Summary of key messages from the Mixed Migration Review 2021

- **Reframing mixed migration:** the global context is rapidly changing, and with new conflicts, new public health threats (pandemics), new levels of environmental stress and changing perceptions around human mobility, now is the time to reframe mixed migration through the lens of different themes in one volume. How does the Covid-19 pandemic change future mobility, how is the climate emergency affecting mobility and displacement, why do most people in the world not migrate, what about mixed migration on overlooked migration routes and in the Global South and what extraordinary actions and policies towards refugees and migrants were witnessed this past year, both positive and negative. The 2021 edition of the Mixed Migration Review explores all this and more, offering a comprehensive annual analysis of mixed migration through the overarching lens of 'reframing' mixed migration.
- **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. 14-62)**
- **Unexpected Circumstances – migrant stories:** a series of in-depth interviews with refugees and migrants in Bamako, Barranquilla, Bossaso, Jakarta and Khartoum, presents the unexpected circumstances and many twists and turns in people's migration journeys **(starting from p. 66)**
- **A wealth of unique, primary data, focusing on migration drivers & human smuggling:** 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 over 7,000 interviews, the visualisations focus on two themes fundamental to the mixed migration phenomenon: migration drivers and decision making and human smuggling **(p. 92-109).**
- **Alternative perspectives essay competition:** this year's MMR for the first time features five essays by academics and analysts under the age of 30 who are from and based in the global South (Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa). These were deemed to be the most original and well-drafted of the 600 abstracts and, after initial selection, 20 full essays, submitted to MMC in response to a competition launched to find alternative perspectives on migration issues **(p. 112-128)**
- **Thematic snapshots:** throughout the report **(from p. 67),** one-page thematic snapshots cover topics such as migration determinants, circumstantial migration, missing migrants and forensics, the meaning of mixed migration in Asia, pushbacks and migration predictions and forecasting.
- **Normalising versus resisting the extreme:** as in previous years, MMR 2021 provides a sobering overview (**p. 200-208**) 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. The growing prevalence of such measures remains highly concerning. However, for the first time, we also included an uplifting and necessary counterpoint with positive actions and policies, called 'resisting the extreme' (**p. 209-213**). Assembling this sister feature has proven to be more of a challenge. Does this difficulty reflect the preponderance of ever harsher and more restrictive approaches to mixed migration, or rather that more positive examples going against this trend are simply more difficult to find and less publicised, perhaps because they constitute the status quo of migration policy rather than being noteworthy aberrations?
- **Rethinking mixed migration: what about internal migration and displacement? (p. 132)** Critically reframing mixed migration raises a question: have we created another artificial exclusion by not including internal migration and displacement? Would this undermine the strong and useful policy and programmatic concept of mixed migration? Or would it contribute to a more comprehensive focus on and understanding of human mobility in all its forms, foster better protection outcomes and less invisibility for people moving within their own country? Or, by incorporating too many different categories under a single concept, would it lead IDPs to become even more invisible and get lost in the mire of mixed migration?
- **The broken economics of irregular migration (and how to fix them) (p. 141).** The economies surrounding irregular migration are usually hidden from or largely ignored by organisations and policymakers that focus on mixed migration. Yet many businesses and local economies in sending, receiving, and transit countries depend to a large extent on irregular migrants. Averting or even reversing widespread irregularity would deliver myriad benefits to many stakeholders.

- **Repositioning the importance of 'migrant states' in the Global South and less know irregular migration routes** South-South migration is a key facet of mixed migration and is set to increase in all categories. Any re-thinking of mixed migration, therefore, needs to focus on the key characteristics and dynamics of mixed migration in the South (essay on **p. 147**) Shouldn't migration and displacement within the Global South take centre stage of global mixed migration analysis and policy debate, replacing the disproportionate — and often negative — focus on the lesser phenomenon of South-North migration? A focus on some of the less publicised irregular journeys, untold stories, and unchallenged rights violations, reveals a more heterogenous global mixed migration story (**p. 164**).
- **Climate change & migration (p. 178).** We need to focus on the full spectrum of mobility, rather than distinguishing forced from voluntary migration, or internal from international migration, when discussing climate change and migration. Migration is not always evidence of a failure to adapt to changing conditions, it can actually be a sign of adaptation. The assumed direct link between climate change and human mobility is not clear and future prognosis is ambiguous because the interaction between climate change and human mobility collide is complex, dynamic, and rooted in local landscapes, including policy decisions. Accepting that climate is only one element in a mix of migration drivers helps to explain where people go and where they may move to in the future, and thus to identify critical intervention points.
- **Mixed Immobility:** Hundreds of millions of people across the world choose not to, or are unable to migrate despite facing migration drivers such as socioeconomic insecurity, dire geoclimatic conditions, conflict, and failed governance structures. This essay (**p. 191**) argues that understanding 'mixed immobility', increases our understanding of mixed migration, with major implications for humanitarian action and policymaking. Further, the concept "capability to stay" should be further explored as part of a positive approach towards human mobility focusing on the capability of people to choose where to live, including the option to stay rather than migrate.
- **The border industrial-complex (p. 222)** The ballooning business of securitising migration and militarising borders is worth billions of dollars. The private sector strives to steer the EU's securitised and militarised migration and border policies towards seeing those on the move as a threat and, as a result, mixed migration itself is becoming increasingly perilous when migrants and refugees divert to more treacherous routes. The same industry that also earns money by providing arms and security equipment for wars, repression and human rights violations, which are fuelling the reasons people are forced to flee in the first place, subsequently profit from providing the equipment and services to impede their journeys.
- **Covid-19 and the future of human mobility:** The Covid-19 pandemic has had and will continue to have a strong impact on human mobility, both in the short term (e.g. disrupted migration routes, stranded migrants, urban-rural return movements, but also increased migration along some routes, especially when the economic impacts started to create an additional push for people to migrate). In the longer term, the impact will vary, depending on a range of factors, all explored in this essay **(p. 232),** including the growth of automation and the impact on demand for migrant labour, changing urbanisation and settlement patterns, the impact on public sentiments towards migration and foreigners, vaccine inequality - impacting on both people's ability to move, and the speed of economic recovery - the extent to which measures restricting mobility remain in place after the immediate risk of the pandemic decreases, and much more.
- **Mixed migration politics and mainstreaming of restrictionist policies:** What happened to the anti-migrant activists and accompanying populist political entities, so prevalent between 2015 and 2019 in Europe and beyond? Were they just paper tigers, was it just political opportunism, using nationalist and nativist rhetoric to scapegoat migrants and asylum seekers, or is this still a political force to be reckoned with? This essay **(p. 243)** argues that overall attitudes towards migrants and asylum seekers have demonstrably hardened. More significantly, anti-migrant positions and policies have been mainstreamed and adopted by centrist, moderate and even leftist parties.
- **The divisive complexities of returning irregular migrants & failed asylum seekers:** The governance of return, reception, and reintegration needs to be improved. This essay **(p. 257)** discusses how functioning return systems depend on overcoming an array of practical and political obstacles, from the lack of cooperation of countries of origin on readmission to the threats of retaliatory measures by countries of

destination, the limitations of reintegration programmes, and the practice of pushbacks and collective expulsions.