

MIGRATION

Spring 2009



Myanmar and Haiti - Post Emergency Challenges

*Also: Tackling Xenophobia
Head On*



IOM International Organization for Migration

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

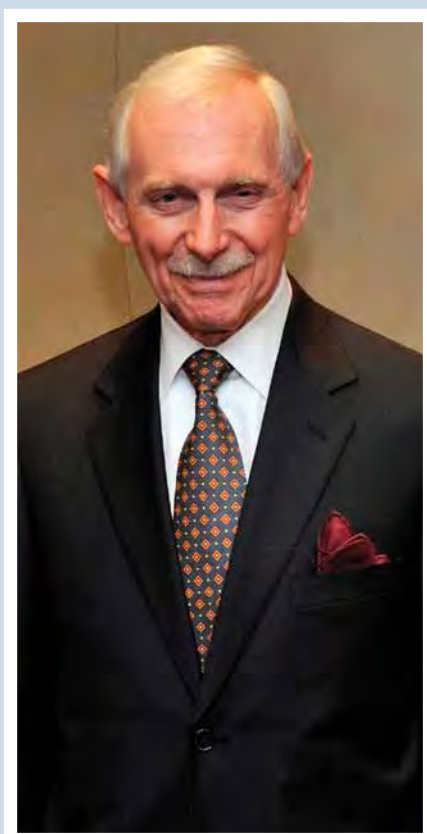
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Let's Not Make a Migrant Crisis Out of an Economic One

By William Lacy Swing, IOM Director General



Last December's Eid al-Adha celebrations were muted for families living in Dakar's working class suburb of Ouakam. Many of those who traditionally relied on remittances sent by relatives abroad to pay for the festivities associated with Islam's second most important religious festival had to do without as a direct consequence of the economic slowdown.

Marème, a mother of nine, lives with her extended family in a small house a few minutes from Ouakam's beaches where, until recently, thousands of young West

Africans were prepared to risk their lives in small boats to make the perilous 1,000 mile-journey to the Canary Islands to find well-paid jobs in Europe.

But the economic downturn in Europe and high inflation at home is fast changing popular perceptions of migration. For Marème and her family, the fact that they have relatives abroad no longer guarantees them financial security at home.

Marème's son, who works in Spain and may lose his job, last year sent only a fraction of the money he remitted in previous years. The family struggled to pay 100,000 CFA francs (EUR 150) for a goat traditionally shared between family, friends and the poor at Eid.

In West Africa and elsewhere in the developing world, the financial downturn is testing relationships between families dependent on remittances and relatives in developed economies now facing shrinking job markets and renewed political pressures to restrict immigration.

It is understandable that destination countries wish to ensure that jobs go to their citizens first, particularly in times of recession and cutbacks. But for most industrialized economies facing ageing and declining populations, migrants will still be needed to fill jobs and contribute to economic growth and development and as such are part of the solution and not the problem.

Migration is a structural part of globalization. Closing the door to migrants and migration will only lead to a "lose-lose" situation for migrants and their families as well as for the countries

to which they make valuable economic and social contributions.

Declining remittances to developing countries – which until recently far exceeded official development aid (ODA) flows – will increase poverty in countries of origin and exacerbate development gaps.

The time has now come for governments to maintain levels of ODA to mitigate the impact of a recession-induced reduction in remittances. Failure to do so will send the wrong message to countries of origin and increase pressure on young people to migrate by whatever means they can.

Closing the front door to these migrants, many of whom are still needed in jobs that citizens of rich countries are unwilling to take, will encourage them to use the exploitative and abusive back door offered by people smugglers and human traffickers.

Transparency and the free flow of information lie at the heart of a successful migration policy response to the global recession. The general public in rich destination countries needs to be aware of the positive socio-economic contribution of migrants to minimize a possible xenophobic backlash.

At the same time, migrant origin countries now have a greater responsibility than ever before to fully inform their citizens about the realities, risks and rewards of regular and irregular migration. They must also step up to the challenge of working more closely than ever before with destination countries to manage migration for the benefit of all. **M**

Diversity Initiative Fights Xenophobia and Racist Crime

By Jean-Philippe Chauzy, IOM Geneva, reporting from Kiev, Ukraine

Throughout history and the world over, migrants have always faced some degree of xenophobia and racist crime. But with increased mobility across borders in recent decades and economies in recession in the wake of the financial crisis, racial violence against migrants is rising around the globe. The xenophobic explosion in South Africa in 2008 was not an exception. Ukraine, no stranger to the problem, is home to a unique initiative to foster greater understanding between migrants and host communities.

Shulyavka is a sprawling outdoor market that looks bleak and dreary under a cold grey autumn sky. Located close to one of Kyiv's main underground metro stations in the western part of the capital, over the years it has become the place where impecunious bargain hunters come to find second-hand clothes and other cheap items.

For many migrants from Africa, the Middle and Far East who came to Ukraine to study during Soviet times and after the country's independence in 1991, Shulyavka has become their daily workplace – a far cry from the successful careers they dreamt of when leaving home decades ago.

▼ Ukrainians get a chance to find out more about other cultures through events organized by the Diversity Initiative. © IOM 2008 - MUA0013



Many decided to stay on and build new lives in Ukraine, some after marrying Ukrainian or Russian spouses. But years later, they are still regarded as foreign interlopers and face a rising tide of xenophobia and racially-motivated crimes.

Bundled in layers of warm clothing, with their feet in icy puddles, African traders in Shulyavka do their best to peddle baggy hip-hop clothes and trendy trainers to young Ukrainians eager to adopt western urban street wear. But business is slow.

"It has slowed down over the past couple of years, partly because of current anti-immigrant feelings," says an unnamed Nigerian, who says he came to Ukraine 21 years ago to study aeronautical engineering at the National Aviation University in Kiev.

Recalling how a 40-year-old handicapped Nigerian friend of his who worked on the market was found dead on 29 May 2008 with a dozen stab wounds to the neck and stomach, he says that an atmosphere of fear now prevails among traders following a string of recent deadly attacks against Africans.

Another Nigerian recalls a 47-year-old asylum seeker from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who two weeks later was also beaten to death on his way to work by a group of thugs.

"We live like mice, in constant fear. We're afraid to walk the streets, day and night. So we stick together because there's a degree of safety in numbers. Despite all the precautions, attacks against our community have continued. Nothing has been done against the perpetrators," he says.

According to the Diversity Initiative, set up in April 2007 by IOM, UNHCR and Amnesty International Ukraine and which has since then grown into a larger network of over 40 organizations, the level of racially-motivated violence reached record highs in the first half of 2008.

Out of the 63 racially-motivated attacks in Kiev and elsewhere during the year in which six people were killed, 50 of them occurred between January and July.



▲ Promoting inter-cultural understanding among the young can go a long way to avoiding xenophobia in the future. © IOM 2008 - MUA0012

In 2007, there were 68 confirmed attacks, including eight murders, against foreigners and ethnic minorities, compared to 14 attacks and two murders in 2006.

"Those figures do not reflect the harassment that Africans and other foreigners endure on a daily basis," says Charles Asante-Yeboa, a Ghanaian national who heads Kiev's African Centre.

"There's always been a bias against foreigners, especially against Africans, but things have got much worse. Many attacks go unreported as victims are afraid to talk and many have lost faith in the judicial system," he says.

On 10 January 2008, Asante-Yeboa himself was attacked by a dozen young thugs armed with a machete, iron bars and broken bottles.

"I was struck on the back of the head, beaten and kicked to the ground. One of them said: let's cut off his head. The blade cut through my ear and cheek. I was about to give up on life when a mini-van stopped close by. The attackers fled and I was left bleeding on the pavement," he recalls.

According to Asante-Yeboa, some of his assailants were subsequently identified by the police and held for questioning, but were later released without charges as they were apparently minors.

"Racism and xenophobia are present in every society around the world," says Jeff Labovitz, IOM's Chief of Mission in Ukraine. "What distinguishes countries is the way they address these issues. Beyond advocating for the well-being and dignity of migrants, refugees and visible minorities in Ukraine, members of the Diversity Initiative seek to support government activities that encourage inter-cultural dialogue."

“

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”

As part of these efforts by the Diversity Initiative, several anti-xenophobia events and rallies were organized in 2008 in Kyiv marking key dates such as Europe Day, Africa Day, Children's Day and World Refugee Day.

