



Managing Migration for the Benefit of All

The International Organization for Migration in Brief

MARCH 2011

General Information

Established in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. We are growing rapidly and currently count 132 member states. A further 17 states hold observer status, as do numerous international and non-governmental organizations. IOM's programme budget for 2010 exceeds USD 1 billion, funding over 2,820 active programmes and more than 7,000 staff members serving in more than 420 field offices in more than a hundred countries.

IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

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, be they refugees, displaced persons or other uprooted people. The IOM Constitution gives explicit recognition to the link between migration and economic, social and cultural development, as well as to the right of freedom of movement of persons.

IOM works in the four broad areas of migration management: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration, and addressing forced migration. Cross-cutting activities include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants' rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration.

IOM works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

Migration and Development

The relationship between countries of origin and their overseas communities is key to successful development. IOM's goal in this field is to harness the development potential of migration for individual migrants and societies. We work by promoting international policy dialogue, policy-oriented research and programmes that strengthen the administrative and managerial capacity of governments.

Programme activities include improving remittance management, building human capital through labour migration programmes, return and reintegration of qualified nationals, capacity building for governments and empowerment of migrant women.

Facilitating Migration

Mobility is an essential feature of today's world. Integrated world markets, the emergence of transnational networks and the rapid growth of communication technologies all contribute to the increasing movement of both high and low-skilled workers, students, trainees, families and tourists.

The demographic and social structure in the industrialized world has created the need for workers and professionals from other countries. Large-scale migration for work represents potentially difficult adjustments, but economies that desire to remain competitive cannot ignore the need for change. Facilitating migration for work can be a win-win proposition.

IOM provides policy and technical advice to governments on the regulation of migrant labour and other migratory movements, and carries out programmes to assist governments and migrants with selection/recruitment, language and cultural orientation, consular services, training, reception, integration and return.

These services, tailored to each programme, are provided during all stages of the process: information and application, interview and approval, and post-approval. IOM has performed over 1.5 million immigration medical evaluations around the world and provides logistic and travel assistance to migrants.

Regulating Migration

Governments and societies have an interest in knowing who is seeking access to their territories. The objective is to take measures that prevent access by those who are not authorized to enter, while facilitating speedy access for those who are. IOM assists governments in the development and implementation of migration policy, legislation and administrative mechanisms. To this end, IOM provides technical assistance and training for governmental migration managers on border management, visa systems, regulating entry and stay and collecting and using biometric information.

Replacing irregular flows with orderly, regular migration serves the interests of all governments, and IOM can offer a broad range of programmes to counter trafficking and smuggling in human beings, from prevention to assisting the victims. IOM also implements programmes to facilitate the voluntary return and reintegration of displaced and stranded persons and other migrants, taking into account the needs and concerns of local communities.

Forced Migration

Refugees and displaced persons are a distinct category of “people on the move” deserving special attention. IOM is active in assisting refugee populations during and after emergencies, as was the case in Kosovo and Timor. IOM also facilitates the resettlement each year of thousands of refugees for whom resettlement in a new country is the approved durable solution.

IOM is regularly asked to help find solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), former combatants, victims of ethnic engineering and populations in transition or recovery environments. It also locates and assists widely scattered voters to enable them to take part in elections and referenda. IOM has large programmes and acknowledged expertise in post-war claims and compensation.

Policy Activities

Research and analysis are key to understanding migration, developing effective new policies and designing sustainable practical approaches. Providing public information on migration trends, challenges and opportunities is a key function of the Organization. IOM’s research and publications promote better understanding of migration issues. The World Migration Report provides an overview of major migration trends and policy issues around the globe. The 2010 report, available on www.iom.int, promotes a focus on building capacities to enable states and other stakeholders to respond to and plan for migration effectively and in a sustainable way.

IOM is strengthening its role in the field of international migration law, with special emphasis on the compilation, dissemination, understanding and implementation thereof. More broadly, the Organization carries out extensive training and capacity building programmes with governments and other partners as part of comprehensive migration management frameworks. In all these activities, the consideration of migrants’ rights and obligations, the gender dimension and the health implications of migration is central.

Regular consultations among governments facing common migration challenges have become particularly important. With IOM’s substantive and logistic support regional consultation processes exist in the Americas, Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. These mechanisms strengthen international cooperation, promote the sharing of information and experiences, and build confidence and partnerships on issues of common concern. At the global level, the IOM Council’s International Dialogue on Migration is the principal international forum for intergovernmental migration policy debate, fostering enhanced understanding and cooperation on migration.

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