armenia Inter-Agency Working Group on ‘Protection-Sensitive Entry Systems’ with participation of UNHCR, IOM, NSS border guards, SMS and the Armenian Red Cross Society are currently working to support the government to draft the relevant SOP.

Asylum seekers will either be directed by border guards to go on their own to SMS or will be collected up by SMS to register the claim at their premises. While asylum seekers who entered Armenia legally are housed in the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers and enjoy freedom of movement, those staying illegally, without either a valid visa or valid travel documents, can be detained for up to 72 hours in a special shelter, from where they may be subsequently transferred to the temporary reception centre for asylum seekers.⁵⁸ The Law on Refugees and Asylum in Article 28 specifies that asylum seekers shall not bear criminal or administrative liability for illegal entry or stay in Armenia.

Temporary Protection

The procedure for individual asylum applications is perfectly workable at BCPs under normal circumstances, when such applications are few and far between. According to interviews with State Migration Service during an IOM assessment of migrant accommodation⁵⁹ in September 2013, over the previous 13 years, a maximum of five applications for asylum were made at border crossing points. Clearly, though, a mass influx would place severe strain on resources and require special measures as there would be likely to be an urgent need to move

55 Article 55 para. 15 Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

56 Article 2 para. 1 in connection with Article 9 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum.

57 Furthermore, it is also possible to use sign language.

58 Article 47 Law on Refugees and Asylum.

59 “A Needs Assessment Of Special Accommodation Centres For Foreigners” December 2013.



people away from BCPs, particularly if the crisis was driven by conflict. The legislation acknowledges this and specifically provides for temporary protection to be applied in the event of a mass influx.

The main difference between temporary protection and asylum protection is that for temporary protection, no individual procedure is carried out. The scope of the rights and protection granted does not differ from general asylum protection, but the group of beneficiaries is more limited as they must be specified by the government, generally at the instigation of SMS, the Police, NSS, the MFA, UNHCR or IOM. Article 3, combined with Article 6, establishes the scope of application of temporary protection and specifies that asylum has to be granted to refugees, as defined by the Geneva Convention, who flee to the Republic of Armenia, without undergoing an individual asylum procedure. Foreign nationals who are granted asylum in this way should receive the same rights and have the same obligations as refugees individually granted asylum.⁶⁰

This legislation allowed for fast streaming of asylum processing during mass movements, but the scope of it had been questioned, in so far as it specified that refugees have to come from countries bordering Armenia and limits the definition of refugees to that covered by the Geneva Convention. The government, however, responded to questions raised over this and according to the SMS, deleted the geographical limitation so that Article 3 applies to a group who - irrespective of whether the State is bordering or not - have left their country owing to reasons outlined by Article 6 of the law. It was also suggested that if there was a mass influx, the Government should identify the area under threat, which would not necessarily include the whole country. Migrants arriving would then be identified as meeting the government definition of refugee, registered as such and given refugee status until the situation in their country was resolved.⁶¹

Documentation

According to the Law on Refugees and Asylum, refugees granted temporary protection must be issued with “Identity Documents for Refugees Granted Temporary Protection,” which has to be replaced by a Convention Travel Document subsequently.⁶² The procedure for the exchange of documents and the design and format of identity documents for refugees granted temporary protection must be approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia. However, in an update as a result of the Syrian movement, legislation was recently changed to enable asylum seekers to get similar identity documentation to that given to Armenian citizens, such as national I/D cards and travel documents to cover both internal and external use. It was also anticipated that fingerprints will be collected from refugees as part of a general movement to issue more secure documents and by 2017 tenders will be invited to supply internationally compliant documents.⁶³

60 Article 62 para. 1 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum.

61 Interview at the SMS – 11 February 2016.

62 Article 62 para. 7 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum.

63 Interview with the Department of Passports and Visas of the Armenian Police – Yerevan, 8 February 2016.



Ending of Temporary Protection

Article 63 stipulates that if there are strong indications that the situation in the country of origin has normalized or, if the national security situation warrants, the Government may, upon the joint suggestion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the NSS, cease the temporary protection for the particular group concerned. In such cases the members no longer benefit from the rights defined for temporary protected persons. They have the right to launch an individual asylum application, which has to be examined in an individual asylum procedure.⁶⁴ The cessation, as well as cancellation of refugee status and asylum with regard to individual members of the group, must be in accordance with the same rules as for refugees who have received asylum in an individual procedure.⁶⁵

2.3 Proposed Amendments

A Working Group, co-chaired by SMS and UNHCR, was established to develop draft amendments to the Law on Refugees and Asylum that were tabled before the National Assembly in early 2015, and outlined in a UNHCR briefing paper in the following terms:

*“The draft contains an extensive list of amendments, which inter alia provide for: granting asylum in case of mass influx to groups who left not just “bordering” States but also other countries; the possibility for family members of the principal applicant to make an independent claim, when they are affected by a cancellation or cessation decision; introduction of more comprehensive procedural guarantees for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees; clearer distinctions among important concepts of exclusion, cessation and cancellation; financial assistance also to those asylum-seekers who are not placed in the reception centre; free legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees; integration programmes; timeframe for examination of asylum claims; power for detention/prison administration to receive and refer asylum applications; introduction of strengthened procedural guarantees for asylum-seekers; and ICAO compliant Convention Travel Documents and ID cards.”*⁶⁶

They were subsequently adopted in late 2015 and came into effect in mid-January 2016.

2.4 Asylum and Protection Initiatives

Largely in response to the arrival of Syrian refugees, the government adopted streamlined procedures, which were outlined in a UNHCR briefing to the diplomatic community⁶⁷ in November 2015, which said:

“The Influx to Armenia of persons displaced due to the on-going conflict in Syria, primarily of ethnic Armenian background continued throughout the year, with peaks of arrivals having been observed during the summer months. According to the authorities over 20,000 displaced from Syria had at one stage of their flight arrived in Armenia of whom 16-17,000 are presently remaining in the country.

64 Article 63 para. 2 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum.

65 Article 63 para. 3 of the Law on Refugees and Asylum.

66 Update on key legislative developments in the field of asylum, refugee protection and statelessness in Armenia – 2014 and 2015.

67 Key Messages at the Briefing for Members of the Diplomatic Community - Yerevan, 18 November 2015.



The Government continues to pursue, in principle, a receptive approach offering different protection options, namely accelerated asylum-procedures (at 100% recognition rate, irrespective of ethnic background), (ii) facilitated naturalization of persons of ethnic Armenian Background and (iii) granting of mid or longer term residence permits.

Most arrivals from the Syrian Arab Republic increasingly opt for the naturalization option, some, however, with the intention to use Armenian travel documents for onward migration, in particular to the Gulf States. According to data provided by the Police between 2012 and June 2015 a total of 15,465 persons displaced from the Syrian Arab Republic were granted Armenia Citizenship. Naturalization procedures have been streamlined and accelerated. While in 2013/14 it often could take 6-10 months to conclude the naturalization procedures now frequently applications are processed within 3 months (due to change in the legislation, as well).”

Figures provided by the MOD indicate that as a result of the Syrian conflict, the Armenian community of the Syrian Arab Republic decreased from 80,000 to between 20,000 and 25,000. During 2012 to 2015, 20,000 Syrian refugees arrived in Armenia. After the influx between 2011 and 2013, it is estimated that 3,000 to 4,000 Syrians returned to the Syrian Arab Republic and about 17,000 settled in Armenia.

The streamlined procedures were further outlined by the Passports and Visas Department (PVD) of the Police during interviews in Yerevan on 8 February 2016, when it was stated that citizenship legislation relating to refugees was recently changed to allow faster naturalization for foreign nationals of Armenian extraction and those married to Armenians. Prior to amendment, the law required a three-year period of residence before naturalization, but this is no longer required and it can be applied for from the PVD immediately they qualify for residence. This amendment was seen as important in helping integration and protecting rights. On initial application for asylum, the SMS issues a refugee certificate valid for two months after which, if asylum is granted, residence/naturalization can also be granted. If asylum is refused, there is an appeal system which can prolong the process by years.

2.5 International Conventions and Agreements

Armenia is a signatory to most United Conventions and Protocols and has signed and ratified those most important to the protection of migrants and refugees likely to be involved in crisis mass movements across borders. These, in terms of HBM, are:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its Optional Protocol;
- The Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons;
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- The Convention Against Torture and other cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination;
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;



- The Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime;
- The Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air;
- Palermo Protocol to Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The Armenian Constitution specifies that ratified international and regional treaties become automatically part of Armenia's domestic legislation and if a ratified international treaty stipulates norms other than those stipulated in the laws, the norms of the treaty shall prevail.⁶⁸ Fundamental rights and freedoms are also enshrined in the Republic of Armenia Constitution, compatible with international law, and applicable to citizens, residents, migrants and asylum seekers alike. Armenia is a member of various international organizations, including:

- United Nations Organizations;
- Commonwealth of Independent States;
- Council of Europe;
- Eurasian Economic Union;
- Black Sea Economic Cooperation Collective Security Treaty Organizations;
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The principal document regulating Armenia's relations with the EU is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which came into force in 1999 for a period of 10 years. It is automatically renewed year by year, according to the relevant provision of the Agreement.

Armenia-EU cooperation is also regulated by the EU-Armenia ENP Action Plan, which was adopted on 14 November 2006 in Brussels. According to the ENP Action Plan, a number of priority areas of cooperation have been identified, such as the rule of law, strengthening democratic institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and improving the investment environment. The list of actions for implementation of the EU-Armenia ENP Action Plan for 2014 en dash 2015 was approved by the President Sargsyan's decree of 23 April 2014.

The Eastern Partnership was launched at the Prague summit of the Heads of State and Government of EU Member States and six Eastern Partner countries in on 7 May 2009, during which a joint declaration was adopted.

Multilateral cooperation within the Eastern Partnership takes place through four platforms:

- democracy, good governance and stability;
- economic integration and convergence with EU policies;
- energy security;
- people to people contacts.

A Joint Declaration on the Mobility Partnership between Armenia and EU was signed on 27 October 2011 in Luxemburg, confirming their commitment to improving facilitation of movement of persons between Armenia and the European Union, whilst working to ensure better management of migration flows, including preventing and reducing irregular immigration, according to the best international standards.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Article 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia.

⁶⁹ 3121st JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS Council meeting Luxemburg, 27 and 28 October 2011.



Within the framework of the Mobility Partnership, since March 2013, targeted initiatives for strengthening Armenia's migration management capacities, with special focus on reintegration, has been implemented.

Armenia and EU signed an Agreement on Visa Facilitation on 17 December 2012 and an Agreement on Readmission on 19 April 2013. Both agreements came into force on 1 January 2014. The EU-Armenia Visa Facilitation Agreement provides for simplified procedures for issuing entry visas to EU countries for a number of categories of Armenian citizens and since January 2013, all citizens of the EU Member States, as well as of those applying the Schengen Acquis, are exempt from visa requirement when visiting Armenia.⁷⁰

The above are a synopsis of conventions and agreements entered into by Armenia and many others exist, in various different fields, including returns agreements with non-EU countries. They serve, in the context of this assessment, to demonstrate the government of Armenia's policy of taking an active role on the international stage and its commitment to bringing migration, human rights and asylum legislation in line with best international practice.

2.6 Evaluation - Policy and Legislation

The migration policy of the government of Armenia, in terms of humanitarian border management, is directed firmly towards safeguarding the rights of individuals and national/ethnic groups. This is demonstrated by the way in which the processing of a relatively large number of Syrians was met with a pragmatic relaxation of requirements to qualify for nationality for those of Armenian ethnic origin and the ready acceptance into the asylum system of those who were not. It was acknowledged by UNHCR that, although refugees who are not of Armenian ethnicity are processed differently, good quality case assessments are done by SMS and some applicants were recognized as refugees last year. However, it was also reported that the recognition rate for applicants who are not of Armenian ethnicity has dropped since the Paris attacks, with a perception that heightened security concerns may be influencing the decision-making. It is not clear, at the time of writing, whether this has resulted in rejections of asylum and if so, what nationalities are involved. Also, the policy of recognizing migrants from war zones appears to be working as Ukrainians are being accepted and around 200 have so far applied.⁷¹

In terms of policy at an operational level, some of the actions central to HBM have been extracted and detailed above from "*Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation of The Border Security and Integrated State Border Management Strategy of The Republic of Armenia (2011—2015)*." As far as can be determined, there has not yet been a formal reassessment or update of progress on implementation of the plan, which is perhaps not surprising given that it was scheduled to run until 2015. However, if this is not yet work in progress, it is suggested that it be started as soon as possible.