"These events help to promote a better understanding of different cultures among the Ukrainian public. Targeted information campaigns promoting the positive values of migration linked to training activities for key government and civil society partners, such as the media, would also go a long way to promoting a greater understanding of foreigners," says Labovitz.

Mridula Ghosh from the Kyiv-based East European Development Institute believes the Ukrainian authorities and police have long ignored the issue of racism and xenophobia and have largely attributed racist crimes to hooliganism.

The media also bears some responsibility for the current wave of racial intolerance. "Fragmented, biased and sensationalistic reporting regularly contributes to fanning the flames of racism and xenophobia," she observes.

Citing articles that followed the murder of the Congolese asylum-seeker, she says that some media tried to insinuate that the victim had been attacked because he was involved in illegal activities.

"This type of reporting further reinforces prejudices against foreigners. Worse, it can be perceived as an attempt by some journalists to legitimize violence against foreigners," she adds.

Xenophobic violence also poses an economic threat to Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian State Institute for International Education, some 45,000 foreigners from 134 countries currently study in Ukrainian universities, spending some US\$ 300 million a year.

Within the next couple of years, the authorities plan to increase this number to 70,000, but the scheme could suffer if the current wave of xenophobia and racially motivated attacks continues.

In August 2008, Uganda's state-owned daily New Vision published an article claiming that it was not safe for Ugandans to study in Ukraine. And according to the Algerian ambassador to Ukraine, out of 20 Algerian students reported to have come to study in the country in 2007, only two remained less than a year later,

In response to the criticism, the Ukrainian government has taken some steps to address the problem. It has developed a plan of action to combat racism and xenophobia and established a Department for Ethnic Crimes.



▲ Children's Day: Working together on arts and crafts. © IOM 2008 - MUA0015

Article 161 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code, which criminalizes those responsible for inciting ethnic, racial or religious animosity, was also used on three occasions last year against three Ukrainians subsequently found guilty of violent hate crimes – the first such convictions since 2003.

It is a step forward on a long journey. **M**

▼ Inter-cultural dialogue, the fun way. © IOM 2008 - MUA0011



Bringing Hope to Haiti's Mud-Ravaged Streets

By Niurka Piñeiro, Regional Information Officer for the Western Hemisphere, reporting from Haiti

“ I am very lucky because there was no death in my family. I could be dead, my family too.” Smith Archéus, IOM Emergency Operations Assistant in Haiti’s western city of Gonaïves recalls the night of September 1st when he and his wife heard the neighbours scream: ‘Wake up, wake up, the water is coming.’ They grabbed their two children and took shelter on a nearby roof.

After the waters subsided, Archéus sent his wife and children to the capital, Port-au-Prince, and turned his attention to helping thousands of victims of Hurricane Hanna, which killed almost 500 people and left tens of thousands homeless. The storm also destroyed the city’s primary water system.

“My family returned to Gonaïves in mid-October so the children could

start school, but my home is still uninhabitable and we are living in a room at a friend’s house,” Archéus explains.

“I plan to slowly clean out the mud from inside the house and the yard. After that we will have to replace all of the furniture that was completely ruined. But we were lucky, we are all alive,” he adds with a shy smile.

As part of the UN country team in Haiti and the lead agency in providing shelter and non-food items (NFIs), the IOM Mission in Haiti began working with the authorities, UN agencies and local partners immediately after the hurricane to provide emergency relief items, including hygiene and kitchen kits.

▼ Clean up crews removing mud from small streets and alleyways to provide access. © IOM 2008 - MHT0222 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)

“
Slowly, as we clean,
people are returning
to their homes.
Cleaning the streets
is a sign of hope.
When they see us
they know they
will be able to return
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”





Estimates suggest that over 100,000 people were displaced by floods caused by the storm. Many families took refuge in public shelters set up in schools, churches and community centres. But most of these were not equipped to handle the large numbers and did not meet even minimal standards.

The city of Gonaïves remained under water more than two weeks after the flood waters initially rose to the city's rooftops.

"From the beginning of this emergency, IOM has played an essential coordination role in supporting the authorities with their efforts to track displacement, needs, returns and now long-term recovery," explains Vincent Houver, IOM Chief of Mission in Haiti.

"IOM quickly focused on early recovery activities by encouraging those who were able to return to their neighbourhoods to do so and contribute to the clean-up efforts. But much will need to be done if

the international humanitarian response is to materialize at levels commensurate with the level of damage and harm caused by the successive hurricanes - Fay, Gustav, Hanna and Ike," he adds.

As the water level started to recede, damage assessments conducted by IOM and its partners confirmed that several thousand homes had sustained damage beyond repair.

In order to provide temporary shelter for some 500 families who could not return to their homes, IOM engineers carried out site planning, and built roads and kitchens at four tent camps set up by the Haitian government and the international community.

At the Praville camp, 270 families whose homes were completely destroyed, still wait and wonder how they will be able to rebuild their homes and their lives.

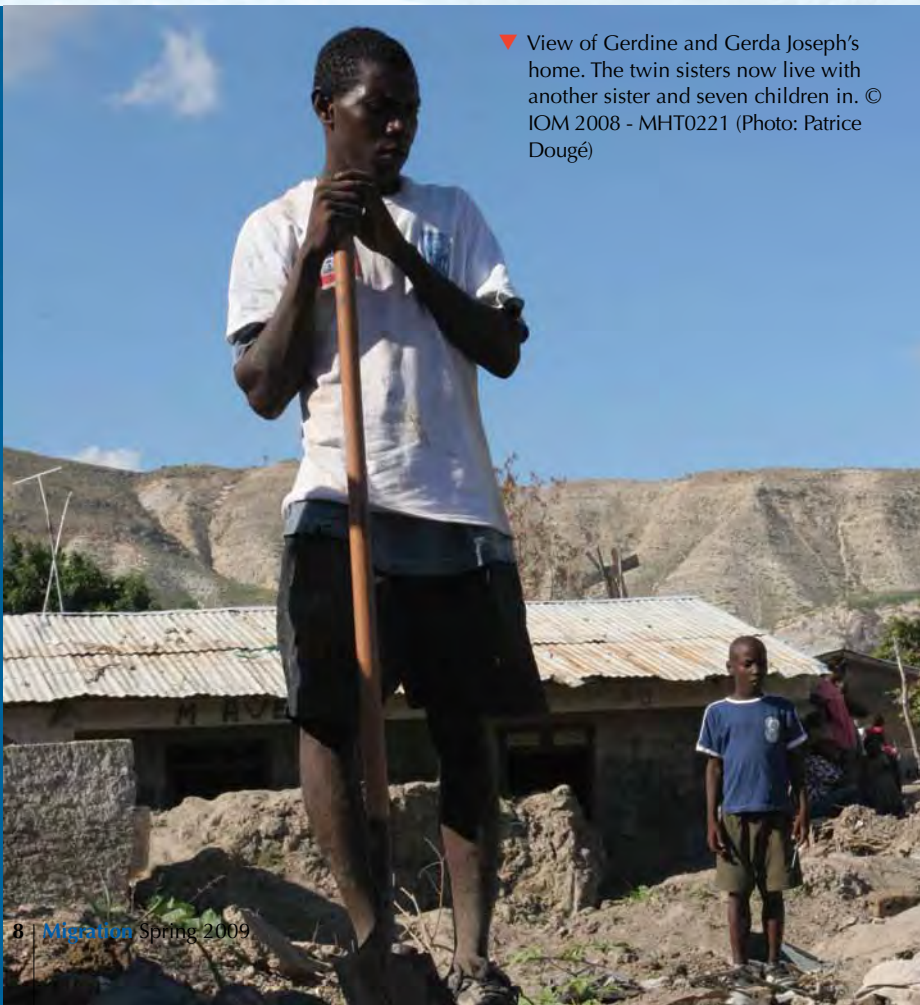
Petithomme Marc-Georges is living at the Praville camp with a son, two cousins and his mother. He sent his wife and two smaller children to Port-au-Prince.

"Every person in this camp lost their home. I don't know who is going to help us. I don't know if the government has a plan. How can I even think of rebuilding my home? I have no money, no job, nothing," he says.

"When and how are the victims going to restart their lives?" asks Serge Guillet, IOM Programme Assistant and a resident of Gonaïves. "All of Gonaïves was affected. We are all living day-to-day; surviving day-to-day, I should say. There is no employment. Those who had small businesses have been forced to close and many have left for the capital and other towns to live with family or friends."

