



IOM International Organization for Migration
 OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
 OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

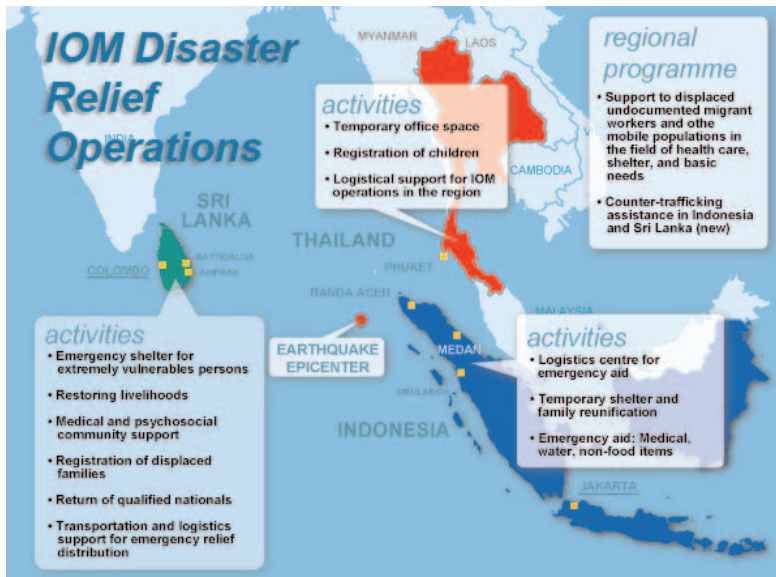
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Tsunami Disaster

IOM at the forefront of the emergency relief operations

280,000 presumed dead. Over 165,000 victims in Indonesia alone. Hundreds of bodies found daily along the coastlines of the affected areas. Around a million dwellings destroyed or damaged. A reported 550,000 homeless in Sri Lanka... The Indian Ocean tsunami earthquake is one of the biggest natural calamities in living history. As soon as news of the disaster emerged, IOM mounted a series of large-scale emergency relief operations in the hardest-hit countries (Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand...) and launched an appeal for donations.



Donor countries have so far met half of IOM's funding requirements. In recognition of IOM's presence and scale of operations in the worst affected areas, the Japanese government alone has contributed \$25 million to IOM's overall target funding of some \$73 million.



Above IOM's Kristin Dadey and a US soldier carry an injured man. Below Kristin is shown briefing U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and senior USAID officials on IOM relief operations in Banda Aceh.



IOM London can still assist people wishing to return home to areas affected by the tsunami. Some of the reintegration activities in Sri Lanka, particularly small businesses, have been destroyed. Extra funding has been allocated to provide for reconstruction assistance.



Following a memorandum between the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) and IOM in November 2004, IOM was officially authorized to implement an Out of Country Voting (OCV) programme on behalf of the IECI. The programme enabled the large Iraqi communities living abroad to participate in their country's transitional National Assembly Election which took place on 30 January 2005.

IOM was chosen by the IECI to implement such a challenging programme because of IOM's considerable experience in organising similar external voting programmes in other countries, namely in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro) and East Timor. In 2004, IOM organised the largest refugee Out-of-Country Registration and Voting programme, which gave 850,000 Afghans residing in Pakistan and Iran the opportunity to take part in Afghanistan's first democratic election.

The IRAQ Out-of-Country Voting programme took place in 14 countries involving over 800 Registration and Polling Stations in 75 locations worldwide. In the UK, Iraqis were able to vote in three locations: London, Manchester and Glasgow. In each country, the turnout of registered voters exceeded all expectations. For the 14 countries taken as a whole, the total who voted (as a percentage of those who registered) stands at 93.6%. For the UK, the figure is 92.7% of the total of registered voters. In terms of actual numbers, the total for the 14 countries is 265,148 voters and in the UK 28,691 took part in the electoral process to elect a Transitional National Assembly in their home country.





Afghans explore return options and prepare to go back

Twelve Afghan nationals opted to explore their options to return to their country under the IOM *Explore and Prepare for Return to Afghanistan* programme.

Of these 12 people, six have come back and IOM and the Refugee Council are currently assessing the experiences of these Afghans and how they might view their prospects back in Afghanistan. Feedback is being gathered via a Refugee Council research questionnaire designed to gain an overall picture of Afghans' experiences of the *Explore & Prepare* programme.

Explore & Prepare is a component of the Voluntary Returns to Afghanistan Programme (VRAP), a programme of UK government assistance for Afghans who have decided to return to Afghanistan on either a temporary or permanent basis. VRAP is operated on an inter-agency basis by IOM, Refugee Action, the Refugee Council and UNHCR working in partnership with the UK Home Office and Foreign Office.

