

Key messages from the Mixed Migration Review 2022

- **Alternative ideas & solutions for contemporary mixed migration challenges:** The impact of the war in Ukraine as well as the socio-economic legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic are being felt profoundly across the world as prices rise, food insecurity grows, and an economic slow-down takes hold. All of these dynamics are impacting upon migration and forced displacement. The [Mixed Migration Review 2022](#), the Mixed Migration Centre's flagship annual report, reflects on recent events and emerging trends affecting refugees and migrants globally, attempting to document, analyse, and suggest solutions.
- **Keeping track:** as every year, the MMR offers a full roundup of last year's most important mixed migration dynamics and policy developments from around the world (p. 17-74)
- **Those who remained – migrant stories:** a series of in-depth interviews, with those that remained in Beja (Tunisia), Cagua (Venezuela), Garissa (Kenya), Mazar (Afghanistan) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and saw family members migrating, sharing their stories of success and failure, their concerns, the dangers of migration and the mixed emotions that accompany the departure of their loved ones (starting from p. 77)
- **A wealth of unique, primary data:** as always, the MMR provides primary data from the world's largest data-set of in-depth surveys with refugees and migrants, MMC's 4Mi programme. This year, based on almost 15,000 interviews, the 4Mi analysis & visualisations focus on each of the themes covered in the essays and immediately follow each of those (starting from p. 95)
- **Alternative perspectives essay competition:** MMR 2022 again features five essays by academics and analysts under the age of 30 who are from and based in the global South (Peru, South Africa, Tunisia, Vietnam and Zimbabwe). These were deemed to be the most original and well-drafted of the abstracts and essays submitted to MMC in response to a competition launched to find alternative perspectives (p. 111-123)
- **Thematic snapshots:** throughout the report (starting from p. 79), one-page thematic snapshots cover topics such as the Ukraine refugee crisis, the response to Haitian refugees, the Greek 'hotspots', climate induced migration, the response to Afghanistan and the role of migration in addressing labour shortages.
- **Normalising versus resisting the extreme:** as in previous years, MMR 2022 provides a sobering overview (p. 206-218) of what MMC has come to label as 'normalising the extreme': policies, actions and attitudes to mixed migration that were considered unacceptable some years ago, but are becoming increasingly normalised and mainstreamed. This section grows longer every year, which points to a growing prevalence of such measures and is highly concerning. MMR 2022 also includes a countervailing antidote, of sorts, a more uplifting section with positive and progressive actions and policies, called 'resisting the extreme' (p. 219-225), showing that – while more difficult to complete than the sister section - asylum seekers, refugees and migrants still have many advocates across the world pushing for their protection, inclusion, integration and well-being.
- **Risk and decision-making in irregular and mixed migration (p. 69)** While migrants may be relatively well aware of the dangers, what is difficult to know are the risks: the probability of falling victim to any of those dangers. Going beyond models of individual rational decision-making, the role of (extended) family and the cultural context need to be taken into account in how migrants perceive risks. Other factors to take into account: the risk of not-migrating (staying), people's build-up tolerance to risks based on their situation in home countries and the sunk cost effect and investments already made and suffering endured along the way, which could lead migrants to continue dangerous journeys once

they've started. Psychological factors – personality traits, risk aversion, etc. – remain underexplored in mixed migration decision making.