Stéphane Trocher is part of the IOM Emergency Team in Gonaïves and oversees an IOM-UNDP project to clean up the city. "We are cleaning the streets of Gonaïves so that people can start moving back into their homes. We have 20 large trucks working in different parts of the city and each truck goes to the dump site seven to 10 times per day. We are also employing some 800 people to clean the small streets, where the large trucks do not have access," he explains.

"Two months ago when I arrived, there was no access. It was flooded, people could not walk in the streets; the mud



▼ View of Gerdine and Gerda Joseph's home. The twin sisters now live with another sister and seven children in. © IOM 2008 - MHT0221 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)



▲ IOM's Salome Kombere, in charge of IOM Return Kit distribution, helps victims arrange the relief items. © IOM 2008 - MHT0218 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)

was up to their knees. Slowly, as we clean, people are returning to their homes. Cleaning the streets is a sign of hope. When they see us they know they will be able to return to their homes. But we'll have to return to all of the streets that we've cleaned to pick up the mud that people will be taking out of their homes," he adds.

With hundreds employed each day to carry out the massive clean up, and many others rehabilitating the potable water system and carrying out other infrastructure rehabilitation projects, IOM projects are not only helping to put the city back on its feet, but are also pumping much-needed cash into the destitute economy.

Guillet is cautiously optimistic. "In three months things will get better. But the most important thing right now is to provide employment for the residents of Gonaïves. If people have no jobs, we will see even more misery," he says.

As affected populations began to move out of public shelters, IOM, Haiti's Civil Protection Department and the Ministry of Social Affairs began distributing return kits containing 1,000 Haitian Gourde (approximately US\$26), hygiene items, jerry cans, blankets, tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, shovels, corrugated metal sheets, nails, hammers and other small tools to help families make immediate repairs to their homes.

Gerdine Joseph, her two sisters and seven children left the public shelter and accepted a return kit. They want to repair what's left of their home because they have nowhere else to go. "But how can we do this alone? The damage is

too great. We took the return kits and left the school where we were staying. We are using some of the items, except the tools. We just can't repair this on our own and without money," Gerdine explains.

"We have ideas. We know what we want to do, but we are not capable of doing it on our own. We are staying with different friends, but we can't stay with them forever. We don't know what is going to happen," adds Gerdine's twin sister, Gerda, with a sigh.

IOM is conducting a survey among the victims to determine if families will be able to repair or rebuild their homes.

▼ The damage to Gerdine and Gerda Joseph's home is so extensive that the sisters cannot rebuild it on their own. © IOM 2008 - MHT0227 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)



“
**The government
 needs the help of IOM
 and other partners.
 We have to work
 together to find a
 solution...**
 ”



▲ Victims receive IOM Return Kits. © IOM 2008 - MHT0214 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)

Marc Saint-Hillien, Delegate of the Antionibe Province where Gonaïves is located, says that the government is entirely committed to helping the victims. "We are working with IOM to distribute kits. The government has a plan to relocate the families who lost their homes. We also plan to work with the international community to rebuild homes," he says.

Annessie Claude, Provincial Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs, says initial surveys after the storms identified more than 5,000 families who had fled their homes.

"Some of these families were in official shelters and others in unofficial shelters. Those who are able to return home and rebuild are receiving return kits," Claude explains. "The government needs the help of IOM and other partners. We have to work together to find a solution for the victims who are living in tents and with family and friends. The long-term plan is to build homes for all victims." **M**

▼ Clean up crews removing mud from small streets and alleyways to provide access. © IOM 2008 - MHT0223 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)

▼ Gonaïves residents are trying to recover from the loss of their loved ones, homes and belongings. © IOM 2008 - MHT0210 (Photo: Patrice Dougé)



IOM Doctors Improve Health Care, Warn of Poverty After Cyclone Nargis

By Chris Lom, Regional Information Officer, Asia-Pacific, reporting from the Irrawaddy Delta

The banks of the Irrawaddy river – a vast glistening expanse of water – are dotted with a spider’s web of muddy channels overgrown with lush vegetation.

An hour by Zodiac speedboat west of Bogale, one of the townships worst hit by Cyclone Nargis in May 2008, IOM’s Kyae Chan Chaung Pyar (KCCP) fixed clinic – a white canvas frame tent sheltering under a bamboo and Nipa palm thatch superstructure – can be reached by channel at high tide.

The clinic, which treats some 60 people a day, serves 11 villages or over 4,200 people and doubles as a base for mobile IOM medical teams serving neighbouring villages.

“We live in Mawlamyinegyun and come here by Zodiac every morning. We then split into two groups. A doctor and nurse stay here at the fixed clinic and a second team takes the boat to other villages for mobile clinics. Then we all meet up again in the evening,” smiles Dr Kyaw Thura Thein, a young GP from Yangon.

Outreach mobile clinics, which are held in monasteries or the homes of village elders, can involve hours of bumpy, but essential Zodiac travel for IOM’s 54 doctors and nurses who work two-weeks-on two-weeks-off shifts in the delta.

Most spend six days out of seven camping in the five fixed tent clinics

to which they are attached, all of which, with the exception of KCCP and Yuzana 2, are too remote to allow daily commuting to nearby towns.

“Both the fixed and the mobile clinics provide treatment and health education – particularly in areas like hygiene and reproductive health - but we also refer serious cases to the township hospitals. In the past three months we’ve referred over 200 patients with serious conditions – that means not just diagnosis, but also taking them there by boat and bringing them back after treatment,” says Dr Kyaw Thura Thein.

The IOM medical referral system, which received a boost in November with the donation of five new, locally built

▼ IOM medical teams reach remote communities using inflatable Zodiac boats donated by USAID. © IOM 2008 - MMM0141





▲ An IOM doctor at work in the KCCP tent clinic. © IOM 2008 - MMM0302 (Photo: Piers Benatar)



▲ Builders start work on a permanent rural health centre next to the KCCP tent clinic. © IOM 2008 - MMM0346 (Photo: Piers Benatar)

fibreglass and steel “ambulance boats” from the NGO Americares, is freely available to other agencies and offers an important service to delta villages, most of which are only accessible by boat.

“The new boats are not as fast as the Zodiacs, which were donated by USAID right after the cyclone and have been invaluable, but they are comfortable and safer at low tide when there are sharp tree stumps and other debris in the channels,” says IOM Mawlamyinegyun Field Coordinator Thein Ohn, a genial, elderly man, who oversees the whole operation from under a battered bush hat.

The KCCP clinic’s mixture of fixed and mobile primary health care, referrals and health education is now replicated at four other locations in three of the delta townships worst hit by the cyclone - Yuzana 2 in Mawlamyinegyun; Kyun Thar Yar and Nga Kwat in Bogale and Seikma in Pyapon.

Sites were selected in consultation with township medical officers and the Department of Health, who picked locations where existing sub-rural health centres had been destroyed and needed to be replaced or renovated.

In KCCP, IOM and the Japanese NGO HUMA have already started to construct a new, steel reinforced brick building

next to the tented clinic. They have also sunk a 500 ft deep tube well to provide fresh water for the village.

But at Nga Kwat, another IOM tented fixed clinic two hours away by speedboat, an adjacent government bamboo and wood sub-rural health centre and birthing house stands empty, while patients queue to be seen by the IOM doctor.

“We are worried that when IOM’s project ends (in March 2009) the government clinic will not be able to cope. They only have a midwife and there is never enough medicine,” says Village Head Shwe Win.

The population of Nga Kwat, which lost 188 people in the cyclone, has actually expanded since the disaster, according to Shwe Win. “About 40 families came here from other villages – perhaps

because the IOM clinic was here, but also because they could not go back to the places they came from. They’re very poor, because they don’t have land, but they get some work as casual labourers in other villages,” he says.

IOM Bogale Field Coordinator Win Myint, an unflappable, smiling man who studies his staff through unruly hair and gold rimmed spectacles, agrees that combating poverty, particularly among families displaced by the cyclone, is now the biggest challenge facing the government and the international humanitarian community in Myanmar.