The IOM report "*Analysis of Armenian Migration Legislation and Practice as Compared to EU Standards 2013*" comprehensively reviewed legislation and identified gaps and inconsistencies, some of which were addressed in draft amendments to the Law on Refugees and Asylum that were tabled before the

70 Taken from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Armenia - www.mfa.am

71 Interview with UNHCR, Yerevan, 12 February 2016.



National Assembly in early 2015. These amendments were scheduled for adoption in early 2016, but it is not yet clear whether they have been. It is not appropriate in this assessment to re-visit all the recommendations made in the analysis report, but given that over two years have elapsed since it was published, it may now be prudent to initiate a review of what progress has been made. If it is decided to conduct a reassessment, it would be beneficial, at the same time, to look at how migration legislation is constructed, with a view to amalgamating the laws on foreigners and the laws on refugees and asylum into one migration and asylum legislative instrument. This would have the advantage of integrating recent amendments, providing one point of reference for stakeholders, introducing greater clarity and eliminating overlap and duplication.

Finally, specifically in terms of mass movements at borders, it should be noted that although the law allows for temporary protection of particular migrant groups during a mass influx, what constitutes a mass influx is not defined. It is possible, therefore, that if a crisis develops very quickly, confusion will occur over when to invoke group protection and who for. It may be sufficient to delegate authority, in the first instance, to the crisis manager at the BCP, but the law should allow for this and the crisis management structure should be made clear in standard operating procedures (SOPs).



3. ADMINISTRATION

Border management in Armenia is relatively straightforward and the roles of the agencies involved in it are clearly defined in the routine operation of BCPs and internal control. However, when considering the wider implications of HBM relating to the mass movement of migrants during a crisis, additional challenges are presented, which require the involvement of other agencies and organizations in the disaster management structure. It is therefore pertinent to first look at the normal agency structure and responsibilities at BCPs, before examining in more detail how agencies can become involved at an operational level.

3.1 Structure of Border Crossing Points

The agency with primacy for migration management and control at BCPs is the Border Guard Troops detachment which comes under the overall remit of NSS. Their responsibility is entirely for BCPs, while the NSS is responsible for all security matters within the State. The responsibilities of the border guard are to:

- Check documents of persons and means of transportation and loads; carried by them as required by law;
- Process asylum applications lodged at borders;
- Prevent crime and irregular migration;
- Manage the Border Management Information System.

Other agencies present at BCPs are:

- The Republic of Armenia State Customs Service of State Revenue Committee;
- The Republic of Armenia Police, Passports and Visas Department;
- The Republic of Armenia Ministry of Agriculture, Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspectorates of the State Food Security Service;
- State Health Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Healthcare.

State Customs Service of the Republic of Armenia is responsible for foreign trade management, economic security and internal market protection by applying legislation governing goods and vehicles through borders, which includes the interception of contraband such the illegal transportation of drugs, objects with cultural, historical and archaeological importance, intellectual property objects, and animals and plants under the threat of destruction.



The Passports and Visas Department of the RA Police deals with all matters relating to foreigners, including civil protection and maintaining public order in crisis situations. It has officers at BCPs to handle visa applications on arrival, but the first point of contact for asylum seekers are border guards and after they enter, responsibility for processing asylum seekers passes to the State Migration Service (SMS). After this, they are passed to the Police Department of Visas and Registration, for registration and documentation.

Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspectorates of the State Food Security Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, has a presence at all BCPs, where officers carry out veterinary-sanitary, phytosanitary and sanitary-hygienic oversight of goods that are subject to import, export, transport and transit.

The State Health Inspectorate of the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Healthcare staff is responsible for health issues at borders and maintains a presence in the form of structural sub-divisions of borderline medical-sanitary inspection points at 7 BCPs - Zvartnots and Shirak airports, Bavra, Gogavan, Bagratashen and Meghri land BCPs and Ayrum rail terminus - in the form of “Borderline Medical-Sanitary Inspection Points.” It is responsible for sanitary protection and control at the borders and in time of crisis mass movements, would carry out duties including medical examinations, organizing hospitalization, organizing primary health care and putting in place preventative measures for individuals who had been in contact with sick people.

3.2 Humanitarian Border Management and Related Training

Following recruitment, border guard officers are posted to BCPs after an induction training course lasting between 30 and 40 days, which covers subjects described as standard BCP matters. These include document checks, normative legal acts regulating the activities of border control service agencies, migration, trafficking and smuggling of persons, international and bilateral issues, etc. Refresher training was said to be regular, on an annual basis, covering new developments, legal matters, document fraud, etc. Training is conducted at the Border Guard Training Centre in Yerevan. Specific crisis training was said to be part of the overall curriculum and included large scale refugee and asylum movements at borders. In interviews with border guards, it was emphasized that officers were taught what to do in emergencies.

The Health Inspectorate currently runs training programmes for border guards and customs officers on identifying and dealing with different hazards, such as biological and chemical threats, particularly in respect of cooperation with other agencies. This is built into basic training for officers and additional instruction can be given afterwards. Currently under development for inclusion in future basic training, is instruction for border guards and customs officer to profile and recognise travellers who may pose a health risk. Ad hoc training is also provided as risks emerge.

In addition to in-house training, in a meeting with the Armenian Red Cross Society, it was reported that the Society has been running a project for some years to help build capacity for Border Guards, PVD, the army and Border Guard Troops in areas relating to vulnerable migrants, including local legislation, international conventions, reproductive health, gender based violence, treatment of irregular migrants, psychological profiling and dealing with victims of trauma. A training programme is due to start this year to provide a 1 day course at each BCP per year, to ensure that all staff in the migrant structure are properly trained.



In the time available, it was not possible to conduct a training needs analysis, but a training review conducted in 2011 as part of an IOM technical border needs assessment of Armenia⁷² recommended that training of trainers' modules be developed to establish specialized advanced training courses in:

- Modern (integrated) Border Management Concepts;
- Identification of fraudulent documents;
- Risk profiling/Risk management;
- Procedures for in depth secondary examination of documents and travellers;
- Interviewing Techniques;
- Human trafficking and identification of victims of trafficking;
- Migration and health;
- Trans-national crime and terrorism.

From the information given by border guards, it is probable that some, if not all of these subjects are now included in training programmes, but it is not clear whether they are delivered at a basic level during induction training or conducted later at a specialist level. Additionally, the involvement of the UNHCR and the Red Cross Society in an extended programme of training in the subjects being delivered under their auspices, which are all directly relevant to HBM and the management of mass migrant movements, would tend to indicate that they are additional to what is currently included in the existing border guard training curriculum. As such, consideration should be given to conducting a new review of the current border guard training programme at all levels, to ensure that HBM concepts are fully covered and the Red Cross input is institutionalized within it, thus providing continuity when the scheduled programme at BCPs has been completed. At the very least, if it is not currently provided, rapid response teams and senior managers at BCPs should receive specialist training on crisis management in general and, specifically, on its application during mass migrant movements.

As part of a training needs analysis, it would be useful to look at the channels of communication between the central training unit and BCPs. If the communications network is not formally established, consideration could be given to upgrading the existing structure with a system of training liaison officers (TLOs) to act as specifically designated points of contact with BCPs. TLOs need not be trainers, although a background in training would be useful but, failing this, basic instruction in port training issues and administration would be desirable and could be relatively easily provided. TLOs would be responsible for highlighting local training issues, encouraging their colleagues to do mandatory courses, organizing local training on behalf of the training unit and disseminating training material and instructions. TLO would not be a full time role and designated officers could fit it around their normal duties, with time allocated by supervisors when needed.

⁷² IOM report “*Technical Border Needs Assessment, Armenia*” 21 – 24 May 2011. Project funded by the US Government.



3.3 Interagency Emergency Response Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

This section seeks to examine how the main government agencies and international organizations see their role in disaster management, in order to build a broad picture of readiness to respond to a mass influx of migrants across borders in terms of contingency planning and cooperation.

Republic of Armenia Ministry of Emergency Situations

MES is the ministry with overall responsibility for management of emergencies to protect the population and infrastructure of the country. Its constituent parts include:

- Rescue services;
- Fire fighters;
- The National Service for Safety and Protection;
- State Hydrometeorological and Monitoring Service Technical Safety;
- State Reserve and Stockpiles of Equipment.

MES is heavily involved with contingency planning for all types of disasters and emergencies and was described as operating within a horizontal and vertical structure. The vertical organization is within the Ministry, running from central level to provincial level and on to community level. The horizontal structure is liaison and cooperation with other government, non-governmental and international organizations. An example was given of ministry disaster management teams (DMT) being partnered with UN disaster management teams (UNDMT) and on a wider plain, to most if not all international organizations in the country. Contingency planning was said to follow the UN SENDAI framework for disaster risk reduction, which was agreed by UN member nations in 2015 and covers strategic planning at national level, followed by agency, regional, community and facility levels. The involvement of International organizations in risk reduction includes the distribution structure, training, humanitarian aid, damage limitation and resource procurement.

MES is involved in planning for all types of disaster in the context of borders, which includes natural disasters - earthquakes, landslides, floods, drought, famine, rain and hail and industrial disasters - technological, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN). Whilst in the past, mass movements of people displaced internally by such events had been included in planning, it was only relatively recently that cross-border movements had started to be considered for inclusion in contingency planning. Border related risk reduction includes radiological risks e.g. movement of hazardous substances across borders and from the biological perspective, diseases causing epidemics such as Swine Africa Fever and Avian flu. The latter had, in the past, involved the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health working together to screen travellers and disinfect vehicles. Planning relating to the smuggling and illegal transfer of radiological and biological substances had involved exercises at borders requiring joint working between several agencies, including the Border Guard, customs, Ministry of Defence police and MES. Capacity-building in the detection of radioactive and biological substances was underway, with the cooperation of UNDMT, and BCPs will receive more detection equipment to increase monitoring at borders. Two specialized vehicles will be



deployed, one in the north and one in the south and territorial units close to the border will have specialized equipment and train jointly with the Georgians.

As far as mass migration across borders, rather than internally displaced persons, was concerned, the main scenario was said to be a conflict situation somewhere in the region. As a result of the 2008 Russian/Georgian conflict, which resulted in higher levels of cross-border traffic, but not at a sufficient level to exceed the existing capacity of border agencies to deal with it, an ad hoc government plan was developed for a response to a hypothetical 30,000 migrant exodus from Georgia. This included tactical considerations such as accommodation, hospitals and schools. The plan was never required and was never made generic to all border emergencies. It was acknowledged that it should be re-visited with a view to inclusion in future planning.

Republic of Armenia State Migration Service (SMS)

SMS is the agency responsible for policy development in the field of migration and coordinating the actions of all other agencies in the migration structure. Essentially, anything relating to migration should be routed through SMS. In addition to policy, SMS has service functions and is entirely responsible for processing and deciding asylum applications. It also has input to the development of returns agreements, dealing with irregular migration, etc. The Service interviews all asylum applicants and issues a certificate valid for 2 months, after which, if asylum is approved, the PVD will grant residence or naturalization. To identify issues in the migration field, SMS provides politicians with information designed to make them more aware, but are hindered by a lack of detailed statistical information. The register of population was said to be out of date and information on passenger flow in and out of the country, which was obtained from BMIS, did not differentiate between regular passengers and migrants. In general terms, emigration was perceived as being a greater economic threat to the country than immigration and it was roughly estimated that over the previous 25 years, up to 25 per cent of the population had emigrated. This mainly applied to labour migration, with the principal destination country being the Russian Federation.

