

MMC's UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF THE TERM MIXED MIGRATION



INTRODUCTION

This document includes two sections:

- The MMC's understanding of mixed migration
- A further elaboration on MMC's use of the term mixed migration

This document has been developed by MMC and reviewed by external experts. MMC's understanding of mixed migration as outlined below will be used consistently throughout MMC publications. The elaboration includes important notions on terminology that will be followed in all MMC publications and presentations.

1. MMC's UNDERSTANDING OF MIXED MIGRATION

Mixed migration refers to cross-border movements of people including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people in mixed flows have different legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. Although entitled to protection under international human rights law, they are exposed to multiple rights violations along their journey. Those in mixed migration flows travel along similar routes, using similar means of travel - often travelling irregularly and wholly or partially assisted by migrant smugglers.

2. ELABORATION OF MMC'S USE OF THE TERM MIXED MIGRATION

This elaboration further guides our use of the term mixed migration and can be used in publications and features on the MMC website.

While MMC offers commentary and analysis on the whole cycle of mobility from pre-departure to destination and return migration, MMC values and uses the term 'mixed migration' primarily for three reasons:

- Firstly, the term has value in describing those on the move *while they are on the move*, or in transit, however long the journey takes. The term cannot be applied to people before they have left their place of origin, just as it cannot be applied to those who have arrived and settled at a point of destination.
- Second, the term has value from a protection perspective insofar that while on the move, people in mixed migration flows, irrespective of status, whether refugees or migrants, face similar risks and vulnerabilities from the same causes and/or perpetrators.
- Thirdly, the term recognises that the drivers for the movement of refugees and migrants are various and often intertwined and influence each other: people feel compelled to move *inter alia* due to persecution and conflict, poverty, discrimination, lack of access to rights, including education and health, lack of access to decent work, violence, gender inequality, the wide-ranging consequences of climate change and environmental degradation, separation from family and driven by aspirations.

MMC recognises that not all those who are forced to move are without agency during their journey, just as people who started their migration journey voluntarily do not necessarily maintain agency during their journey.

When applying the lens of mixed migration, MMC fully recognises and stresses the importance of the specific rights of refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. MMC also emphasises the protection deficits, vulnerabilities and rights of all people in mixed flows, regardless of status, whether refugees or migrants. This emphasis on the human rights of all those in mixed migration flows informs our analysis and policy development in a way that reflects the complex nature of contemporary mixed migration flows.

MMC takes note of the current debate on terminology and definitions, in particular the use of the words 'refugees' and 'migrants' and whether 'migrants' can be used as an overarching term including refugees.

On the one side, there is the well-grounded concern that by viewing refugees as a sub-group of migrants (but with specific rights under the Refugee Convention) the protection space for refugees may become more limited, especially taking into account the negative narratives and public perceptions around migrants. On the other side are those arguing that from a basic human rights and humanitarian needs perspective, focused on all people in mixed migration flows, it is better not to present refugees and migrants as two completely distinct groups (while acknowledging the specific rights of refugees). Doing so may limit the protection space for all the other people in mixed migration flows; especially for those who may not be refugees/may not have left their countries for reasons laid out in the Geneva Convention, but still feel compelled to leave. Especially since they may face the same risks, may have similar needs along the journeys and may fall between the cracks in terms of protection, safeguarding of rights and assistance.

While this short summary by no means does sufficient justice to the complexity of this debate, there are valid arguments on both sides. MMC aims to provide a neutral and independent platform for analysis, taking in perspectives from all sides, while focusing on and advocating for the basic human rights of all people in mixed migration flows, regardless of status. To be equipped to fulfil its mission, for the present and until unified terminology is agreed upon, MMC in its publications follows the language used in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, since for the time being this is the only internationally adopted document on both refugees and migrants. MMC therefore uses 'refugees and migrants' when referring to all those in mixed migration flows, unless referring to a particular group of people with a defined status within these flows. The term *mixed migrant* can never be applied.