“Restarting livelihoods and helping people to generate income is now critical. Immediately after the cyclone we (the government and the international community) met people’s immediate needs – food, shelter,

▶ A family brings a sick baby to the Nga Kwat tent clinic. © OM 2008 - MMM0245 (Photo: Piers Benatar)





▲ Two thirds of families in the villages worst affected by the cyclone earn less than USD 8 a month. © IOM 2008 - MMM0265 (Photo: Piers Benatar)

medicine. But the cyclone took away their means of making a living - their fishing boats, nets, farm tools, seeds. So they can't make the money they now need to repair their houses and pay for things like healthcare in the future," he observes.

An IOM shelter survey of 57 villages badly affected by the cyclone, conducted in September with UK DFID funding and published in November, suggested that over two thirds of 1,746 families surveyed earned less than USD 8 a month. **M**

Cyclone Nargis, a freak storm which struck the Irrawaddy delta on 2nd May 2008 left 140,000 people dead and some 2.4 million others severely affected. IOM's emergency response to the disaster has included delivery of medical aid to some 57,000 patients in over 700 villages; emergency shelter materials for some 45,000 families; and distribution of relief items including mosquito nets, waterproof clothing and household items such as blankets, kitchenware, jerry cans and hygiene kits. It has also delivered four pre-fabricated clinics, that will serve as pre-screening centres for station hospitals in Dedaye, Pyapon, Bogale and Labutta townships. It is currently working to distribute roofing and reconstruction materials to some 6,000 households in affected urban areas. It is also working with local and international partners to train communities to help them cope with the psycho-social impact of the disaster. IOM's response to Nargis was made possible through funding from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), Japan, the USA, the UK, Switzerland, Denmark, Amicaires, HUMA and Chevron Corporation.



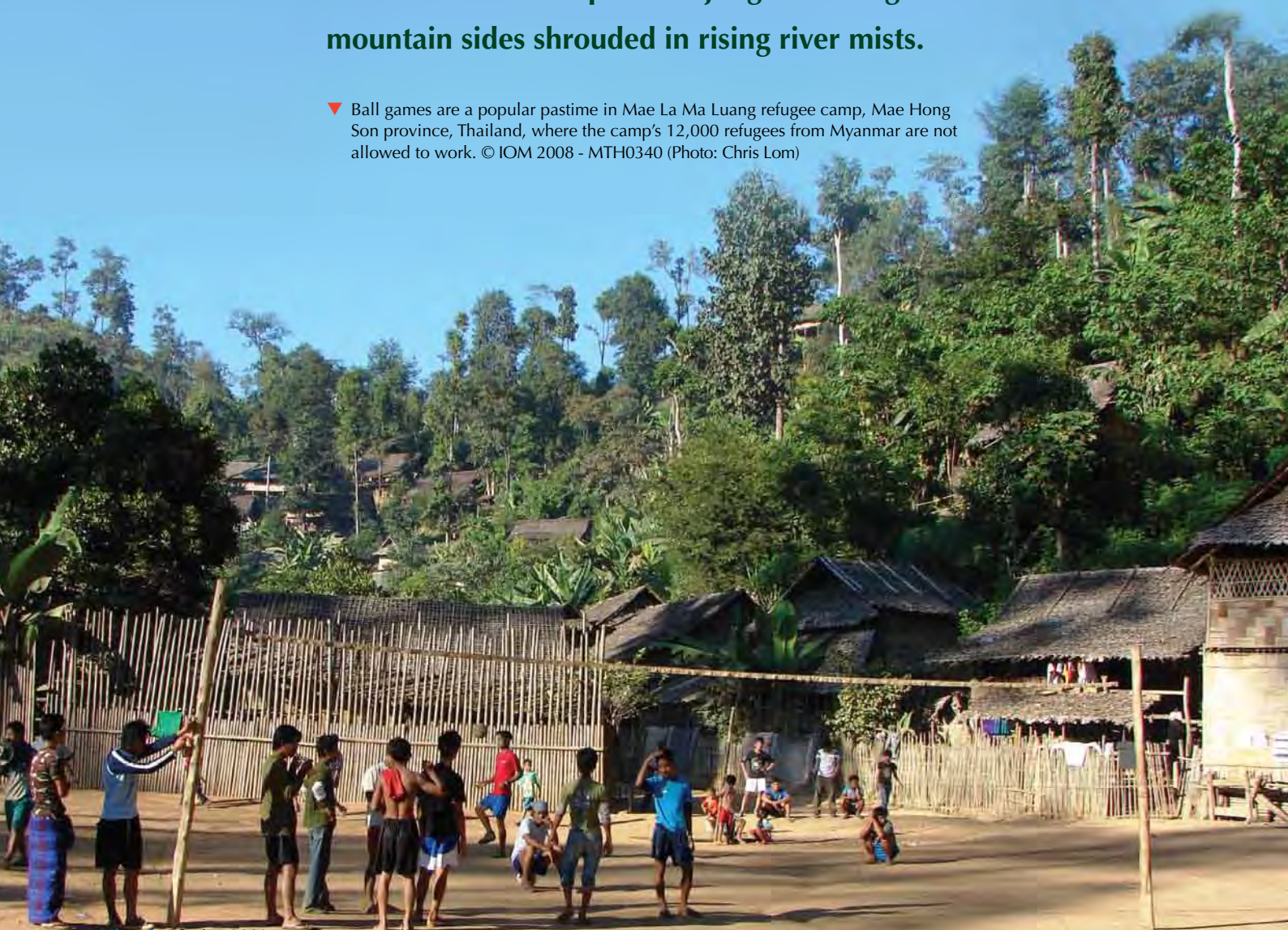
◀ IOM doctors conduct an outreach clinic at Kyaung Su monastery. © IOM 2008 - MMM0374 (Photo: Piers Benatar)

Refugees Leave Remote Thai Border Camps for US Resettlement

By Chris Lom, Regional Information Officer, Asia-Pacific, reporting from Mae Hong Son

In Thailand's remote northwestern Mae Hong Son province, refugee camps constructed from bamboo and leaves perch in jungle clearings on mountain sides shrouded in rising river mists.

▼ Ball games are a popular pastime in Mae La Ma Luang refugee camp, Mae Hong Son province, Thailand, where the camp's 12,000 refugees from Myanmar are not allowed to work. © IOM 2008 - MTH0340 (Photo: Chris Lom)



The timeless beauty of the place belies the terror which caused the refugees to flee their villages in Myanmar, and the poverty and frustration of life in the closed camps, where a generation has grown up depending on handouts from foreign donors.

But change is in the air, following a 2008 US decision to offer resettlement to some 50,000 refugees from four Mae Hong Son camps. The move follows earlier US decisions to offer resettlement to up to 100,000 other refugees from Myanmar living in more accessible border camps south of Mae Hong Son in Tak and Kanchanaburi provinces.

‘We plan to start US resettlement out of Baan Mai Nai Soi and Baan Mae Surin Karenni camps in January 2009. They have a combined population of about 25,000 and we expect to move between 5,000 to 7,000 in the first year. Then in 2010 we’ll focus on the two Karen camps - Mae La Ma Luang and Mae La Oon, which have roughly the same population, but are the toughest to access,’ says Dragan Aleksoski, head of IOM’s new Mae Hong Son sub-office.

Getting to and from three of the four Mae Hong Son camps will pose a major challenge to IOM staff responsible for screening the health of refugees accepted by the US, providing them with basic cultural orientation and arranging their departure from Thailand.

The Karen camps of Mae La Oon and Mae La Ma Luang can only be reached via a 70 km precipitous, rutted dirt track cut through dense jungle. During the wet season from June to October, flooding and landslides frequently make the 3-hour drive from Mae Sariang, the nearest town, too dangerous. Small boats plying the fast-flowing, shallow Salwen river, become the only means of bringing refugees in and out.

‘Whether we move people by road or river, it is going to be slow, expensive and will involve some risk. Last year we lost a car when it was caught in a flash flood fording the river between Mae La Ma Luang and Mae La Oon. The driver was lucky to survive,’ says IOM Resettlement Coordinator Hans Beckers, who oversees IOM’s resettlement of some 20,000 refugees a year from Thailand and Malaysia.

But in the newly renovated buildings rented from Mae Hong Son’s general



▲ Mae La Ma Luang and Mae La Oon refugee camps are located in dense jungle close to Thailand’s border with Myanmar. Access is via a deep rutted 70km dirt road. © IOM 2008 - MTH0353 (Photo: Chris Lom)

hospital which serve as the IOM office, the mood is upbeat among staff, many of them resettlement veterans transferred from IOM operations in five other border camps south of Mae Hong Son.