Republic of Armenia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA)

The Ministry is responsible administering the State social security system and in the event of a mass influx of migrants, would be required to integrate them into the existing system. It has a network of regional offices throughout Armenia, 19 of which are one-stop-shops for a variety of benefits and assistance and a further 30 integrated offices are planned. The offices essentially deal with employment, disability, social services and allowances, such as family benefits, pensions, etc. The ministry also administers various establishments across the country, such as orphanages, boarding schools and elderly peoples' homes.

Whilst the Ministry has no specific unit for emergencies, they have officers who are focal points for contingency planning, which includes civil protection, martial law, earthquakes, etc. and are actively involved in cross government planning. In 2015 it was involved in a national exercise⁷³ based on a need to evacuate and relocate 6 villages in the north of the country, which involved 460 inhabitants. The ministry organized provision of food and shelter, identified educational facilities and deployed social workers and medical assistance in conjunction with

73 The Exercise was codenamed SHANT and will be covered in a later section.



other ministries. Having covered internal displacement, the Ministry acknowledges that Armenia is in a turbulent region and is currently looking at migrant displacement across borders, the most likely being from Georgia and/or Turkey. There were said to be 500,000 ethnic Armenians in Georgia and it was suggested that an internal escalation in military action by Turkey against Kurds may provoke cross-border movements, even though the border is closed. An interesting observation was made relating to the minor exodus precipitated by the 2008 Russian/Georgian conflict, in so far as petrol supplies in Yerevan quickly dried up as the commercial freight routes to and from the Black Sea ports was disrupted by military movements. Presumably, any mass movement of migrants, particularly if a significant number of vehicles were involved, could have similar consequences.

It was felt that the role of agencies such as the Border Guard and police was already well-defined, but the role of MLSA was in need of clarification. It was envisaged that MLSA officers would initially take responsibility for assessing the needs of migrants, particularly the elderly, children and those who are otherwise vulnerable. Following assessment, social services would be provided based on need, in terms of schools, accommodation, medical care, plus financial assistance in accordance with benefits available to the population as a whole. Assistance would be provided through the integrated offices in the areas affected by migrant movement to which additional staff would be deployed. If migrants could not go to the offices, there were provisions for home visits and if a refugee camp was established, staff would also be deployed there. It was reported that the MLSA had around 10,000 staff and the largest network of regional offices of any ministry and was expecting to take on additional responsibility if a mass migration movement occurred. Contingency plans were said to have built-in mechanisms for providing additional funding and equipment. MLSA did not maintain stocks of emergency kits, such as those that would be required for an earthquake emergency but, in the event of any such crisis, would obtain them from the Ministry of Economy. Identity screening and documentation would be carried out by the competent authority before benefits were claimed.

Republic of Armenia Police Passports and Visas Department (PVD)

The role of PVD at borders has been outlined previously, but it also has an internal function and is involved in national contingency planning for emergencies, as are all other ministries and departments of government. In the event of a mass migrant influx, PVD responsibility was seen as providing an increased presence at borders to help regulate incoming migrants and direct them to pre-determined areas. Officers would establish perimeters for refugee camps and maintain law and order within them by, for example, confiscating firearms, screening migrants without identity documents, identifying those wanted for crimes and generally referring people on to other agencies as appropriate.

Republic of Armenia State Revenue Committee - Customs Service

The function of customs during mass migration movements was described as dealing with the vehicles and goods and was not seen as getting involved with the processing of travellers and refugees. Whilst their presence during a crisis was said to be important, it was the role of the MES to take the lead and customs was content to follow instructions from whichever agency was given primacy for coordination. As an example, the small to medium scale influx



of Syrians that had occurred in preceding years was quoted, during which the Ministry of Diaspora had taken over coordination of reception, accommodation, support and assistance at airports, with the other agencies, including customs, performing their normal duties. The role of customs was to continue to conduct their duties in a prompt and orderly fashion to maintain the flow of normal traffic. When there were humanitarian factors to be considered, they would introduce measures to expedite clearance. Whilst there was no provision in domestic legislation to completely suspend customs regulations for normal goods, under Eurasian Economic Union agreements, goods could be released prior to clearance and the paperwork attended to later. This essentially involved customs officers assessing the price and quantity of goods, recording the details of the importer and obtaining a point of contact without the need for a customs declaration. The importers would then be contacted at a later date to obtain further details and settle any duty payable.

Special procedures for the import of humanitarian goods, equipment and vehicles was the remit of a joint agency taskforce convened at cabinet level. Its job was to monitor and determine which agencies would be regarded as humanitarian operators and give them the status of humanitarian missions, which would allow them to import duty-free goods temporarily for non-commercial use, having first submitted a list of equipment. Once an agency had been granted humanitarian mission status, customs did not interfere. During natural and man-made disasters, rescue teams were permitted to work in an unregulated way, moving equipment as necessary. Arrangements for dealing with the goods and vehicles of refugees was said to be covered by the Eurasian customs code, but the exact procedures were not known. Although it was said that there were no agency specific SOPs for mass migrant movements at border, it was reported that there was a customs contingency plan covering emergencies, irrespective of the nature of them, which could be mobilized within 40 minutes. Each ministry was reported to have a system of wardens in every unit who were familiar with emergency procedures and responsible for coordinating and liaising with other units within the Ministry. In addition to the national exercise, SHANT, smaller ones were conducted at agency level more frequently, usually bi-annually.

Republic of Armenia Ministry of Healthcare (MOH)

The MOH were reported to have a list of specific roles relevant to mass movement of people and it was felt that measures to deal with internal displacement could relatively easily be translated to action at borders. These included participation in evacuations, sanitary clean-up, triaging and subsequent hospitalization of disaster victims, organization of specialized treatment and managing epidemics. It was pointed out that there was a government decree on civil defence and medical assistance which applied to camps for displaced people covering set-up, administration, provision of services, facilities, etc. Although this decree did not specifically apply to refugee camps, it was felt that the only difference would be the need to set up a secure perimeter if refugees were being accommodated. As far as healthcare was concerned, the MOH would perform the same functions as they would for internally displaced persons. Within camps, the Ministry was responsible for providing medical assistance and maintaining sanitary systems, with heavy emphasis on helping the vulnerable.

Joint- agency response to crises at borders was reported to be compliant with domestic legislation and international conventions. Country mapping for epidemics is carried out and medical controls can be deployed to risk at BCPs. Thermo-visors are available, including



mobile units and hospital facilities include provision of quarantine and treatment areas for infectious diseases. It was reported that two BCPs - Zvartnots and Bagratashen - have full medical control facilities and there are plans to bring others - Bavra and Gogavan - up to the same standard as part of the BCP redevelopment programme.

Republic of Armenia Ministry of Diaspora

On the instruction of the RA President, issues, support and integration of Syrian Armenians moving to Armenia are coordinated by the RA Ministry of Diaspora. Its responsibility for refugees extends only to Syrians and does not include refugees from other countries, whether they are of Armenian ethnic origin or not. In 2013, an inter-agency commission to coordinate Syrian Armenian issues was set up by the RA Prime Minister, under the leadership of the minister of diaspora, with the participation of the deputy heads of almost all State bodies. The commission included MTAD, SMS, PVD, Border Guard, The State Employment Agency of the RA Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the RA General Department of Civil Aviation, etc. The commission follows an annual work plan and holds joint meetings that follow set agendas and also deal with ad hoc issues. International organizations such as UNHCR, IOM, etc. are periodically co-opted, as are NGOs and representatives from community and spiritual organizations. Committee sessions are covered by the media and all participants are expected to contribute reports and updates on the Syrian situation. The commission was established to ensure that all agencies providing support to the Syrian refugee issue were properly coordinated and contributed positively. The commission has become an important platform for the participation of not only State bodies but also society as a whole.

With the support of the MOD, a “Centre for the Coordination of Armenian Issues” NGO was also been set up in 2012, all founding members of which were Armenian Syrians. The organization closely cooperates with the MOD and humanitarian support projects are implemented through it, coordinated by the Ministry, along with pan-Armenian, international and charitable organizations.

Inevitably there have been problems with employment, permanent accommodation and healthcare. Support mechanisms were introduced with free basic health care and sources of funds, such as benevolent organizations and the UN through UNHCR, identified for complex medical treatment. The ministry is very concerned to promote integration and self-reliance with, in addition to education and accommodation, sponsors students, summer camps and recreation facilities for children, cultural activities. To assist economic integration, the ministry cooperated with the Ministry of Economics to establish a centre for SME support and development, which offers loans for viable business plans and promotes regular fairs to showcase Syrian goods, particularly catering, arts and crafts. The Ministry is anxious that the Syrians stay, particularly in view of their shared language and culture, but it was acknowledged that some travelled elsewhere as refugees and Canada was mentioned as currently receiving them.

The Ministry does not get involved in the registration of refugees and provides support after they have been through the regular registration process. In the event of a mass influx through a land BCP, the ministry has no plans to deploy to the borders, but once ethnic Armenians have been cleared and documented, it would provide the usual support structure.



Republic of Armenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)

Whilst always maintaining their core function of maintaining diplomatic relations and situation reporting, the involvement of the MFA with mass migrant influx is largely confined to activity in the migrant source country. This was demonstrated by the movement of Syrians by air, which was facilitated by the MFA via their Consulate General in Aleppo. Applications for citizenship by those who could prove Armenian ancestry were taken in and despatched to Yerevan for onward transmission to the appropriate ministry for decision, which generally took approximately six months. Alternatively, migrants could be given a visa or, in the absence of any documents proving ethnicity, the Consul General was able to issue a return certificate, which was only valid for travel to Armenia for a period of one month. The certificate is internationally recognized and presents no difficulty when exiting other countries. The CG in Batumi can also issue return certificates to ethnic Armenians in Turkey, as they have no diplomatic representation there.

Republic of Armenia Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)

Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspectorates of the State Food Security Service

The Food Security Service of the MOA maintains offices at all BCPs to regulate and control the import and export of plants, animals, raw materials of animal origin, feed, feed additives, feed mixture, veterinary medicines, plants, vegetable products, plant protection products, and fertilizers, etc. In an event of a mass migration movement, it was reported that representatives/employees would be deployed to the respective control points, regional centres and various workplaces to attend to their normal duties. No special provisions applicable to mass influx were reported.

Armenian Red Cross Society

In accordance with its agreement with UNHCR, the Red Cross Society is responsible for monitoring border crossings in terms of asylum seekers and refugees. It is also contracted by UNHCR to gather statistics on all travellers crossing borders, including irregular migrants and those in detention. It utilises its local representatives to do the border monitoring and report to UNHCR. If required, it supports asylum seekers with supplies and support packages of food, clothes, bed linen, etc. It was said to be fully engaged with the Armenian government in disaster response contingency planning, but because of limited resources, the organization is not geared to providing large scale support, such as may result from a mass migration crisis.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP is very active in Armenia through its ongoing Disaster Risk Reduction Programme, which is aimed at supporting capacity-building in risk reduction through technical expertise and the communities. It supports the National Platform for Risk Reduction in general and specifically assists the State funded Crisis Management Academy which, under the auspices of the MES, trains 800 specialists per year. All crisis support and response mechanisms are developed through the Academy and they jointly produce publications on the subject.

In term of crisis management, UNDP helps to identify risks at local level, identify needs and develop action plans that are integrated into risk management. Local community leaders



attend the Academy and ad hoc training is given locally, after which a community risk certificate is issued by the MTAES. The certificate will soon be replaced with a community risk passport, which will specify the risks pertaining to particular communities. Local level risk management methodology has been tested in many communities for local needs in Armenia and UNDP has produced a local level risk management toolkit to help communities implement, develop and monitor risk management. The toolkit has been adopted by other international organizations and they have developed one for environmental disasters. Also used is a local government self-assessment tool produced by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, which was developed for worldwide use and is in place in 21 cities in Armenia.