- **The war of words in the politicisation of human smuggling (p. 144).** Declaring war on human smuggling continues to be a tool used by politicians and policy makers as a way to implement otherwise unpalatable and possibly undefendable migration policies. New terms such self-smuggling and state-sponsored smuggling have recently been added, expanding the lexicon and illustrating the prevalence of deliberately using terminology with political intent. Nuance remains crucial, but missing. Among those who want to stop irregular movement, demonisation and criminalisation of smugglers is commonplace. The emphasis is on smugglers as unscrupulous and organised predators of people who would otherwise not dare to venture on dangerous and irregular journeys. But far from being the calculating seducers of passive populations in precarious circumstances, evidence suggests they have limited influence in migration decision-making. The biases of those attempting to restrict and contain mixed migration are countered by others who prioritise the rights and needs of those on the move. In their contrary narrative, the documented exploitation and violations caused by smugglers is downplayed or overlooked and smugglers are framed as a disparate group distinct from organised crime who merely facilitate the travel needs of those already committed to move.
- **Raising the bar: new international instruments, scientific disciplines, and practice related to missing migrants (p. 164)** After decades of official indifference, the “great untold tragedy” of missing migrants, a key characteristic of today’s mixed migration phenomenon that continues to claim mostly unnamed lives on a daily basis, is getting more and more attention. The emergence of a scientific discipline and humanitarian response to the technical and moral problem of missing migrants is not only a compassionate attempt to respond to an urgent problem, but also a moral and legal obligation that only increases as the scale of the problem rises. However, despite increasing global attention, States hardly report on implementation of objective 8 of the Global Compact for Migration on ‘saving lives’, and many governments continue to enforce restrictive migration policies, constrict regular channels for mobility, shrink space for asylum, limit search and rescue operations, and criminalise assistance to migrants, illustrated among else by the paucity of state-led and collective search-and-rescue initiatives at sea.
- **Migration diplomacy gets messy and tough: Is mixed mobility being ‘weaponised’ for geopolitical aims? (p. 248)** Migrants and refugees are increasingly used in global diplomacy as instruments within both political conflagrations and interstate coercion. In recent years, mixed mobility has become weaponised for domestic and geopolitical aims with important consequences for refugees and migrants. While there are different forms of migration diplomacy and instrumentalization (by origin, transit or destination states, creating novel migration dynamics or using existing ones, with positive outcomes for migrants or on the contrary), the more cynical examples stand out in recent years. This ongoing commodification of migrant and refugee populations embeds an element of political cynicism and zero-sum mentalities into the management of mixed migration that further dehumanises vulnerable groups.
- **Reshaping the root cause approach: disentangling official development assistance and migration management (p. 234).** Destination states’ fixation on discouraging people from emigrating irregularly has had an outsized influence on official development assistance, yet, despite costing billions, has so far failed to entice would-be migrants to stay in their origin countries. Moreover, this fixation, centred on addressing “root causes” of migration, has left a raft of pressing development issues unaddressed. It’s time for a new kind of dialogue between governments at either end of the migration journey.
- **Unpicking the notion of ‘safe and legal’ routes (p. 190)** Not only refugees and migrants themselves, but also states and international organisations, stand to benefit from the expansion of regular migration pathways. Yet although the term “safe and legal routes” dominates current mobility discourse, is usually included in international agreement on migration and often presented as the solution to reduce

irregular migration, the complexities of creating them and the viability of some of their assumed dividends merit close examination. While extending regular migration is indeed important, it is unlikely to have a transformative effect on reducing the scale and impact of mixed and irregular movements, and there is every reason to believe large numbers of people continue to move out of necessity rather than choice, in an irregular manner.

- **The emerging digital nervous system: technology, mixed migration, and human mobility across borders (p. 126)** Digital technologies are re-shaping—and in some cases radically transforming—the management and control of human mobility and mixed migration across borders. This rapid evolution of automation and AI involves a wide range of actors with varying interests and motives. Alongside its promised benefits lie myriad privacy and protection risks. As stakeholders work on building digital infrastructure and developing standards, rules and laws, it is essential that issues of human rights and dignity are not overlooked.
- **Questions of intent: the interwoven phenomena of mixed migration and human trafficking (p. 179)** Mixed migration and human trafficking are closely intertwined. While the causal relationships between the two phenomena vary in line with the intent of the parties concerned and the precise role of those involved two broad—and overlapping—dynamics can be postulated: migration-led human trafficking - where trafficking occurs along migration routes and where victims are already on the move - and trafficking-led migration - where people become victims of trafficking from the onset when they are moved from one place to the other. More nuanced narratives and a better understanding of these phenomena will help counter the common conflation of smuggling and trafficking and will help in understanding why certain smugglers become traffickers and why some migration routes are more susceptible to trafficking and abuse than others.