‘IOM has resettled over 50,000 refugees from Thailand since 2004 – over two thirds of them from Myanmar. In 2008 our team moved over 16,000, mainly Karen from the Mae La, Umpium Mai,

Nu Po and Tham Hin camps. So we’re fairly confident, despite the challenges,’ explains Beckers.

Physical access to the camps is only one such challenge. The decision of whether or not to apply for resettlement in the US is often a highly charged political issue in the camps, where many refugees still cling to the hope that one day they will be able to return to their homeland. This

▼ Housing in Mae La Ma Luang refugee camp is made entirely from bamboo and leaves. © IOM 2008 - MTH0360 (Photo: Chris Lom)



makes it difficult for IOM to forecast the number of refugees likely to need medical screening, cultural orientation and plane tickets in any given period.

“The US Department of Homeland Security determines which applicants are accepted. But we work with the International Rescue Committee, on behalf of the US Embassy, to provide the refugees in all the camps with the objective information that they need to make an informed decision on whether or not to apply for resettlement,” says Peter Salnikowski, IOM’s head of cultural orientation in Southeast Asia.

“Then if they decide to apply and are accepted, we try to teach them some of the basic survival skills that they will need when they leave camps in which they may have spent their whole lives,” he adds.



▲ An IOM vehicle fords the river between Mae La Ma Luang and Mae La Oon refugee camps. Flash floods swept away an IOM vehicle at this point in early 2008. © IOM 2008 - MTH0343 (Photo: Chris Lom)

doctors and nurses will screen accepted refugees for infectious diseases, a laboratory to test for tuberculosis (TB) and sexually transmitted diseases, a second, molecular laboratory to analyse

While most of the new capacity in Mae Hong Son is geared to meet the needs of the US resettlement programme, Beckers, the resettlement coordinator, expects other countries to also accept growing numbers of refugees from the Mae Hong Son camps.

“The US still takes most of the refugees from the nine Thai border camps, but other countries including Canada, Australia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are also now accepting them and asking for IOM’s help. For example we have already moved 1,800 refugees from Mae La Oon to Canada in the past couple of years,” he notes. **M**



▲ Some refugees work in the camps to supplement rations provided by foreign donors. © IOM 2008 - MTH0348 (Photo: Chris Lom)

“Third country resettlement is not everyone’s preferred solution, but if the refugees can’t go home to Myanmar and can’t live and work normally in Thailand, at least it gives them a clear choice – to stay put in the camps or to try to create a future for themselves and their kids in the US,” says Aleksoski, who moved to Mae Hong Son from Bangkok in November with his wife and 18 month-old baby.

The new IOM Mae Hong Son complex that he heads still smells of fresh paint and reflects the expected size of the resettlement operation. It includes administrative offices, a health screening block, where a team of IOM

positive TB samples for multiple drug resistant strains, a cultural orientation office and a logistics hub.

“Medical screening and high quality laboratory services are a key part of the resettlement process, particularly in identifying infectious diseases like TB. If we identify TB in a patient, it doesn’t disqualify them from resettlement, but they have to wait until they have completed an appropriate course of treatment. In the case of TB, the treatment is provided by IOM and takes at least six months,” says IOM Thailand Chief Medical Officer Dr Predrag Bajcevic, who oversees the screening programme.

▼ Most children in Mae La Ma Luang have never left the closed camp, which is located 70 km from the nearest town. © IOM 2008 - MTH0347 (Photo: Chris Lom)



Child Marriage, Drug Smuggling and Forced Prostitution – An Afghan Trafficking Experience

By Katsui Kaya, IOM Kabul

Zarmina, a beautiful 17-year-old girl, does not have a lot of things that a child of her age usually takes for granted, such as a home, family, friends and hope. It has been a year since she ran away from human traffickers, but the fear that they might find and catch her still haunts her every night.

When Zarmina was born, her parents decided to escape from the intensifying conflict in Afghanistan and moved the whole family to neighbouring Iran. Like many other Afghans seeking refuge, her father worked as a daily labourer, barely earning enough to support his family. Life became even harder when he died of cancer, when Zarmina was seven.

She started weaving carpets with her mother in order to help make ends meet, while trying to go to school when she could. But in the end, in her third year of primary education, her schooling stopped completely.

Asked if it was hard to work as a child, she says: "It was difficult at first, but I got used to it. I was not in the mood to play anyway. I was too sad about my father's death."

It was a quiet life with her mother, her father's first wife and some siblings. "We were so poor and nobody paid attention to us," she adds.

The years of drudgery took their toll, especially on her mother. She died when Zarmina was just 15. Relations with her step-mother soured with Zarmina suffering abuse and neglect at her hands.

▼ Women and girls in Afghanistan are often regarded as commodities to be traded. © IOM 2008 - MAF0321 (Photo: Sam Falsis)





What little money she earned from carpet weaving was taken by her step-mother, who then forcibly married Zarmina off for the sum of US\$ 6,000.

Forced marriages are common throughout the country and among the Afghan diaspora. Women rarely make decisions about their own life and girls as young as two years old are sometimes committed for marriage as a way to settle family feuds or debts.

According to the German NGO, Medica Mondiale, 57 per cent of girls in Afghanistan are married before the legal age of 16 and up to 80 percent of marriages are forced. Women and girls are often regarded as commodities to be traded. Girls who try to escape such control over their lives can be ostracized for “dishonouring” their families.

Several months after her wedding, Zarmina’s 65-year-old husband brought her back to Afghanistan, where they lived as a “normal” married couple.

That was until one day, when about to leave for a visit to relatives in Iran, she found some strange powder in her bag. Suspicious, she asked her husband why he had put a pack of “salt” in her bag. He explained that it was not salt but heroin. He was planning to transport it to Iran using her bag, as the police would not usually search women’s bags.

In recent years, Afghanistan has become the world’s main supplier of illicit opiates, accounting for 93 per cent of world production in 2007, with gross revenues equivalent to nearly half of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The UN Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that between 70 and 90 per cent of the heroin found in Europe has been processed from Afghan opiates, mostly smuggled through Iran or Pakistan.

That breadth and depth of drug trafficking experience has now spilled over into human trafficking. Well-established networks are now certainly linked to human trafficking beyond Afghanistan’s borders.

Afraid that Zarmina might run away and report him to the police, her husband and brother-in-law locked her up in the house for the next five months. They then forced her into prostitution, with clients brought to the house. Her husband told her that she had to pay him back the money he had paid to marry her. Every time she tried to resist, they beat her, cut her with a knife and threatened to kill her unless she obeyed them.

Fed up with her “disobedience” one day, her brother-in-law went to fetch his Kalashnikov. As he stepped out of the house, Zarmina seized the moment to escape in a split second decision. A sympathetic neighbour referred her to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which took her under its custody and has sheltered her since then.

Human trafficking is a crime that can impair a victim’s personality and destroy a life. As a source, transit and destination country, Afghanistan is no stranger to the phenomenon. According to a recently published IOM survey on human trafficking in the country, numerous factors make Afghans extremely vulnerable to the crime. These include the continuing personal and economic insecurity that decades of conflict have wrought, and with it, the subsequent loss of lives and livelihoods.

There are additional factors such as the common occurrence of violence against women, including forced marriage, that render women particularly vulnerable. Children are another large pool of potential “targets” for trafficking, with widespread poverty compelling up to one third of Afghan children to work.

Sadly for Zarmina, all these factors came into play in her story. But the real tragedy is that Zarmina’s experiences are not an exception. Traffickers ruthlessly exploit countless other people like Zarmina, violating their basic human rights in the full knowledge that this modern-day form of slavery is largely thriving with impunity.

Building on five years of counter-trafficking experience in Afghanistan, IOM currently carries out activities

addressing all aspects of prevention, protection and prosecution, with generous funding from Italy and the USA. IOM seeks to reduce the exposure of vulnerable people, particularly minors, to the risks of human trafficking and to contribute to the Afghan government’s efforts to strengthen its counter-trafficking response.

Successful cooperation with the government recently led to the enactment of Afghanistan’s first counter-trafficking legislation, the Law on Combating Kidnapping and Human Trafficking, in July 2008. IOM worked closely with members of the Legislation Department at the Ministry of Justice in drafting the law and provided technical advice through weekly meetings and a series of training activities.