UNDP are committed to helping the government develop early warning systems in the event of all types of disaster and are involved in producing a system that will use multiple communications systems to inform communities and agencies, such as text messages, emails, TV and radio. The organization is currently working on updating and expanding the Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, which was originally produced just for MTAES, so that it can be extended to cover disaster risk management for ministries. It is expected to be ready by the end of May and will cover the period 2016 to 2020. The strategy will cover mass movement of migrants across borders at national level, rather than just in individual agency instructions, as has previously been the case. Amongst other things, it also covers how the airports will need to be supported to deal with large emergencies, how aid personnel and equipment will be received, documenting regulation of cooperation between agencies at the airport and setting up refugee camps at borders.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

In terms of refugees, asylum seekers and other displaced persons, UNHCR core Mandate activities include support for legislative reform and policy development to strengthen the asylum system, capacity-building of relevant actors including border guards, SMS, judiciary, lawyers and NGOs, and the provision of humanitarian assistance where gaps in State assistance to refugees and asylum seekers are identified. UNHCR also encourages greater self-reliance, regardless of the status held by persons displaced by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to Armenia. UNHCR has no current project underway in Armenia, but operates core mandate activities with those who arrive from the Syrian Arab Republic, of which 16,000 remain from 20,000 arrivals. It is engaged in providing humanitarian assistance and encouraging greater self-reliance, regardless of status. From the point of view of UNHCR, as ethnic Armenians, the Syrians cannot really be regarded as externally displaced and thus in need of asylum, because they qualify for citizenship. Their situation is more analogous with the category of internally displaced persons, although they have crossed borders to get to Armenia. UNHCR treats persons displaced by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to Armenia as “persons in a refugee-like situation.” Money is provided for support, with the bulk going on accommodation rental, financial assistance to find work and start businesses and medical support to supplement the State system. Support is also provided to all other nationalities, including Ukrainians, Iraqis and Iranians, but they form much smaller numbers.

UNHCR is partnering with the Red Cross, who conducts monitoring visits to borders on their behalf. The only BCP with detention facilities is Zvartnots airport, although they are planned for the 3 BCPs on the Georgian border as part of the redevelopment scheme. It was reported that border guards do not have SOPs for dealing with asylum applications, although



some are being developed for them by UNHCR. Amendments to asylum law were made in January 2016 to regulate referrals from penitentiary institutions to ensure that persons in need of international protection, who are in detention, can have access to asylum procedures.

UNHCR has provided technical assistance to the Border Guard by contributing to equipping training rooms at 2 land BCPs, Zvartnots airport, BGs Headquarters and by providing air-conditioning at the Meghry BCP bordering with the Islamic Republic of Iran. While UNHCR refugee contingency planning in 2015 focused on conflict-induced displacement, the Disaster Management Country Team disaster management plans had, until 2015, revolved around nuclear accidents and natural disasters, primarily earthquakes, although mass migrant influx is now on the agenda.

3.4 Interagency Emergency Response Exercise (SHANT)

During the course of meetings with the Ministries and agencies, the SHANT exercise was mentioned by almost all of them, usually in the context of their role in it. The agency with primacy during the exercise was the Ministry of Defense, as it was designed to simulate events following military aggression from an unspecified neighbouring country. Press releases described SHANT as:

“During a briefing held on September 2 by Armenian Defense Ministry’s Defense Policy Department, Yerevan-based military attaches of foreign States and representatives of international organizations were provided with information about ‘Shant-2015’ military command and staff exercises due in Armenia on September 3-6. Officials of Armenian Defense Ministry said that Shant-2015 are planned military exercises of all-republican significance and aim to check the mobilization readiness of State and military command bodies in the process of the State’s immediate preparations for defense and repulsion of an aggression, the ability to bring forces into a higher level of readiness, and to raise the level of interaction and coordination of actions. Those present were told that given the military-political situation around Armenia and in adjacent territories, the enemy and the situation in the drills’ fictional scenario were maximally brought into line with reality.”⁷⁴

Further detail was added by agencies involved and it was reported that SHANT was comprised of 3 or 4 crisis scenarios, one of which was a mass influx of refugees during a conflict situation in a neighbouring country, which was the component of interest in terms of HBM. The refugee scenario was based in a mock refugee camp close to Yerevan or “tent city”, as it was colloquially referred to. It lasted for 2 days and participant agencies were given one month to prepare.

The role of SMS was defined as the registration of migrants and provision of identity papers for them, as it is currently responsible for registering asylum applications and issuing initial identity cards. In the event of a real emergency, it would probably do this at the border, but during the exercise, it was done in the camp. For the purpose of the exercise, SMS officers were split into 2 teams, one at Headquarters and the other in the camp. The team in the camp recorded refugee details - name, nationality, date of birth and date of issue - on laptops and in ledgers, and photographed migrants on hand-held cameras. At the end of the day, the information was brought back to Headquarters where hand written identity cards were produced, with photographs printed from the cameras. The cards were taken back to the camp

74 News report - www.Panorama.am



and issued the next day. Records were entered on the SMS asylum database. There was no differentiation between asylum applications and temporary protection - all migrants were treated as though they had applied for asylum. SMS worked closely with NSS and having initially screened all migrants, passed those identified as being of security interest to MSS, who carried out more in-depth checks. Communications between staff and agencies was by mobile phone. In identifying some of the lessons learned from the exercise, it was said that, although there was a strategic action plan prepared by the Ministry of Defence, there was also a need for clear, written instructions on demarcation of responsibilities at a tactical level between agencies, from the border to the camps and beyond.

The MOH were involved as part of its responsibility for civil protection. They had a list of specific roles relevant to mass movement of people and it emerged from the exercise that measures to deal with internal displacement could relatively easily be translated to action at borders. The Ministry reported that migrant health considerations were discussed with the SMS, but had not yet been specified in any official documents. In the event, the perception was that it was not so much the response mechanisms that were in need of refinement, it was the areas of responsibility that required clarity. As a general observation on the exercise, it was felt that it had demonstrated that the country was not fully ready for a mass influx of migrants and that there was a need to clearly define who is responsible for setting up and running camps, the criteria for setting them up, allocation and source of finance, etc.

An independent view of the exercise was given by UNHCR, who were present as observers. The imagined scenario appeared to be an influx of foreign nationals displaced from a neighbouring country by military action against their community and the refugee camp was set up with tents for all the agencies involved. Representatives from various ministries were present, although border guards did not appear to be operationally deployed in the camp, which tended to suggest that the exercise may not have included dealing with refugees as they crossed the border. The thought and preparation that had gone into the exercise was described as impressive and as was presumably the intention, problems were identified. From the point of view of the observers, the perception was that:

- The overall management of the operation had not been fully thought through;
- What had happened at the border did not appear to have been included;
- NSS were interviewing people in the camp, when they should have perhaps been screened before they got into it;
- How the camp population was to be managed had not been fully worked out and the responsibilities for doing so not clearly defined;
- It was unclear how long people would be kept in the camp and thus their freedom of movement restricted.

In the event of a mass influx at the border, UNHCR would monitor the situation, give advice and if humanitarian needs were not being met, would assist, give coaching and provide guidance. If they lacked local capacity, they would get an NGO partner to assist.



3.5 Evaluation - Administration

Because Armenia is so prone to disaster situations, many internal and external agencies are involved in the emergency response structure, in addition to those with a permanent presence at BCPs. Contingency plans for mass migration movements at borders do not appear to be currently available in the public domain and are not written into the generic disaster response plans, covering natural and man-made disasters, that are available through open sources. Whilst SOPs were reported to exist, they were considered confidential or for internal use only and were not made available to the assessment team.

Without access to specific mass migration influx response plans at borders, how agencies currently interact may be gauged, to a significant degree, from their own accounts⁷⁵ of their role and functions within the structure. Although current planning is focused on internal mass movements, in view of the fact that legislation requires all refugees to be treated equally with the rest of the population, responses to internal displacement can presumably be relatively easily adapted to migrant influx. It seems apparent, however, that while most, if not all, agencies have a broad perception of their role and responsibilities, work needs to be done to specifically include mass migrant influx response in contingency planning, either as a separate element or integrated into existing plans. This perception was also apparent at operational level, as identified during the SHANT exercise, with several agencies highlighting the need for more concise planning at both strategic and tactical level to demarcate responsibilities between players in the structure and provide clear, written instructions. It should be acknowledged that the SHANT exercise is an excellent example of inter-agency planning and cooperation, particularly at operational level. Lessons learned will be invaluable in refining future planning.

⁷⁵ Taken from meetings and interviews conducted during the in-country phase of the assessment, 8 – 12 February, 2016.



4. OPERATIONS

In examining how the operational aspects of HBM are, or could be applied at borders, the assessment team were able to visit Bavra BCP, to look at operational management and facilities first hand. As part of the same visit, the team also went to the corresponding BCP at Ninotsminda on the Georgian side of the border and met with Georgian Border Guards.

4.1 Bavra Border Crossing Point

Bavra BCP is located in the North East of Armenia, approximately 160 km from the capital, Yerevan. For the first 30K out of Yerevan, the road is 2 lane motorway, after which it reverts to single lane for the rest of the way to the border. When not winding through mountains, long stretches of the road are straight, with predominantly undulating, rocky terrain on either side. Small settlements periodically border the road and it passes through Gyumri, the second largest city in Armenia, approximately 60 km from Bavra. The road leads directly to the border post, which is situated on the northern outskirts of a small settlement. At the time of the visit, the surrounding countryside was covered by a thick layer of snow and it is common for the road to be impassable for days at a time in winter.

The BCP is accessed through an arched gateway, beyond which is a customs office on the left and a substantial customs shed on the right. The Border Guard office is approximately 700 to 800 metres further down the road on the right, with an office for the Ministry of Agriculture on the opposite side of road. The Border Guard and customs controls are 300 or 400 meters further on, under a high canopy straddling both sides of the road, with the arrival controls on the left and the departure controls on the right. Control accommodation is located along the central length of the canopy and occupied by immigration officers and customs officers in adjacent booths. Access through the BCP is restricted to the road under the control canopy. The BCP is currently undergoing redevelopment and the new control facilities are being located 1 or 2 km further down the road towards the Georgian BCP. Substantial building work is underway, but no further progress can be made during the winter. Building will continue when the weather improves and completion is scheduled for September or October of 2016.

The agency with primacy and the largest staff compliment are the Border guards and details of the operation of the BCP were given by the Border Guard Officer in Charge (OIC). Staffing levels for the border guard contingent were regarded as confidential, but was said to be sufficient to keep the BCP adequately manned for current operational requirements, although it was acknowledged that levels will need to increase when the new facilities are opened.

Precise traffic figures were not retained at the BCP, as they are drawn from the BMIS system centrally. The traffic is seasonal and figures varied widely between summer and winter. The



summer season runs from June to September and estimates of a total of 3 to 4,000 pedestrians passing through per day were given. During winter, the numbers dropped to around 200 per day, mostly from the Armenian communities in the border area, which were said to number between 100,000 and 150,000 on the Georgian side. The Georgian Black Sea tourist resorts, principally Batumi, are approximately 100 km away and account for a substantial level of tourist traffic, predominantly Armenian, but including a significant number of international travellers who tend to fly to Tbilisi and Kutaisi, which has an airport located approximately 40 km from the border in Georgia. A common international tourist route is by air to Georgia, coach through Bavra to tour Armenia then return to Georgia through Bagratashen to fly out from Tbilisi.

Figures for vehicles were put at 3 to 400 per day, including coaches, although specific coach numbers were difficult to estimate, as tourist coaches were not regular, but not uncommon. Regular buses bound for Turkey crossed on Saturdays and returned on Thursdays at the rate of 2 or 3 a day. There are also buses between Armenia and Georgia, mainly carrying Armenians and Georgians of Armenian origin. Buses disembarked passengers to cross as pedestrians and re-join their vehicles after clearing the border controls. Passengers included small scale traders conducting cross-border trade, often 40 to 50 persons on each bus. Medical care in the border region of Georgia was said to be less well developed than in Armenia, which created demand for Georgians to travel to a hospital located approximately 10 km from Bavra, which provided more comprehensive facilities.