For further information about the *Explore & Prepare* programme, please contact us. Freephone: 0800 783 2332. Tel: 020 7233 0001. Email: ops@iomlondon.org

Reaching Out and Raising Awareness

Throughout 2004, IOM London carried out the following activities to increase awareness about voluntary return options among the asylum seeking community in the UK.

Partners

(a) **Agencies:** Four partner agencies operate in seven regions of the UK providing local and regional access to information and advice on voluntary return and further raising awareness among other stakeholder organisations. They also act as referral agencies to IOM London. In 2004, they referred over 700 VARRP applicants to us, accounting for 19% of the total VARRP applications received;

(b) **Home Office:** 4,000 copies of information materials were sent to the Home Office. These will form an integral part of new tool kits for all immigration officials and presentations to immigration offices across the country.

Media

(a) **Community media:** We signed contracts with a number of non-English community media channels in order to reach individuals who are not in regular contact with agencies in the asylum process or community networks.

(b) **Newspapers:** We placed adverts in ten newspapers in nine different languages. Alongside these adverts, there were nine articles which provided more details about reintegration and AVRIM.

(c) **Radio:** We also had adverts in four radio stations in five languages as well as two interviews with colleagues from IOM London and IOM Colombo.

(d) **Television:** Likewise, there were adverts on seven TV stations in nine languages along with six interviews/programmes on four different channels with colleagues from IOM London, IOM Kabul and IOM Tirana.

Outreach meetings

These ranged from one-to-one meetings with refugee community groups to presentations to regional consortiums through to seminars for members of different ethnic communities. A total of 145 meetings were organised across all regions of the country to present and discuss the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) and the Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM) programme. Meetings were arranged by IOM and the partner agencies and over 2,000 participants from approximately 950 organisations attended them.

Information materials

(a) **Leaflets, Newsletters, Brochures:** Over 85,000 leaflets, in 16 languages, were disseminated through mailshots and in response to publicity requests. Additionally, 3 issues of the IOM London newsletter were sent out to over 700 agencies across the country while we also distributed 1,300 newsletters focusing on return to Afghanistan through Afghan community networks.

(b) **IOM London website:** This is updated continuously with copies of all our translated materials and video clips, application forms and any new developments.

IOM awarded DFID contract in Afghanistan

IOM Afghanistan has secured a DFID-funded project for an 'alternative livelihoods' works programme in Baddakhshan province, in the North East of Afghanistan.

The aim of the 'alternative livelihoods' approach is to try to attract farmers away from poppy cultivation by providing them with incentives to elect different economic options. This, hopefully, will help desperate farmers reduce their dependence on opium for survival.

Brian Kelly, Senior Program Manager at IOM Afghanistan, said that "this is an important initiative and could lead to longer-term programming".

1,000th Returnee Gets Reintegration Assistance

Since IOM London expanded its Voluntary Assisted Return Programme (VARRP) in 2002 to include reintegration assistance (in the returnee's home country), applicants from over 42 countries have benefited from this assistance.

The change from VARP to VARRP, has thus enabled beneficiaries of reintegration assistance to either start a small business, go into vocational training or pursue their education in their country of origin.

January 2005 saw the 1,000th returnee - a Sri Lankan national - who obtained reintegration assistance from IOM London to start a fishing business.

Reintegration Assistance

Albania
Kosovo

Assisted under VARRP

Since the launch of Reintegration Assistance (as part of VARRP) in 2002, 536 applicants from Albania and Kosovo (Serbia Montenegro) have returned to their countries under this programme. 26% of these returnees also benefited from Reintegration Assistance in their home countries. Almost half (42%) of these assisted returnees decided to start a small business while the rest (58%) chose to go into vocational training or pursue their education.

Assisted under HLWG

Furthermore, reintegration assistance was extended to irregular migrants from four EU Member States (the UK, Germany, Italy, Belgium) under the High Level Working Group (HLWG) 2002 Albania project. Entitled *Fostering Sustainable Reintegration in Albania, the Kosovo Province and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) by Reinforcing Local NGOs Capacity Service Provision to Returnees*, the project aims to assist 200 irregular migrants in the four EU countries. This category of migrants includes visa-overstayers, failed asylum seekers who become irregular according to the national legislations and those who simply entered any of these countries illegally. Currently, there are 110 HLWG cases, with over a dozen actually receiving reintegration assistance and the rest being processed.