Under the victim assistance component of IOM’s counter-trafficking programme, foreign nationals trafficked to Afghanistan and Afghan victims of internal and cross-border trafficking are identified through IOM’s referral network. They are helped through the provision of daily necessities such as clothing, food, medical and psychological support, as well as reintegration assistance when necessary. IOM has assisted over 130 victims of trafficking since 2006.

Zarmina is now among those being helped by IOM. After a long silence, she has finally started sharing her experience with others. Scars are still visible on her hands, but she almost certainly has them on many other parts of her body. Slipping off her head scarf, Zarmina says: “Look at my short hair. When he got mad, he shaved my head completely. Back then I had no hair at all.”

Her lack of education, family and home rests heavy on her heart and gives her little hope for the years ahead. When asked about her dream, Zarmina pauses for a while and answers: “When I try to think of myself, I just see no future.”

IOM is currently providing her counselling. After that, it will do what it can to give her the chance to finally begin living. **M**

Poverty and Unemployment Push Nicaraguans into Arms of Traffickers and Smugglers

By Niurka Piñero, Regional Information Officer for the Western Hemisphere, reporting from Nicaragua

“When you’re in that place, fear takes over you.” Rosa Angela, a 20-year-old victim who was trafficked to Costa Rica for sexual and domestic exploitation, says she was simply too scared to run away from her captors.

“There is no family, no friends, no one nearby that you can turn to for help,” Rosa Angela recalls. “Each day all we had to look forward to was physical and verbal abuse.”

Nicaragua is a country of origin for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour. Women and young girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation within the country and outside its borders primarily to Guatemala and El Salvador, and in smaller numbers to Costa Rica, Mexico, Honduras, Venezuela, Spain, and the United States. Children are trafficked within the country for forced labour in construction, agriculture, fishing, and domestic servitude. There are also reports of very young women in rural areas being forced into marriage with foreign men. Extreme poverty and lack of jobs have also pushed an estimated one million Nicaraguans to leave their country in search of a better life.

▼ Travellers at the Peñas Blancas border station wait in line for Nicaraguan border guards to inspect their merchandise before continuing their journey to Costa Rica. © IOM 2008 - MNI0011 (Photo: Charles Porcel)





▲ Immigration Officer working at the Passport Issuance Office in Managua, Nicaragua.
© IOM 2008 - MNI0007 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

Many of Nicaragua's victims of trafficking hail from Chinandega; a town and departmental seat of the Department of Chinandega. A poor agricultural area northwest of the capital, Managua, it is 72 kilometres from the Honduran border and a two-hour boat ride to the Salvadorian border.

"We are experiencing an epidemic in this country. We can't deny it, although some may want to cover the sun with one finger, it simply is not possible. Human trafficking is a problem that affects all of us and so we must work together - the government, civil society and international organizations," asserts Maria Castillo, Director of Chinandega's Women's Association.

IOM works actively as part of the National Coalition Against Human Trafficking created in 2004 and composed of 95 members including ministries, police, and other government agencies, international organizations, civil society and NGOs. Its aim is to raise awareness, provide protection and assistance to victims and to prosecute traffickers.

Eloy Francisco Isaba Acuña, the Coalition's Executive Secretary, says the word is getting around. "Last year we received a letter from a newspaper informing us that they would no longer publish advertisements for massage houses. Although this means a loss of revenue for them, it is their way of supporting the Coalition."

An IOM pilot project, the only one in Central America focusing on the reintegration of victims with financial support from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), is working with local authorities and civil society in Chinandega to strengthen the local support network so that victims returning home can receive the medical and psycho-social assistance needed, as well as vocational training to get jobs and start new lives.

Brenda de Trinidad, IOM Counter-Trafficking Focal Point in Nicaragua, says many of the young women return home with sexually transmitted infections and psychologically very fragile.

"Each and every story is horrendous; there's abuse, exploitation, humiliation,

and drug and alcohol addiction in some cases. But there is one young woman with whom I most identify. She is 27 years old, alone and with two children, so I see myself as a young woman trying to raise my two children. This girl was rejected by her mother and never met her father. They are all very courageous and determined young women, but at times they falter. They have no jobs, no money and that lack of hope makes them look to the other side in hopes of a better life."

And so Brenda is always there to take their phone calls and pick them up when they're down. But in the next phase of the IOM project, she hopes to create alliances with women's cooperatives and the private sector to find long-term employment opportunities so they can become independent and less vulnerable to abuse, depression and trafficking.

"It's important for them to be part of a group, an organization. This will make them stronger, it will empower them so they can make the right decisions and move ahead successfully," Brenda muses.

But with a population of 5.6 million, an annual population growth rate of 2.7 per cent and 53 per cent of its population under 18 years of age, Nicaragua faces an almost insurmountable challenge to overcome poverty, especially for women as one in every four households is headed by a woman.

Extreme poverty and lack of jobs have pushed an estimated one million Nicar-

▼ A group of Nicaraguan migrants loaded with their suitcases make the long and dangerous journey hoping to avoid the border guards and cross undetected into Costa Rica. © IOM 2008 - MNI0016 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



aguans to leave their country in search of greener pastures. Trafficking rings also recruit victims during their migration route, when trapped at borders in a situation of high vulnerability.

Captain Lenin Flores is the head of the border post of Peñas Blancas, which separates Nicaragua from Costa Rica and is the busiest in the country with up to 15,000 crossings per day during the high season.

Competing with the deafening sound of the constant stream of buses, Captain Flores explains: "We have all sorts of things passing through this border post; we have illegal substances, drugs. We just discovered a truck carrying more than 100 kilos of cocaine. We've stopped trucks carrying huge sums of money, drug money. So far this month we've detected three vehicles carrying drugs and cash."

But when asked about Nicaraguan migrants crossing into Costa Rica, his face softens: "These are economic migrants. An economic migrant is someone who is ripped from his or her country in search of a better life for their family. Many Nicaraguans who pass through this border travelling to Costa Rica are economic migrants. I would say that 99.9 per cent of those crossing through this official border area have travel documents and are legal, but there are unofficial crossings where migrants risk their health and life in order to make it to Costa Rica," Flores says.

Less than five minutes from the official border crossing, Juanita, Excel and their two children walk down a narrow dirt track loaded with suitcases. They boarded a bus in their hometown of Estelí at three that morning, seven hours later they arrived at the border and are now walking under oppressive heat and humidity trying to cross into Costa Rica.

Eighteen-year-old Juanita, her intelligent eyes gleaming and loaded with determination says, "it's the economic situation. Right now things are very difficult in Nicaragua. Salaries are low and we have two children, so we can't manage."



▲ Nicaraguan border guards board buses and inspect passengers and cargo at the Peñas Blancas border point with Costa Rica. © IOM 2008 - MNI0009 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

But why risk their safety and drag a two and a three-year-old under the gruelling midday sun?

Without hesitation she replies: "In life one must take risks. If we don't take this risk, we cannot move ahead; we have to take this risk."

In Costa Rica she can make US\$200 per month as a domestic servant; in Nicaragua the same job pays around 1,500 Córdobas (US\$83).

▼ Victim of trafficking assisted by IOM, at home with her newborn son. © IOM 2008 - MNI0006 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



In the past three decades, migration flows from Nicaragua to Costa Rica have been prompted by natural disasters, political conflicts and economic downturns. For unskilled workers, Costa Rica acts as a magnet by offering abundant work in sectors that are becoming less and less attractive to the native population; mainly agriculture, construction and domestic work.

To harness the development potential of these migration flows, spur economic development and improve living conditions for labour migrants, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID by its Spanish acronym) provided funding to IOM to put in place a co-development project between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

One of the main objectives of the project is to regularize the flows of Nicaraguan migrant workers (agriculture, construction and agro-industrial sectors) in Costa Rica, by ensuring legal integration into the local labour market, improving the economic and psychosocial situation of the migrants and their families and promoting the social integration of migrants into Costa Rican society.

"The project is benefiting both countries," explains Jorge Peraza, IOM Programme Officer in San José. "In October of 2007, the Costa Rican

government announced that 29,000 migrant workers from Nicaragua would be admitted under temporary labour migration permits in 2008; 10,000 for the construction sector and the rest to work in agriculture."

Nilo Salazar Aguilar, Secretary-General of the Independent Workers Union of Nicaragua, remembers a time when Nicaragua imported labour from neighbouring countries to work in the cotton fields. His organization estimates that there are an estimated 650,000 Nicaraguans working in Costa Rica - 147,000 of them in the construction industry.