Freight traffic was estimated at 40 to 50 vehicles per day in peak season and much less in winter, as the preference was to use the BCP at Bagratashen, which is not as prone to such extreme weather conditions. The freight route through Bavra links Yerevan to the Georgian Black Sea ports of Batumi and freight terminals at Poti, which are located side by side. Worldwide freight movements are cleared in Poti and embarkation points include the United States, Western Europe, Japan, Canada, etc. Broad examples of the type of goods shipped included vehicles, food (specifically wheat flour from Canada), clothes, etc.

Commenting generally on the operation of the BCP, it was reported that the controls were not subject to long delays, as staffing was adequate and the staff compliment remained constant year round.

While staff numbers were said to be confidential, officers were prepared to comment on training for border guards. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were reported to be available in hard copy and accessible for consultation by all officers. Joint SOPs with other agencies were also reported to be available, as was an emergency contingency plan and rules for interaction between agencies.

When the question of the potential for mass migrant movements at Bavra was raised, the general opinion was that officers could not foresee any events in the immediate or distant future that might precipitate such an event. Armenians in Georgia had been living there for centuries and any conflict situation with Georgia, which was considered to be inconceivable, would be more likely to involve the movement of other nationalities present in the country. Officers were of the opinion that any mass movement would occur through the green borders, which were the responsibility of a separate unit of the Border Guards, rather than through the BCP.

In the event of mass movement, equipment available for recording the details of refugees was confined to the BMIS system, for which there was a total of 10 static terminals, 5 on departures and 5 on arrivals, including one that was used by the Department of Visas and Passports of the Police. There were no mobile units, although laptops containing BMIS



software were available at rail stations and could, conceivably, be redeployed in the event of an emergency. These units did not connect to the live system and any information recorded on them during passenger checks was currently required to be downloaded later onto static terminals that had a real-time connection with Headquarters. However, it was later reported by NSS that the mobile units were equipped with RJ 45 cable and wireless Wi-Fi network devices, which could be activated remotely with a live system if an appropriate network structure was created.

Ninotsminda Border Crossing Point, Georgia

Following consultations at Bavra BCP, the assessment team travelled to the corresponding BCP at Ninotsminda, Georgia. The road from the Bavra departure controls continues for 2 or 3 km on a largely raised one lane causeway to the Ninotsminda arrival controls, past the site of the new Bavra BCP, where two large buildings now stand in a reasonably advanced state of construction. For most of its length, the road drops down by about one metre to the surrounding countryside which, at the time of the visit, was covered by a thick layer of snow. It was, therefore, not possible to assess the nature of the terrain. The area around the new construction, however, seemed to be flat for some considerable distance around the perimeter of the site.

The friendly relationship between the Armenian and Georgian BCPs was emphasized by the ease with which the team was permitted to cross to the Georgian side and the hospitable way in which it was received by officers of the Georgian Border Guard Troops. Whilst assessment of Ninotsminda BCP was not within the remit of the assessment, the Georgian border guard contingent were relaxed about discussing issues of mutual interest. They stressed the cordial relationship that existed with their Armenian counterparts and the two countries as a whole. None of the officers spoken to could envisage any situation that might result in conflict between the two nations and did not consider it to be even a remote possibility. The possibility of mass migration movements through either BCP was considered to be unlikely, even in the context of current events within the EU, as neither was on the current routes used by migrants from the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq or Afghanistan. It was conceded that irregular migrants had been detected on the Georgian/Turkish border, principally from India, Afghanistan and Bangladesh and the number involved was estimated at around 100 in 2015. There was no indication that the situation could or would turn into mass movements and it seemed likely that the irregular migrants were arriving through the Black Sea ports, although officers acknowledged that they did not know for sure as the migrants would not reveal their routes.

It was reported that the BCP did not suffer from traffic congestion, as it tended to be slow and steady. There were 9 BMIS static terminals available on the arrival and departure control and there were no mobile units available.

4.2 BCP Configuration

The current configuration of Bavra BCP is not conducive to managing a mass influx of refugees and it was never designed to be, as a mass movement of migrants from Georgia was not considered to be a possibility when it was built. The position of the BCP 2 km from the border line is far from ideal and when it was reviewed in 2011 for the IOM technical border



needs assessment, major deficiencies were identified, particularly in infrastructure such as accommodation, power and sanitation. At the time, there was not even a canopy over the vehicle control lanes and travellers were very much exposed to the elements. In the intervening years, improvements have been made, but facilities are still relatively small scale and rudimentary. However, as construction of a new BCP is now underway, there is little sense in making any more improvements to the existing structure, unless they are designed to complement the new BCP e.g. provide extra parking space, adapt buildings for other uses, etc.

The new BCP site is approximately 1K nearer the border than the existing facility and plans for the new structure are impressive. The new site is considerably larger than the existing BCP and the current single lane vehicle inward and outward controls are to be replaced by 4 standard vehicle lanes and one for non-standard cargo on each side. The outward control lanes are located to the North-East of the main office building, which will house the control authorities, and the inwards lanes are adjacent, to the South-West. All lanes are covered by canopies. The rest of the infrastructure will be built on the inward, west side of the site, leaving the east side beyond the outward controls perimeter fence clear of buildings, so that an emergency services helipad can be located on the north-east edge. The helipad will be accessed from a road to be constructed north of the outward controls.

The west side of the site will accommodate all of the infrastructure necessary at an international standard BCP, including at least 3 holding areas for commercial cargo vehicles on the inward control side, capable of holding in excess of 25 lorries, plus a fenced area for detained freight vehicles to the west of, and adjacent to, the inward control lanes, suitable for at least 12 lorries. Holding areas for passenger cars are located to the north and south of the inward and outward controls, each suitable for 20 to 30 vehicles and there is a 2 vehicle fenced area for hazardous cargo in the south-west corner of the site. On the far western side, within the perimeter fence, a separate building is to be provided for a veterinary, sanitary and phytosanitary control station, with a fenced quarantine area for animals. A customs warehouse, a vehicle in-depth control station and a cargo and passenger X-ray inspection stations are located further south along the perimeter. MOH offices are housed in the main administration building between the inward and outward lanes.

4.3 BCP Adaptation in Response to Mass Migrant Influx

When looking at the proposed new site to assess the potential for managing a mass influx of migrants, it is not easy to envisage the scale of the facilities from plans. As a result, how the infrastructure might be adapted to cope with a sudden, large increase in traffic is, at present, open to conjecture. However, certain assumptions can be made and options explored that are evident from blueprints, which may be refined and included in contingency planning when construction is nearing completion. The suggestions that follow may be worthy of consideration.

With 4 vehicle arrival lanes, initial examination of a significant number of arriving migrants should be possible, with the non-standard cargo lane used to keep normal freight traffic moving under accelerated customs clearance procedures. Whilst care will need to be taken to control vehicular traffic, if the number of pedestrians significantly exceeds the capacity of the foot controls, one or two vehicle lanes could be used for pedestrian control or for buses to bring pedestrians through for examination on-board. In the event of a crisis driven inward mass movement, it may be assumed that outward movement through the BCP will be severely



reduced or suspended, which will free-up vehicle and passenger lanes on the departure controls, thus providing expanded capacity and creating what would effectively be a one way control. If this option is considered viable by the authorities, provision should be made during construction for any fence or barrier between the inward and outward lanes to have a gate or removable section to allow inward traffic to safely cross into the outward lanes, under strict supervision. Although the frontline of the control would remain with the border guard, there should be space of the other agencies to work alongside them, especially customs who already share control booths. Provision should also be made for health officials to monitor traffic to identify possible health risks and take immediate referrals from border guards who may also detect any such risks.

It is widely accepted by agencies in the migration structure that any mass influx is going to be made up of foreigners, in the case of Bavra, Georgians, of Armenian ethnic origin. While all migrants will need to be examined on arrival, those who have identity documents can be relatively easily processed e.g. holders of national passports who do not need a visa can be given entry under normal entry conditions and advised of what support services are available, which will include national and international organizations and possibly accommodation in a refugee camp. If they are of Armenian ethnic origin, they can then apply for citizenship, residence or asylum. If not, subject to border guards being satisfied that they do not pose a security or criminal threat, they can be advised to apply for asylum with SMS.

In the first instance, every effort should be made to at least register everyone on BMIS, but whether this is possible will be determined by the nature of the emergency and the volume of traffic. In the event of armed conflict in the border region, the first priority will be to move refugees out of the danger zone, to camps if necessary, whilst keeping them as close to the border as practicable. This will reduce logistical problems and facilitate return if the crisis is temporary. If refugees do not have passports or other acceptable identity documents, consideration should be given, at the very least, to issuing basic identity documents, if necessary in hard copy, recording name, date and place of birth, nationality and family details. Full registration and issue of photo I/D, either by SMS or PVD, would then need to be conducted later, at the earliest opportunity. Ideally, fingerprints would also be collected at this stage, but this is not currently carried out on BMIS and there is doubt about present legislation allowing for it.

If circumstances allow for full registration at the BCP, it would appear from the site plans that the freight vehicle holding areas could be adapted to be processing areas. This would require temporary offices to be set up, together with covered waiting areas, access to refreshments and sanitation facilities. The fenced vehicle detention area could be adapted to screening where security is an issue and containment is required, such as for combatants, suspected people traffickers, criminal elements, etc. Alternatively or in addition, it may be appropriate to utilise the open area outside of the perimeter fence on the east side of the site, around the helipad, to set up temporary registration and screening facilities, again with temporary buildings providing office space, shelter and other essential facilities. A further alternative would be to utilise the current BCP site which, when the new facilities are opened, will presumably be redundant. When the assessment team visited, it was not possible to survey what land was available around or within the BCP perimeter due to a thick layer of snow, but it should be possible to set up screening and registration facilities, if not a longer term refugee camp.



4.4 Contingency Plans and Standard Operating Procedures for Emergencies

Information was given by border guards at Bavra BCP that emergency contingency plans were in existence but specific to individual BCPs, which included cooperation with the Georgian border guards. They were, however, classified as confidential and for internal use only, so there was no opportunity for the assessment team to review the content. It was also reported at Border Guard Headquarters that emergency contingency plans were in place at national level, but whether they included anything specific to mass migrant movements at borders was unclear, although it was said that regular planning made reference to setting up a response. There was also said to be inter-agency cooperation procedures for emergencies, such as establishing quarantine facilities. SOPs for disaster response were also said to exist but, like the national contingency plans, they were classified for official use only and therefore not available for disclosure. Instructions were reported to be constantly further developed and updated.

Operating procedures have been produced in conjunction with the development plans for the new Bavra BCP, in conjunction with UNDP, which cover, in considerable detail, how and where the BCP agencies operate and what their responsibilities are. However, they do not cover operational response to crisis mass movements, although they do contain reference to the responsibilities of an MES who, it would seem, will be permanently stationed at the BCP and will be required to:

- Assess potential threats to life and property in case of emergency;
- Develop solutions and take measures to prevent emergency situations and eliminate their consequences;
- Coordinate authorized services at checkpoints in case of emergencies of natural or anthropogenic character.

In considering preparation of SOPs covering mass influx, account should also be taken of how border guard troops would deal with migrants crossing green borders outside of BCPs. Policy on responding to this situation will probably need to be formulated at Ministerial level, but could involve setting up unofficial but manned BCPs in high risk areas and deploying staff and mobile equipment to conduct passport checks and registration. Alternatively, depending on the volume of traffic, refugees could be brought to the BCP or wherever processing was taking place.

4.5 Cross-Border Cooperation

Cross-border cooperation was covered at national level during meetings with NSS and the border guard in Yerevan and at local level at Bavra and Ninotsminda. At NSS it was reported that there were no international agreements on emergency response currently in force, although negotiations were underway to form a task force of “border delegates” from agencies and civil bodies to look at events at borders to formulate preventative measures and take action. The negotiations were said to include Armenian and Georgian border guards. It was proposed that joint sessions to examine incidents would be instigated both at BCP and higher level.