Information Campaigns

All IOM missions involved in the project embarked upon a series of advertising and publicity campaigns in the countries of destination and return using a mixed media strategy, mailshots and information meetings.



All photos © IOM



What they said:

"Right after my return, I contacted IOM Tirana about possibilities for assistance. (...) I started from zero and the support from IOM was very useful, morally and materially. I started an internet café, which is a new kind of business in Albania."

- D, 33 years old (Tirana, Albania)

"With assistance from IOM, I bought a stone carving machine and became self-employed as a stone carver. (...) This profession is quite profitable. I work and I am able to make enough money to help my family survive"

- Y, 22 years old (Gjakova, Kosovo)

Activities in 2004

Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP)

In 2004, IOM London received VARRP applications from 4,129 individuals (86% male and 16% female). Compared to 2003, this represents an increase of 11% in the number of individuals who applied for voluntary return. The chart below shows the first six major countries involved. Altogether, returnees went to 81 countries worldwide.



The VARRP is co-funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF).

Reintegration Assistance

Under VARRP, 1,355 male and 317 female applicants applied for reintegration assistance during the past year. A total of 422 actually benefited from reintegration assistance, with the bulk (349) opting to start a small business. Examples of such businesses include cafés, grocery shops, bakeries, clothes-making outlets and internet/printing shops. The remainder went into further education (this included a number of children) or chose to follow a vocational training course. These returnees went to 34 countries, among which Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Iran, Colombia and Ecuador were the biggest in terms of returnees.

Regional Information Campaign in Four EU Accession Countries

From March to December 2004, IOM implemented a regional information campaign in four EU accession countries about the realities of immigrating to the UK following EU enlargement in May 2004. Funded by the Home Office, the campaign provided objective information about immigration, working in the UK, the rights and obligations of immigrants, and the risks and consequences associated with abuse of UK laws and the social security system.

The campaign was targeted at potential migrant populations in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. 10,500 calls were received on the free hotlines set up in each country, 130 meetings with nearly 5,000 participants were held across these countries, 27,000 posters and 670,000 postcards were disseminated while the migration debate was extended through articles published in the local press. Close coordination with local government ministries, other stakeholders and British embassy officials ensured a successful campaign.

Survey of Zimbabwe Nationals in the UK and South Africa

At the behest of Zimbabwe nationals themselves, IOM London, with the help of a researcher from City University, carried out this survey. The full survey report as well as a four-page summary will soon be available on IOM London's website - www.iomlondon.org

Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants (AVRIM)

This new project started on 15 November 2004. It pertains specifically to irregular migrants (ie visa overstayers, illegal entrants, victims of human trafficking or people smuggling).

On 24 November 2004, a workshop about voluntary return of irregular migrants was held at IOM London's offices. It brought together government representatives and IOM staff from Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary and Germany. They shared their experiences of dealing with and discussed issues related to the voluntary return of irregular migrants.

At the end of 2004, IOM London had received 37 applications and assisted 10 individuals to return to their home countries.

AVRIM Community Meetings

IOM London had its first meeting with community groups in November 2004 when it met a number of Chinese Community Organisations to present the Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM) programme and explore how this new project could benefit Chinese migrants. Since then, there have been further meetings with other local community groups. Thus, about 30 groups from Latin America, India/Pakistan/Asia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe attended meetings at IOM London's offices in November and December last year.

Meetings will continue this year with representatives of other community organisations. Interestingly, community radio, TV stations and a number of newspapers sought to interview IOM following feedback from their listeners, viewers and readers.

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Do you want to go home?

Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants - AVRIM

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Address: 21 Westminster Palace Gardens,
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Do you want to go home?

Doni të shkoni në shtëpi?

您想返回家乡吗?

क्या आप घर जाना चाहते हैं ?

Хотите вернуться домой?

کیا آپ گھر جانا چاہتے ہیں؟

¿Desea regresar a su país?

Attendees were generally pleased with the meetings. Besides learning about IOM as a worldwide organisation, they also appreciated the potential of IOM London's AVRIM programme. They asked many detailed questions which had a particular relevance to members of their respective communities. All of them had questions which centred upon the linkages between the AVRIM programme in practice and wider migration issues and how these might affect their members. Finally, some organisations said that they intended to include AVRIM (and VARRP!) leaflets in their correspondence with their members.

AVRIM leaflets exist in the following languages: English, Albanian, Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Spanish and Urdu. They can be seen on our website: www.iomlondon.org and can be sent to any organisation upon request. And we can also arrange meetings at our offices or at the office of any organisation making such a request in order to present and discuss the AVRIM programme.