"Many don't have social security benefits," Salazar Aguilar says. "They are forced to buy four pieces of wood and a slab of corrugated metal to stay dry at night. They are living in miserable conditions."

The life-long union organizer says the country is not thinking of the future and of the ability to compete in today's market.

"All the time and money that were invested in our construction workers, training them over the years to become

experts in their fields; these men have built embassies and other buildings using the latest construction techniques and tools, and so we are left without professionals," he notes.

Government officials and civil society organizations agree that lack of information on human trafficking and migrant smuggling allow smugglers and traffickers to continue to prey on innocent victims and desperate men and women whose only crime is the quest to find a better life for themselves and their families.

Deborah Grandisson, Attorney for Women's Issues at the Attorney-General's Office for Human Rights, says most of the women who are entrapped by human traffickers see migration as a way out, a way to make their dreams a reality.

"Many of these women come from male-dominated homes, with large doses of violence. We need to raise awareness and lift the stigma felt by these women when they return to their neighbourhoods, because this keeps them from coming forward and testifying against the traffickers," explains Grandisson.

One of Grandisson's ideas to raise awareness is to produce a series of videos to be played on board buses leaving Nicaragua.

"We need to raise awareness amongst potential victims. Many times women, especially these young women, have no idea where they are being taken and that they have fallen victim to human trafficking," adds Grandisson.

Enma is one of those girls. She was a minor when she was trafficked to Guatemala. She is so traumatized and frightened by the experience that she agrees to tell IOM her story but using a letter she wrote beforehand. It's the only way she can express her ordeal."

Monica Moreno Sequeria, Special Investigator of the National Police, says the public does not understand the plight of these young women. "People say, if they left for Guatemala it was of their own free will, maybe they knew what they were going there for. And maybe a few of them knew. But the traffickers prey on their innocence and their poverty. We have to fight to make the public understand that they are victims. These girls will never be the same again," she says. **M**

▼ Eighteen-year-old Juanita, Excel and their two children are less than five minutes from the official border crossing of Peñas Blancas, but they must take the long and dangerous road to cross undetected into Costa Rica. Lack of jobs in their native Nicaragua pushes the family to take the risk. © IOM 2008 - MNI0017 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



New Tool to Improve Counter-Trafficking Legislation in the Caribbean

Half a decade after the monumental *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (2000) came into force, countries around the world have been working fervently to adhere to its provisions. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), with 15 member states and a variety of different legal systems, is no different.

Many Caribbean nations have not enacted comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation. Instead, for legal proceedings, they rely on available legislation that can be a patchwork of criminal provisions addressing particular elements of the trafficking process, such as slavery or labour exploitation.

In 2008 IOM set out to equip Caribbean countries with tools appropriate for the various legal, social and economic characteristics of the region. The objective was to improve regional cooperation among nations and to harmonize counter-trafficking legislation on a national and regional level, creating a more effective deterrent for traffickers and would-be traffickers.

IOM's *Caribbean Counter-Trafficking Model Legislation and Explanatory Guidelines* is the first comprehensive booklet designed to serve as a resource for stakeholders in government and civil society wishing to improve domestic legislation and policy to address the crime of human trafficking in the Caribbean.

The IOM initiative to develop counter-trafficking model legislation for the Caribbean brought together legal experts from 10 countries (Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize,

Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago) and CARICOM officials.

"The model legislation upholds the standards established by the UN Protocol. The participatory approach used to develop it has helped to ensure that the local and regional contexts are reflected as much as possible," explains Chissey Mueller, Coordinator of IOM's Caribbean Counter-Trafficking Programmes.

The explanatory guidelines not only summarize the group's discussions about a provision, but also have easy-to-read text boxes and "best practices" to facilitate implementation. In recognizing that each country uses its own legislative format, the tools in the booklet aim to provide a counter-trafficking legal framework by suggesting provisions and sentencing guidelines.

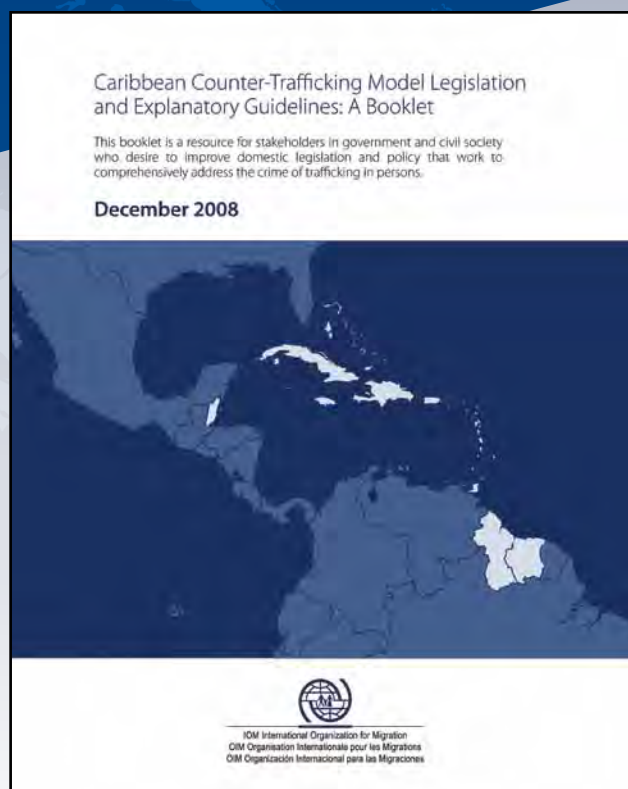
Based on its participation in IOM's group sessions to develop the model legislation, St. Kitts and Nevis was able to adapt the model legislation to the

local context and enact a "Trafficking in Persons Act" in August 2008.

"The Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis was quite passionate about the issue, which received much attention in the ensuing parliamentary debates," says Mueller. "St. Kitts and Nevis have shown how the model legislation is meant to be used: as a tool for states to draft and shape national legislation addressing trafficking in persons."

IOM research in 2005 identified some level of human trafficking in the Caribbean in the areas of forced labour, sexual exploitation, and domestic servitude. The victims - men, women, boys and girls - were found to be trafficked through legal methods, such as work permits and visas, as well as through illegal methods, such as smuggling or fraudulent documents.

The booklet is published in English and available to the public through IOM's website www.iom.int. The initiative was funded by the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP). **M**



Luring Cape Verdeans Back to Paradise

By Dario Muhamudo, IOM Cape Verde

An archipelago spread over ten islands in the Atlantic, Cape Verde, 500kms from the coast of Senegal and half way between Europe and South America, has always occupied a strategic position. The islands, which generate income from salt production and long haul aircraft refuelling fees, have also become a popular winter tourist destination.

In 2007 the European Union (EU) put Cape Verde on the map by signing one of the first Mobility Partnerships with the islands. This agreement opened the door for closer cooperation with Europe in areas of common interest: migration and development, border management, document fraud, fighting irregular migration, and combating smuggling and human trafficking.

The move was seen as a reward for the country's good governance, low corruption, stable institutions and economic growth. As Cape Verde has moved from a low to a medium income country, it has also moved from being a country of origin to a country of transit and destination for migrants.

The country has already achieved four of the eight Millennium Development Goals seven years ahead of the 2015 deadline. In July 2008, it was admitted as the 153rd member of the World Trade Organization.

Local folklore claims that when God finished Creation, he brushed his hands

and the crumbs that fell into the ocean became the Cape Verde islands.

For Carlos, a Praia taxi driver who dreams of becoming a singer of local Kizomba rhythms in the capital, the issue whether divine intervention caused the islands to appear at the cross of three continents is secondary. He is convinced that Cape Verde is truly a paradise on earth and never plans to leave.

But in the past Carlos would have been the exception. Migration is a dominant theme in Cape Verde's history. In the 19th century Cape Verdeans travelled to the Americas to work in the whaling industry.

With the World Wars and the restrictions placed on US borders, migration flows

▲ Cape Verde has not only become a popular winter tourist destination, but is now increasingly attracting its nationals home. © IOM 2008 - MCV0001 (Photo: Dario Muhamudo)

shifted to the rest of the Lusophone world – primarily Portugal in Europe and other Portuguese colonies in Africa – Angola, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

Cape Verde's lack of natural resources led to massive emigration over two centuries, resulting in a diaspora that is perhaps double the number of domestic residents today.