At Bavra, relations with the Georgian guards was described as good and any problems, not necessarily just those relating to migration issues, were discussed, largely on an informal basis,



by officers visiting their counterparts as and when issues arose. There were no formal memoranda of agreement (MOU) at BCP level to govern the exchange of information, although there was a national MoU covering the redevelopment of the BCP. At strategic level, cooperation in all BCPs between Armenia and Georgia since 2012 has been based on the provisions of the treaty, signed between RA NSS and Ministry of Interior affairs of Georgia on “border cooperation.” Currently the agreement on the activities of border representatives on both sides is in the process of ratification.

At Ninotsminda, it was confirmed that officers from the two BCPs worked closely together on an informal basis and that should mass movements or any other emergency arise, they would deal with them together, although it was reported that no formal agreements for doing so existed. Local bilateral agreements were said to be unnecessary as the border guards were good friends. Should a mass movement occur, perhaps following an earthquake or other natural disaster, it was acknowledged that both sides could work together on, for example, registration of refugees and although formal joint plans have not currently been developed, there was enthusiasm for such a project. It was also reported that when incidents occur, both on the green border and at the BCPs, the border guard contingent units from both sides report to each other and could work jointly if necessary. Communications between them relied principally on crossing and meeting face to face, although they also talked by telephone. Additionally, they worked together on keeping the infrastructure going by helping each other clear cross-border roads. The officers present agreed that it would be useful to have joint SOPs for emergencies.

Though not directly focused on emergency situations at borders, the UNDP reported in its project document⁷⁶ covering the redevelopment of Bavra BCP, that a cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of Interior of Georgia and National Security Service of Armenia on 29 November 2011. This established a legal basis for an increasingly integrated approach to enhancing border security between the two countries. At the time, UNDP suggested that further bilateral agreements would be required, particularly in regard to exchange of information, joint operations and joint use of equipment at BCPs, and new secondary level legislation, regulations and SOPs would need to be prepared and adopted on both sides. It is not clear how much, if any, progress has been made in these areas although it would appear from conversations with both border guard detachments that, although they cooperated well, not much had been formally agreed.

4.6 Risk Analysis

Information collection and risk analysis is widely recognized as being essential to providing migration specific intelligence, both at a strategic level to anticipate where crises and threats to border security are likely to develop and at a tactical level to enable and inform operational intervention, typically in the area of trafficking/smuggling and cross-border crime. It can also be used to anticipate where crises are likely to occur and monitor increased traffic as it builds, so that resources can be deployed to risk. It must be stressed that such an intelligence capability should be migration specific to compliment rather than be in competition with the production of national security intelligence.

⁷⁶ UNDP project “Enhancement of the border management capabilities at Bavra-Ninotsminda BCPs between Georgia and Armenia”. 2012 – 2013.



There was said to be a central intelligence structure in place to examine situations that in different countries that might precipitate an emergency response, which appeared to primarily record and analyse statistical data and provide information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for use in the visa regime. What was not explored was to what extent officers at BCPs were trained to investigate and gather information from incidents and activity at borders, where to send it, how it was processed and how it was disseminated.

A typical West European migration intelligence structure would involve intelligence liaison officers at border posts, usually designated operational officers, who assist with information gathering in addition to their normal duties. Liaison officers would send information to a regional unit serving BCPs on the same border and they would develop regional risk assessments and identify local threats at all levels. This would contribute to the development of a national strategic risk assessment, prepared by a central migration intelligence unit. Regional units would also develop intelligence packages to support tactical intervention and investigation at BCPs and by other agencies, although it has to be acknowledged that the geographical distribution of BCPs in Armenia may not justify a regional level intelligence capability, in which case small units could be formed at BCPs and report directly to the centre. During crisis mass migration movements, the potential for trafficking and smuggling of persons, as well as commodity smuggling, terrorism and other cross-border crime is greatly increased and good intelligence in the hands of managers and frontline officers is vital in directing resources at the greatest threats in the right places. Depending on what the current situation is in this area of activity, it may be appropriate to conduct a review of the migration intelligence structure and capability, in conjunction with training on information gathering and handling.

4.7 Rapid Border Intervention Teams and Mobile Assistance/Training

It was reported at border guard headquarters that Rapid deployment units for crisis response had been formed, but no details were given about how they were expected to operate. It may be that such teams are for general emergencies at borders, rather than specifically trained to respond to crisis mass movements, which would seem possible as crisis response in this area is currently lacking in generic national emergency response plans. If this is the case, consideration should perhaps be given to setting up teams drawn from border guard and NSS officers in all BCPs, regional and central offices, who could be mobilized in event of a mass influx. They could be given specific training in crisis management and enhanced training in other areas, such as the threat from trafficking and cross-border crime. Ideally, teams should be multi-agency and train together, so that response capacity in all agencies would be enhanced by the deployment of a single team. Multi-capability would also be useful if unofficial BCPs were set up on green borders outside of official BCPs. If it has not already been done, unofficial crossing points should be mapped in advance and a rapid deployment plan prepared to enable immediate mobilization to risk areas.

Planning for rapid response deployment, to both official and unofficial BCPs, should include inventories of mobile equipment such as BMIS, registration units, forgery detection equipment, search aids, a capability to produce emergency identity documentation and back up communications gear, such as personal radios in case mobile telephone networks fail.



4.8 Evaluation - Operations

The BCPs at Bavra, Gogavan and Bagratashen are currently in the process of being reconstructed in accordance with plans that will vastly improve infrastructure, facilities and potential capacity. In Bavra in particular, the vehicle control lanes are currently one lane each way and are scheduled to increase to 5 each way, including one for non-standard freight loads. When completed, the new Bavra BCP will offer several alternatives for dealing with a mass influx of refugees, with areas within the site to increase capacity for control and registration by moving temporary buildings and mobile equipment onto freight parking areas. The vehicle control lanes can also be quickly adapted to process pedestrians and bus traffic, with potential for extra capacity if some or all of the outward lanes were used. Additionally, the present BCP site, when redundant, could also provide scope for establishment of a camp for at least completing first and/or second stage registration and documentation of refugees.

SOPs for the new site do not contain specific guidance for crisis response and refer more to where agencies will be located and what their responsibilities are. SOPs are also reported to be in place for disaster response at the current BCP, as are contingency plans, but are for internal use only and not disclosable. Whilst Armenian and Georgian border guards clearly have an excellent working relationship, response to mass refugee movements has not been jointly planned and no formal agreements exist to define the parameters for a joint response. The government “*Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation of The Border Security and Integrated State Border Management Strategy of The Republic of Armenia (2011— 2015)*” makes specific reference to developing joint working systems with internal agencies at borders and border counterpart agencies in Georgia and the Islamic Republic of Iran, including BMIS that can work together. The provisions of the strategy particularly relevant to HBM are highlighted in section 2.1 of this report and as the action phase of the plan finished at the end of 2015, now would seem to be an opportune time to evaluate the results, in preparation for the opening of the new BCP facility.

The situation with regard to rapid response deployment to mass movements is unclear, although teams are reported to have been established. If not already, they should be specially trained in crisis border management and competent to instruct and lead their colleagues. They should also be able to establish and deploy to unofficial BCPs if there is significant movement outside of BCPs.

Also unclear is the extent to which a migration intelligence structure exists that could provide advance warning of crisis movements and the migration and security risks inherent to them, such as trafficking, smuggling, crime and terrorism, both on groups and individuals. Understandably, there is a reluctance to discuss such matters with assessors from outside organizations, but an internal review may be helpful to ensure that the structure is robust enough to provide good quality intelligence on migration crisis movements.



5. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

5.1 Identity and Risk Management

The primary information management system is the Border Management Information System that was first installed at Zvartnots airport in 1999 and is now installed at all BCPs. It is owned by NSS and operated at borders by border guards. It was described as an integrated system that recorded personal details, scanned passports and checked alert lists. The database contains features of identification, travel history and security documents, such as passports, issued by different countries, including document types, serial number formats, security features, etc. It is capable of storing high resolution images of travel document pages and contains information on genuine and fraudulent documents. It stores a large number of passport types from various countries and is constantly updated. Consular officials in missions abroad can be granted access to input information. It does not, however, currently collect biometric data such as fingerprints.⁷⁷ Although it is able to scan biometric passports, NSS do not exchange biometric keys with other countries, so data in foreign documents cannot be read. NSS is the only agency with full access to the database, but other agencies can be granted access at various levels, as required.

Other databases in the migration structure are the Register of Persons Seeking International Protection, operated by SMS and the State Population Register and the Database on Residence Permits, operated by the police PVD and Visas and Foreign Registration Division. The visa database is also operated by PVD and the MFA, at the borders for visas issued on arrival and at missions abroad for visas issued before travel respectively. The current registration system for asylum seekers applying at borders involves:⁷⁸

- Applicant details are recorded on BMIS;
- Details are sent to SMS Asylum Database;
- Paper I/D card issued is issued by SMS;
- Applicant recognized as a refugee;
- Applicant registers with the police and is recorded on the Population Registration System, which includes passports, national I/D cards, permits for foreigners and successful asylum seekers;
- Automated residents card issued and machine printed.

⁷⁷ “Expansion of Advanced Border Control and Management Technologies in Armenia” IOM Report 2008.

⁷⁸ Described during a meeting with SMS, Yerevan, 11 February 2016.



Unlike the SMS system, the Population Registry System collects fingerprints for national identity cards, as does the passport issuing system for Armenian nationals. Resident cards, however, do not contain fingerprint data.

The problem with the various migration management systems is that they do not appear to be interlinked and are incapable of interrogating each other, thus tracking individual asylum applications requires at least three different databases to be checked. As long ago as 2008, the IOM report “*Review of Migration Management in Armenia*” highlighted the situation in the following terms:

“The current technical system and the use of different databases make it very complicated to find out the persons’ exact legal status in the country. The control of a foreigner for the State official needs to know who to contact to find out the legal status of the immigrant, if that person cannot provide proof of his or her legal status in the country. Otherwise it is highly likely that a person without legal status is allowed to continue his stay or that a person with legal status is falsely arrested or detained.”

Additionally, the report identified that if asylum applicants are given a refugee or temporary asylum status card by SMS and then register with the Police DPV, no information is sent to NSS for inclusion on BMIS. It is not entirely clear whether steps have been taken or are being taken to rectify this situation, but from interviews conducted with the agencies concerned, it would appear that progress is slow. While there are negligible numbers of asylum applicants, as has traditionally been the case, this situation is manageable but it is rather inefficient and should a mass influx occur, it would seem likely that it would be inundated. The importance of recording and properly processing and tracking all migrants during mass influx cannot be understated, if monitoring and providing robust refugee support systems are to be effective. This is essential to not just ensuring that refugees receive proper protection and support, but also to detecting fraudulent and unjustified claims, as well as identifying risks to security.

The difficulty of dealing with undocumented refugees emerged during the SHANT exercise, when SMS officers were deployed to the camp and had to implement an ad hoc system, whereby they took personal details, photographed applicants and returned to their office to produce hard copy identity cards, before going back to issue them the following day. Whilst it was an inspired and imaginative use of their limited resources, they could only process 200 people per day and if a mass influx occurred, such a procedure would be impractical, if for no other reason that it would presumably require refugees to be confined to the camp while there were long delays in issuing identity documentation. It is also unclear why biometrics are not collected from asylum applicants for BMIS or the other systems, because if documentation is issued without any hard evidence of identity, it is very difficult to ensure that applicants do not subsequently change identity, make multiple claims or conceal an adverse immigration or criminal record.

Work would still appear to be needed to link the migration databases and thought is required on how to efficiently and securely document asylum applicants, especially during a mass influx at borders. It is accepted that BMIS would not be the appropriate system from which to issue and machine print identity cards, but the police DPV already has the equipment capable of doing so, as well as, in the case of Armenian nationals, collecting biometrics. This report is not intended to provide specific technical solutions for identity management and there may well be good reasons why the PVD registration system cannot be used earlier in the refugee registration process. However, a possible solution might be worthy of consideration whereby SMS have access to the PVD registration system to input asylum applications instead



of putting them on their own separate system, thus cutting out double handling and enabling them to machine print identity cards, which would require minimal updating by PVD if asylum was granted.

