
Community Stabilization

Overview

Displacement and migration crises, whether human-induced, environmental or a combination of the two, can have a diverse, complex, and devastating impact on people's lives. This includes physical, visible impacts as well as less visible effects such as inter- or intra-communal tensions over scarce resources, marginalization of different social ethnic or religious groups, insecurity, exploitation, and criminal or rent-seeking power structures. Some of these factors may have led to displacement or been a driver of migration in the first place.

All of these impacts can weaken the social, physical, cultural, economic, judicial, and security structures and systems required for societies to function. Leaving the different factors driving instability unaddressed can result in the re-emergence of violence, humanitarian crises, and displacement or prevent impacted populations from embarking on pathways towards recovery and 'Durable Solutions' to displacement.

IOM's community stabilization approach is a process - rather than a physical product or set of products - intended to address the multivariate drivers of instability to facilitate transition away from crisis and fragility as well as laying the foundations for sustainable recovery.

In displacement affected areas, Community Stabilization provides a necessary incremental step towards sustainably resolving displacement by creating the conditions for the restoration of basic rights and security, by promoting social cohesion and empowerment, functioning state governance, non-violent political processes, effective social policy, and livelihoods and service delivery. Empowering communities through participation can play a catalytic role both in improving stability and harnessing the agency of individuals to drive positive change. Although Community Stabilization is multi-sectoral the rationale for intervention is to improve stability.

A second but no less important aim of Community Stabilization is to lay the foundations for longer term development and provide a transitional bridge between humanitarian action and development assistance. Consequently, Community Stabilization programmes are sometimes referred to as addressing 'the missing middle' in IOM.

IOM works with governments, civil society, and individuals to promote stability at the local level as a step out of crisis or fragility, paving the way for more sustainable development approaches. The broad array of stakeholders targeted includes those with capacities to have a transformative impact on unstable contexts.

Community Stabilization – Basic Infrastructure and Services

In fragile and crisis settings, damage to housing and public infrastructure, increased pressure on basic services, and the reduced capacity of local government to provide services can have a severe impact on the stability of affected areas and can impede recovery. Negative consequences can result in damage to local economies, result in resource-based conflicts between different groups, and cause low levels of confidence in the authorities, opening the space for militia, violent extremist or criminal groups to establish themselves, and driving irregular outward migration.

As a sector of assistance under the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF), Basic Infrastructure and Services seek to mobilize communities to take collective action to address needs and improve equitable access to services, with infrastructure often a tangible community-wide benefit of dialogue and engagement processes.

IOM supports the construction and rehabilitation of a wide range of public infrastructure and basic services, providing related training and equipping community-based teams for maintenance and longer-term sustainability - often through community-driven processes which promote inclusion and local ownership. For public infrastructure, these processes and results can help restore trust and confidence in local administrations, can generate local economic benefits, improve security, and enhance social cohesion.

Key types of programming that fall under the Basic Infrastructure and Services sector of assistance include:

- Durable solutions
- Community stabilization
- Early recovery

Key Considerations

Humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN):

IOM's Community Stabilization programming contributes directly to the objectives of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDPN) by providing a critical bridge between dependence on humanitarian aid and embarking on development pathways. On one hand, it provides a step out of dependence on humanitarian aid and acute vulnerability. On the other, it lays foundations for long term recovery and progress towards solving displacement situations.

Community-Based Planning:

At the centre of IOM's Community Stabilization Approach is the community-based planning methodology (CBP) where local communities, vulnerable and marginalized populations (IDPs, refugees, ex-combatants, women, youth), local authorities, and members of civil society are involved in all phases of project development, implementation, and monitoring. This process can help produce empowered communities, strengthened support

networks, improved social cohesion, improved capacity of community members and structures and local ownership leading to more sustainable recovery outcomes. IOM Community Stabilization programmes operate at the local level in order to build stability from the ground up and take advantage of IOM's presence and relationships in the field.

Convergence between Early Recovery and Community Stabilization:

There are many points of intersection between early recovery and stabilization as each contain elements of both, and the absence of elements from either can undermine opportunities for transition away from humanitarian crises. Nevertheless, early recovery focuses on the material, economic, and infrastructural conditions needed to transition out of humanitarian crises whereas community stabilization's places more importance on the normalization of social and political conditions required to prevent areas from backsliding into crisis. As such, recovery places greater emphasis on the deliverables required to enable recovery (from crisis), such as services or livelihoods, and stabilization gives greater emphasis to the process required to produce the deliverables, such as civic dialogue and participation in addition to the deliverables themselves. The difference, therefore, is one of emphasis.

Programming Principles:

IOM's Community Stabilization Approach is underpinned by the following eight programming principles.

- Context specific
- Community owned and driven
- Government partnership and leadership
- Flexible and adaptable
- Multi-sectoral and integrated
- Catalytic
- Integrate strategic communication
- Conflict sensitive approach

These provide overarching standards and approaches that should be considered in the design and implementation of all Community Stabilization programmes. More information on the programming principles can be found in IOM's [Operational Guide: Community Stabilization Programmes and Approaches](#) (internal to IOM).

Relevance to IOM's Emergency Operations

IOM has over 20 years of experience implementing stabilization programming in complex crises contexts such as Afghanistan, Haiti, Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, and Colombia. In 2020, IOM implemented over 150 stabilization and recovery projects in 61 countries and undertook livelihoods activities in over 30 countries experiencing crisis, fragility or displacement. IOM's institutional expertise and on the ground operational presence allows a tailored approach to migration and displacement challenges through stabilization programming.

Operations

IOM's Community Stabilization programmes recognize the importance of rebuilding housing, infrastructure, and restoring services to reduce the risk of communities impacted by crises or fragility from regressing into or remaining in crisis situations. Improving access to services and public infrastructure combined with other community stabilization projects can have a catalytic effect by delivering quick dividends to improve living conditions for the benefit of all, strengthening overall capacities for peaceful co-existence.

Initiatives may include:

- Restoration or construction of critical community infrastructure (health centers, markets, schools, sports centers, recreational spaces, community centers, and administrative centers among others) to generate local economic benefits, improved access to markets and services and/or improved security amongst others at the community/local level.
- Improving access and provision of essential services such as health, education, water and sanitation.
- Capacity-building of local government and civil society to delivery essential services to the population, rebuilding local trust.

Lessons Learned / Best Practice

- [Community Stabilization – An approach for facilitating progress towards durable solutions and operationalizing the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus: Lessons from Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and](#)

[Somalia](#)

- [IOM: Community Stabilization Resources](#)
- [IOM: Community Stabilization Approach](#)

Links

- [Community Stabilization SharePoint \(INTERNAL to IOM\)](#)
- [Online Course: Introduction to Transition and Recovery Programming](#)
- [Online Course: Community Stabilization](#)

Contacts

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Key Points

- In conditions of crisis, factors of instability that remain unaddressed can result in the re-emergence of violence, humanitarian crises and displacement or prevent impacted populations from embarking on pathways towards recovery and 'Durable Solutions' to displacement.
- Community Stabilization programmes are often the first step in establishing foundations for recovery and development and addressing the deep-seated underlying causes of vulnerability.
- Community Stabilization programmes can also lay the foundations for longer term development and provide a transitional bridge between humanitarian action and development assistance.
- Improving access to services and public infrastructure combined with other community stabilization projects can have a catalytic effect by delivering quick dividends to improve living conditions for the benefit of all, strengthening overall capacities for peaceful co-existence.

References and Tools

- [Operational Guide for Community Stabilization Programmes and Approaches \(2019\)](#)

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