5.2 Mobile Border Registration/Identity Technologies

The SMS experience of conducting asylum registration during a crisis clearly highlights the need for a mobile registration system, which could conceivably operate under the PVD registration system. It may be that PVD already has mobile units operating or available for operation, in which case consideration should be given to deploying them to borders in the event of crisis, if not for use by SMS, at least for use in conjunction with SMS officers. It is not clear whether the PVD terminals for visas on entry are or could be made capable of machine printing identity cards, but even if they are, it is unlikely that there would be enough of them to cope during a mass influx and mobile units would still be required. If the DPV system is not capable of adaptation to mobile asylum registration, mobile equipment supporting the production of machine generated identity cards should be acquired for SMS, if possible to link to their existing system but if not, to work with a new one.

As far as BMIS is concerned, mobile units are available at railway stations, but only worked offline and needed to download information to static units when passenger clearance had been completed. It was reported that laptops could be redeployed to BCPs in an emergency and provision of mobile units was planned at Bavra, Bagratashen and Gogavan BCPs, as part of the ongoing redevelopment of the sites. It was suggested that unofficial BCPs equipped with mobile BMIS units could possibly be set up if mass migrant movements occurred. It has been recommended in the past on numerous occasions that BMIS should be used to take and store fingerprints, as is becoming increasingly common world-wide. If this capability was activated on BMIS, it could assist in more accurate recording of all cross-border travellers, particularly those arriving undocumented during crisis movements, which would in turn allow for more accurate identification of people on the alert list. Mobile electronic fingerprint units are widely available and in 2008, BMIS was reported to be compatible with document readers, distance/proximity/laser scan bar code readers and biometric devices.⁷⁹ It was also said to be GIS based, GPS/RFD and WiMAX enabled and compliant with ICAO recommendations,⁸⁰ which would suggest that with the right equipment, BMIS checks should be possible in real time, rather than having to download it later from offline devices. This would provide a faster and more efficient recording and checking system and would be particularly useful for processing refugees on board buses and trains during a mass influx.

5.3 Border Communications Systems

In terms of communications, NSS and the Boarder Guard has an email network, which includes secure and open connections on Wi-Fi. Officers do not have personal radios, but carry IP telephones that operate through secure internet. Electricity generators were available at the BCP for use during power failures. Mobile phone coverage in Armenia is good and the system

79 "Expansion of Advanced Border Control and Management Technologies in Armenia" IOM Report - 2008.

80 Ibid.



is reliable, but the ever-present threat of earthquakes presumably leaves it open to damage in the event of disaster, which also might apply to Wi-Fi systems. This is acknowledged in the “*Plan of the Organization of Protection of Population of the Republic Of Armenia in case of a Severe Earthquake*,”⁸¹ which goes into considerable detail of how emergency response authorities should use shortwave and ultra shortwave radio communications. This being the case, it would seem logical for the Border Guard to be included in the network and have rapid access to personal radio equipment for use in an emergency. It would also be prudent to include their Georgian counterparts in a local radio net.

5.4 Evaluation - Information Management

Migration information management currently relies on 3 different databases and systems to record and process asylum applicants, operated by 3 different agencies, namely BMIS, the Register of Persons Seeking International Protection, operated by NSS (Border Guards) SMS and the State Population Register and the Database on Residence Permits, operated by PVD. BMIS is a technically advanced system and records all travellers crossing the borders, including asylum seekers, but does not currently take fingerprints. The SMS asylum system, which initially records all asylum seekers, is not capable of machine printing identity cards and the PVD system, on which successful asylum applicants are eventually recorded, is capable of printing identity cards and taking biometrics, although currently, only from Armenian citizens. Although these systems are reported to be linked, information collection and registration activity still seems to be duplicated or even triplicated, which would seem to indicate that more work is required to fully integrate them. Creation of a joint database and collection of biometrics has long been advocated by agencies and organizations in the migration structure, but progress seems to be slow.

In terms of mass migrant movements across borders, provision mobile BMIS and registration equipment will need to be a priority, but none, other than a limited number of offline BMIS units, exists. It remains open to debate whether either the SMS system or the PVD system could be adapted to use mobile units to register and document refugees either at the border or in camps nearby, but the possibility needs to be explored, as does taking biometrics from asylum applicants.

Communications at BCPs relies on mobile telephone and Wi-Fi technology which, if a disaster such as an earthquake should occur, could be disrupted. Officers at BCPs do not carry personal radios, but should be available as backup, with networks linked to counterpart BCPs across the border.

81 Annex N 1 of the decision N 919 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia dated on 2010.



CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment revealed the importance and high priority attached to confronting emergencies and natural disasters by the government of the Republic of Armenia. Indicative of this is the establishment of a ministry dedicated to coordinating interagency response to emergency situations and the active involvement of all ministries and agencies in elaborate contingency planning for national response. If further evidence is required, a government Crisis Management Academy has also been established, which trains 800 specialists a year and multi-agency exercises were held less than a year ago. Plans are documented, and developed in collaborative inter-agency processes and in consultation with international organizations. There is a depth of experience in coordination with international organizations delivering relief and assistance.

Existing plans, at least those available for consultation, generally focus on mass movements of internally displaced persons and do not tend to cover approaches to border management before, during or after humanitarian crises, as people are moving into and out of the country.

Legislation relating to mass influx has been developed and allows for temporary asylum to be applied to groups and specific nationalities, without the need for individual applications, and legislators have responded positively when ambiguities or gaps are identified. Policy towards refugees, the vast majority of whom have been of Armenian ethnic origin, has been very tolerant and geared towards facilitating resident status and naturalization, with a view to rapid integration. Provisions have been made for the expedited entry of relief workers and equipment in the event of a disaster and there are mechanisms to relax customs controls during mass movement.

The Border Management system is well advanced, but using its capacity to collect biometrics would strengthen migration controls. A system for electronically registering refugees and issuing machine generated identity documentation is needed, which would also benefit from being able to collect biometrics. Any such equipment will need to include mobile units that can be deployed to crises at short notice, as will BMIS mobile units to bolster capacity and provide access to alert lists when static units are not accessible.

BCP specific standard operating procedures for border officials are reported to be available on, but it was not clear if they deal with mass movements. Given the complex nature of migration control, a review of existing SOPs is suggested to determine if further development or updating is required, particularly in relation to mass movements. Generic BCP operating instructions for procedures appropriate to HBM are attached at annex ... and it is suggested that they be incorporated, if information is currently lacking, into SOPs for the day to day and management of BCPs. Training to deal with emergencies and humanitarian crises is planned through the Red Cross, but a training needs analysis may be helpful to ensure that it is, in future, incorporated, the established training curriculum and determine whether additional material is required.



The following specific recommendations are made based on the review. Where it has not been possible to review material that is considered confidential, generic type recommendations have been made that may not be fully applicable or applicable at all.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

It is recommended that:

- 1.1 The government develops a policy relating to emergency mass movements that makes clear whether or not border posts will remain open in the event of a crisis. If restrictions on BCP operation are imposed, the criteria applied to those crossing should be clearly spelled out in the policy and in standard operating procedures.
- 1.2 Existing plans relating to migration management and disaster management should be reviewed, particularly the “*Action Program for Implementation of the Policy Concept for the State Regulation of Migration in the RA in 2012—2016*,” to either amend them to include provisions for dealing with mass migration movements across borders or ensure that such provisions are included in future plans.
- 1.3 A full review of migration legislation be undertaken to integrate migration related laws e.g. Law on Foreigners, Law on State Border, the Law on Border Guard Troops, the Law on Foreigners, the Law on Political Asylum and the Law on Refugees and Asylum, migration related elements of the Constitution and the Criminal Code, into a single legislative instrument to regulate migration and asylum in Armenia. In order to make it as internationally compliant as possible, conduct the review in conjunction with the IOM “*Analysis of Armenian Migration Legislation and Practice as Compared to EU Standards*”, 2013 report and subsequent amendments either adopted or in the process of adoption.
- 1.4 The temporary protection provisions of Law on Refugees and Asylum should be reviewed in the context of what constitutes a mass influx, which is not currently defined. It is possible, therefore, that if a crisis developed very quickly, confusion would occur over when to invoke group protection and who for. It may be sufficient to delegate authority, in the first instance, to the crisis manager at the BCP, but the law should allow for this and the crisis management structure should be made clear. Consider an amendment to clearly specify what constitutes a mass influx and the procedure for invoking temporary protection.

ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1 Consideration be given to initiating a review of the current Border Guard training programme at all levels, to ensure that HBM concepts are fully covered and that the impending Red Cross input is institutionalized within it, to provide continuity when the scheduled programme at BCPs has been completed.
- 2.2 If it is not currently provided, rapid response teams and senior managers at BCPs should receive specialist training on crisis management in general and, specifically, on its application during mass migrant movements.



- 2.3 If a training communications network is not formally established, consideration could be given to upgrading the existing structure with a system of training liaison officers (TLOs) to act as specifically designated points of contact with BCPs and to be responsible for highlighting local training issues, encouraging their colleagues to do mandatory courses, organizing local training on behalf of the training academy and disseminating training material and instructions.
- 2.4 If not planned or already underway, elements of the SHANT exercise in emergency response relating to migration management and refugee influx be reviewed jointly by all the agencies involved, if possible with observers from international organizations, to identify areas of weakness and determine how spheres of responsibility, particularly in refugee camp management, can be improved or more clearly defined. If not already in existence, joint agency SOPs for refugee camp management should be developed.
- 2.5 In future, exercises involving refugee influx should include dealing with mass movements at BCPs.

3. OPERATIONS

- 3.1 A full analysis of all BCPs should be conducted, to assess their susceptibility to emergency mass migration movements, to include potential unofficial crossing points within their catchment areas. Include mapping of existing infrastructure in the border area, human resources and (specialized) equipment for use in both every day and emergency situations and what additional equipment is likely to be required to deal with mass movements.
- 3.2 Review the “*Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation of The Border Security and Integrated State Border Management Strategy of The Republic of Armenia (2011—2015)*,”⁸² to ensure that, in particular, HBM related actions are in progress or have been completed including, in brief, joint plans to ensure public safety at borders during emergencies, joint contingency training programmes and emergency drills, regular trainings on joint use of facilities and equipment by the agencies represented in BCPs and creation of a joint electronic database for agencies at borders. A more comprehensive list is highlighted in section 2.1 (Policy) of this report.
- 3.3 Review the plans for BOPs on the Georgian border and the existing facilities at the Islamic Republic of Iran's border to identify where, during mass movements, control and screening facilities might best be located, how the existing control structure can be adapted and where refugee camps, etc. might be established. Contingency plans should be jointly prepared with neighboring countries or should at least be shared with them. Contingency plans should, at strategic level, be generic and capable of being quickly adapted to any emergency situation at individual or multiple BCPs.
- 3.4 Consider formal bilateral agreements with Georgia in regard to exchange of information, joint operations and joint use of equipment at BCPs, to include new secondary level legislation, regulations and SOPs for adoption on both sides.

82 Appendix to RA Government Decree no. 482 of April 21, 2011



- 3.5 The composition and structure of existing rapid response teams in terms of HBM be reviewed. It is suggested that they should be drawn from border guard and NSS officers in all BCPs, regional and central offices, who could be mobilized in event of a mass influx, with specific training in crisis management and enhanced training in other areas, such as the threat from trafficking and cross-border crime. Ideally, teams should be multi-agency and train together, so that response capacity in all agencies would be enhanced by the deployment of a single team.

4. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 A technical review of migration information management be instigated to assess the situation with regard to linking the various databases and systems in the migration structure to, as specified in the *Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation of The Border Security and Integrated State Border Management Strategy of The Republic of Armenia (2011—2015)* “create a joint electronic database for agencies authorized to issue certificates and licenses in the area of border security and integrated border management and to integrate those data into the BMIS.”
- 4.2 Develop and deploy mobile equipment to BCPs in order to enable registrations and production of identity documentation in emergency situations. Contingency plans should provide an inventory of equipment and the location of it. In the event of mass influx, the Border Guard, SMS and PVD should agree what is required to ensure the availability of an initial registration system at BCPs to collect basic identity information prior to, where necessary, enhanced screening in-country, with the objective that all travellers are recorded, properly examined, counted and checked against alert lists where possible. Any registration databases, both for nationals and migrants, should be capable of taking photographs and collecting fingerprints. They should be linked to each other to prevent fraud and criminal activity. Moreover, they should comply with international standards for data protection.



ANNEX A

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND AGENDA FOR MEETINGS AND FIELD ACTIVITY OF THE HUMANITARIAN BORDER MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TEAM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Enhancing institutional preparedness of Border Guards in Humanitarian Border Management in Armenia

Project: Strengthening Capacities of Armenian National Security Service and Border Guards in their Response to Migration Crisis

Nature of the consultancy: consultancy and technical advice to IOM on enhancing institutional preparedness of Border Guards to respond to Migration Crises

Expected Duration of the Consultancy: February 01-May 31, 2016

- a) Mission to Armenia for meetings with main stakeholders and interviews - February 2016;
- b) First draft Report - 1st week of April 2016;
- c) Submission of the finalized Report - May 15, 2016;
- d) Production of SOPs - May 31, 2016.

Introduction

About the Project

“Strengthening Capacities of Armenian National Security Service and Border Guards in their Response to Migration Crisis” project aims at strengthening the institutional capacities of the Armenian National Security Service and the Border Guards Troops to respond to migration crises and enhance their role in inter-agency cooperation.



Objective of the consultancy:

Carry out a country-specific mapping and examination of the types of natural disasters occurring in Armenia (including the South Caucasus) due to which people may be forced to flee.

Assess existing relevant national legal framework (including government decisions, immigration laws, standard operational procedures (SOPs), regulations, MOUs, code of conduct and working agreements), guiding the preparedness for and response to humanitarian situations.

Evaluate existing policy framework, including regional, bilateral, national and local contingency plans and disaster risk reduction strategies guiding the command structure, cooperation and coordination among different governmental, as well as non-governmental stakeholders at times of crisis.

Conduct mapping of governmental and non-governmental entities concerned with migration crisis management, and analyse their respective roles and responsibilities.

Examine existing crisis-response human resources, including existence of specialized units and their training, provisions for emergency deployment and temporary recruitment.

Assess existing HBM-related training capacities, such as courses focusing on migrant protection, existing emergency response command structure and SOPs, migration health, scenario and simulation trainings, search and rescue, training on psychosocial assistance and sexual and gender-based violence.

Review capacities for setting up, managing and security temporary accommodation/transit centers at the border.

Evaluate identity management at times of crisis, particularly issuance of emergency identity and travel documents and visa, registration of migrants (refugees, asylum seekers, third-country nationals, returnees).

Examine information management procedures and capacities at times of crisis, including information sharing between various authorities, connectivity between border posts and headquarters and reporting systems.

Appraise existing infrastructure and equipment, including specialized equipment for border surveillance and patrolling, communication, mobile registration, and search and rescue.

Based on the findings, make recommendations for: i) institutional development and capacity-building needs of the Border Guard Troops and other relevant agencies; ii) legal and policy framework; iii) improved awareness raising and cross-border cooperation in the emergencies.

Provide advice and guidance (including advice on structure and content) to local experts in developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in Humanitarian Border Management (HBM) for Border Guard Troops.

Target: Republic of Armenia National Security Service, Border Guard Troops, RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situation and its State Migration Service Agency, other relevant bodies of the Armenian Government, project counterparts, etc.



Reports to: Head of Office, IOM Mission in Armenia

Tasks to be performed under this contract:

- a) Conduct desk review, information gathering;
- b) Visit Armenia and conduct meetings and interviews with the relevant Government institutions and stakeholders in Armenia;
- c) Cooperate with local consultants in elaboration of the recommendations and steer their work;
- d) Produce the Gaps and Needs Assessment Report;
- e) Progressively report on implementation of the activities; mid-term submission of a draft report and final report submission, incorporation of inputs by IOM Mission in Armenia and other stakeholders as suggested by IOM Armenia;
- f) Meet the deadlines set for the assignments.

Tangible and measurable output of the work assignment:

Report on the Gaps and Needs Assessment for HBM in Armenia.

Performance indicators for evaluation of results:

- Satisfactory completion of tasks indicated in these ToR-s;
- Quality of consultancy and elaborated analysis;
- Adequate and prompt provision of the technical inputs;
- Timely delivery of drafts and deliverables as indicated these ToR-s;
- Compliance with the “MA/436: IOM Guidelines on Research Report Writing” (2010); “IN/65: IOM House Style Manual” (2013); “IN/171: IOM Spelling List” (2013) as well as “IN/00138: IOM Data Protection Principles” (2009);
- Adequate demeanour.

Education, experience and competences:

- a) Completed advanced university degree in Social Science, Political Science, International Relations or Law. Education in a migration related field is an asset;
- b) At least 5 years of experience in academic research and / or professional thematic consultancy;
- c) Proven experience in similar tasks. Proven experience with international organizations, think tanks in conducting needs assessments, research and preparing guides, manuals, analytical reports;
- d) In depth knowledge of border management;
- e) Excellent writing, communication and negotiation skills; ability to prepare clear and concise reports. Excellent analytical skills;
- f) Experience in migration management;
- g) Excellent knowledge of English is required;



About IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration. IOM has 165 Member States and 8 Observer States (as of November 2016 IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people. The IOM Constitution recognizes the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement. IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management: (i) Migration and development; (ii) Facilitating migration; (iii) Regulating migration; and (iv) Forced migration. IOM activities that cut across these areas include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants' rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration.

IOM Mission in Armenia

“Strengthening Capacities of Armenian National Security Service and Border Guards in their Response to Migration Crisis”

Assessment mission to map and examine the types of natural disasters occurring in Armenia existing preparedness, division of roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and cooperation as well as exchange of information with counterparts across the border

Monday, 8 February 2016 - Friday, 12 February 2016

Arrival at Yerevan Zvartnots International Airport

Accommodation: Congress Hotel

Day 1 - Monday, 8 February 2016

09:30 - 10:30	Meeting at the IOM Armenia Office Location: 14 Petros Adamyan St., UN House Ms Ilona Ter-Minasyan Head of Office Ms Sonya Armaghanyan Project Assistant
10:30 - 11:30	UN Department of Safety and Security Security Briefing Location: 14 Petros Adamyan St., UN House Mr Aram Gevorgyan, UNDSS
12:00 - 14:00	Republic of Armenia Border-guards Headquarters Location: Davitashen Mr Artur Nalbandyan , Head of International Relations Mr Manvel Mailyan , Deputy Head of BG Troops



	Mr Gevorg Nersisyan , Head of Migration Department, NSS
	Mr Gevorg Navoyan , Head of IT / Communication, NSS
14:00 - 15:00	Lunch
15:15 - 16:30	Police of the Republic of Armenia Location: 130, Nalbandyan St.
	Mr Mnatsakan Bichakhchyan , Head of Passports and Visas Department, RA Police Lieutenant-Colonel
	Mr Artur Manukyan , Head of Visas and Foreign Citizens Registration Division, RA Police Lieutenant-Colonel
	Mr Vahe Atabekyan , Head of Mobilization and Civil Defence Unit, RA Police Colonel
17:00 - 18:00	State Revenue Committee
	Mr Mher Martirosyan , Deputy Head of Customs Control Department
	Mr Suren Melik-Israelyan , Deputy Head of Customs Control Department
	Location: 3 Moveses Khorenatsi St

Day 2 - Tuesday, 9 February 2016

9:00 - 18:00	Actual Border Crossing Review at Bavra BCC Mr Gevorg Yengoyan , Head of Bavra Border Control Detachment of Border Guard Troops
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Day 3 - Wednesday, 10 February 2016

11:15 - 12:45	The Ministry of Territorial Administration and Emergency Situations Location: 109/8 A. Mikoyan Str. 4 th Block of Davitashen Mr Nikolai Grigoryan , Deputy Director and RS Major General Mr Karen Hovhannisyan , Deputy Head of Population Protection and Elimination of Disaster Consequences Department Mr Valeri Bagiyan , Head of Radiological, Chemical and Biological Situations Monitoring Division under the Department of Population Protection and Elimination of Disaster Consequences, RS Colonel Mr Karapet Karapetyan , Head of Man-Made Disasters Division under the Department of Population Protection and Elimination of Disaster Consequences, RS Colonel Mr Hayk Mnatsakanyan , Deputy Head of RS Administration Department, RS Major Mr Ruben Khamoyan , Head Specialist of International Programs Division in the field of Emergency Situations and Civil Protection under the Department of External Relations of the Staff
13:00 - 13:45	Armenian Red Cross Society Ms Hasmik Khachatryan , Disaster Management and Population Department Project Coordinator
13:45 - 14:15	Lunch



14:30 - 15:30	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs Location: Government Building #3 Mr Vanik Babajanyan , Head of Demography Division
15:30 - 16:30	Ministry of Health Mr Gabriel Tepelikyan , Head of Emergency Situations and Mobilization Preparedness Department Mr Armen Azizbekyan , Chief Specialist of Emergency Situations and Mobilization Preparedness Department Ms Gohar Ghukasyan , Expert of Foreign Relations Department Ms Romella Abovyan , Head of Epidemiological Department of Non-communicable diseases and Inter-hospital Infections, “National Center for Disease Control and Prevention” State Non-Commercial Organization Ms Lusine Paronyan , Head of Epidemiological Department of Diseases caused by Transmitter and Parasitic Diseases Ms Lilit Babayan , Entomologist at “National Center for Disease Control and Prevention” State Non-Commercial Organization Ms Gohar Panajyan , Deputy Head of Health State Inspectorate Mr Martin Mkrtchyan , Chief Specialist of Hygiene Unit of Health State Inspectorate

Day 4 - Thursday, 11 February 2016

09:30 - 10:30	State Migration Service Location: 4, Hrachya Kochar Street Mr Gagik Yeganyan , Head of SMS
11:00 - 12:00	“Republican Veterinary-Sanitary and Phytosanitary Center of Laboratory Services” State Non-Commercial Organization Location: 12 Erebuni St Mr Georgi Avetisyan , Deputy-Director
12:30 - 13:30	Ministry of Diaspora Location: 3 Vazgen Sargsyan St., 6 th Floor Mr Levon Antonyan , Head of the Department for Armenian Communities of the Near East and the Middle East
13:30 - 14:30	Lunch
15:00 - 15:30	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Location: Government Building #2 Mr Vladimir Karmirshalyan , Ambassador and Director of Consular Department
16:00 - 17:00	UNDP Location: 14 Petros Adamyan St., UN House Mr Armen Chilingaryan , UNDP Project Coordinator
17:00 - 18:00	UNDP Location: 14 Petros Adamyan St., UN House Ms Alla Bakunts , Democratic Governance Portfolio Analyst



Day 5 - Friday, 12 February 2016

09:30 - 10:30 State Migration Service
 Location: 4, Hrachya Kochar Street
 Mr Gagik Yeganyan, Head of SMS

11:00 - 12:30 UNHCR
 Location: 14 Petros Adamyan St., UN House
 Ms Kate Pochapsky, Protection Officer
 Ms Naira Marutyan, Protection Associate
 Ms Tatevik Badalyan, Protection Assistant (NUNV)
 Departure to the airport - 13:30

Mission Team

Expert:	Mr Adrian Loxton
IOM Head of Office:	Ms Ilona Ter-Minasyan
Project Assistant:	Ms Sonya Armaghanyan
Interpreter:	Ms Christine Karapetyan
Driver:	Mr Hrayr Annikyan
Security Focal Point:	Mr Armen Badiryan

Humanitarian Border Management

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Needs and Gaps Assessment Report

Edited by Nune Asatryan
Designed by Aram Urutyan