Remittances from Cape Verdeans abroad became a major component of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is now changing with the growth of tourism, but large numbers of Cape Verdeans still migrate and many still live abroad. And in a new development, a number of former migrants have now returned to invest in the country.

Restaurant K

Francisco migrated to Portugal in 1997 to manage a Cape Verdean restaurant during the 1998 Lisbon World Exhibition. The exhibition attracted 11 million visitors and the restaurant, which he ran with his brother, thrived. He subsequently opened another restaurant in Lisbon, which doubled as a disco at weekends. Eventually the restaurant closed, but he continued to run the disco for another five years. After a disagreement with his partners, he moved to Natal state in Brazil and opened a new restaurant on Pipa Beach. At this point he started to think about returning to Cape Verde. Two years later he bought a building at a prime beachfront location in Praia and began to renovate it. He imported equipment from Portugal, trained local staff and opened a pizzeria. Soon he was able to expand the business to include a restaurant and lounge bar. Restaurant K is now one of the most popular beachfront eating spots in Praia.

Moura Company

António Moura lived in Massachusetts for over 24 years, becoming Head of the Traffic Division of Boston's mass transit company. In 1994, on a visit to the Cape Verdean community in the US, Prime Minister Carlos Veiga invited him to come back home and invest. Moura returned and set up a transport company with a fleet of six old buses. The fleet has grown to 80 buses with an average

age of 3 years. Moura's company is now the biggest transportation group in Cape Verde, comprising bus operations in the city of Praia, a chartered bus and transfer service on the main island of Santiago, a travel agency and the operation of two inter-island catamarans. The catamarans reliably link the islands of Fogo and Brava to Santiago for the first time. Moura says that his next project may be the introduction of a domestic air service.

DIAS de Cabo Verde Project

To encourage more of these success stories, IOM is jointly implementing the DIAS de Cabo Verde project, which is funded by the European Commission and Portugal, with Cape Verde's Institute of the Communities.

▼ Restaurant K - now one of the most popular places to eat in Praia. © IOM 2008 - MCV0002 (Photo: Dario Muhamudo)



The institute is responsible for Cape Verde's policies towards the diaspora. It promotes actions to reinforce the solidarity between people living in Cape Verde and Cape Verdean communities abroad; stimulating and supporting diaspora communities' initiatives; and contributing to the dissemination of information on activities leading to educational, cultural, professional and social development links.

The project aims to mobilize the capacities of the Cape Verdean diaspora to work for the development of the country. One of its first steps is to identify where capacity building is needed in four key sectors - health, education, infrastructures and private enterprise. This can then be matched against the skills of qualified Cape Verdeans living

in the target countries of Portugal, Italy and the Netherlands.

The scheme also aims to mobilize the private sector, to provide information for migrants wishing to invest in Cape Verde and to channel more remittances into development initiatives and fewer into the purchase of consumer goods.

The DIAS project will also organize networking missions of Cape Verdeans living in the three target countries to get firsthand knowledge of investment opportunities and to establish local contacts.

The first network mission took place in early 2009 when private investor Rolando Borges, who is planning to launch an agro-tourism enterprise,

visited the municipalities of São Salvador do Mundo and São Lourenço dos Orgãos.

"The visit gave me the chance to meet with key local partners in Cape Verde and talk with them. It provided an opportunity to discuss with them what can be done and how my plan can be improved or redesigned based on prevailing conditions on the ground," he says.

The DIAS project website can be found at: <http://www.diasdecabo Verde.org> It includes a section dedicated to the private sector, containing information on access to credit, relevant legislation and support available through local institutions to individuals wishing to invest in Cape Verde. **M**

Storming the Waves In Search of Eden

Rufisque, a sprawling neighbourhood on the outskirts of Senegal's capital Dakar, is criss-crossed by potholed tarmac roads made worse by the relentless flow of heavy goods vehicles.

Fine dust spews from the chimneys of a nearby cement factory, shrouding everything in white grime. The market place in the district of Gouye Mouride is eerily empty at midday, with only a few goats feeding on refuse which litters the ground.

One would almost expect to bump into Kaaba, Baye Laye or petit Talla, three endearing characters from "Mbeke mi," the latest novel from Abasse Ndione, one of Senegal's best known writers.

The realities of daily life in Rufisque permeate all of Ndione's fictional work. Born in 1946 in Bergny, a small fishing village some 30 kilometres from Dakar, he developed a passion for writing at a very early age. One of his central themes became the problems faced by young people in his country.

IOM's Séverine Cirlande recently met the author in his modest home, where he lives with his wife Meriem. The house echoes with the laughter of their numerous grandchildren. In an

interview with Ndione, Cirlande put it to him that his latest novel, which deals with the tragedies of irregular migration, must be based on personal experiences.

Ndione - It would be impossible for me to write about snow because I've never seen snow in my life. So I write about things that I've personally experienced and my novels are always the sum of all those life experiences.

Cirlande - I was told that "Mbeki mi," the title of your latest novel, roughly translates from Wolof as Storming the Ocean Waves. Have you personally experienced the drama faced by hundreds of young Senegalese who decide to sail to Europe on small boats?

Ndione - Indeed. I was made aware of this phenomenon a few years ago when the son of a friend told me: "Uncle, I'm saying goodbye because I'm leaving for Europe." I asked him if he'd finally managed to obtain a visa. He said he hadn't, but added that fishermen from the neighbouring village of Thiaroye-sur-mer had promised to take him and others all the way to the Canaries for CFA 400,000 (US\$ 800). He was back in 2005 or 2006, when this phenomenon was not as widespread as it is now. Ten days later, he called my

son to say he had arrived safely. Six months later, these stories were all over the media. So "Mbeki mi" is a work of fiction, but it is based on facts, on true stories.

Cirlande - Do you understand why young people decide to leave?

Ndione - Of course I understand why they decide to leave. In a way, I admire their guts. It takes a lot of courage to put one's life at risk in such a way. All of them go to Europe in search of what cannot be found in Senegal. As long as young people feel they have little or no future in Senegal, they will continue to leave, lured by the prospect of a better future in Europe. People don't go to Europe to settle for evermore, they go to work to help feed their families back home. Most of the time, they do jobs that Europeans refuse to do.

Cirlande - Why can't they find in Senegal what they're looking for in Europe?

Ndione - They've lost all hope because the government promised to give work to all those who wanted to work. Despite this assurance, the jobs never really materialized. I think everyone carries a share of responsibility in this sorry state of affairs, including the IMF and the World Bank, who pressed upon us

▼ Thousands of young Senegalese have taken to the high seas in rickety pirogues like these in a bid to reach the European Eden. © IOM 2008 - MSN0010 (Photo: Séverine Cirlande)





▲ The realities of Abasse Ndione's daily life permeate his fictional work. © IOM 2008 - MSN0009 (Photo: Séverine Cirlande)

interest to find answers. You see young people who have been brave enough to embark on small boats will riot the day they are told that they can no longer leave.

Cirlande - Europe is currently bearing the brunt of a worldwide recession. Do you really think Europe will be able to absorb more workers from Africa?

Ndione - You're right. Europeans are also facing difficulties finding jobs and it will be more difficult for them to alleviate Africa's poverty. The current economic crisis means that European societies are now closing their doors and Europeans are closing their hearts. Our people must understand and accept that things have changed in Europe.

Cirlande - What, in your view, will be the impact of the current economic crisis on Senegal?

Ndione - It will only make things worse. We are told that the impact of the crisis will not be that great because Africa will continue to benefit from development aid. But official development assistance will probably be reduced because of the crisis. When this happens, we will all really feel the pinch. **M**

successive structural adjustment plans that practically brought our country to its knees.

As a writer, I merely outline the issues, but have no concrete solution to offer. I just want people to start asking questions that will help us Africans find answers to our problems. As it is, young people are today taking jobs that they would have never considered in the past, such as sweeping streets and collecting refuse. Today, they are willing to take any job, but none are available. That's the fundamental problem.

Cirlande - What is your answer to people who advocate for regular, legal migration for work?

Ndione - Some European countries now speak of "selective migration", meaning that they have come to pick and choose the best and brightest, those with the knowledge and expertise which Africa needs. Should this happen, then the development of Africa will continue to suffer. As for those who have no skills, they simply cannot get visas for Europe. That's why they embark on small boats at great risk. It's really not easy to get visas. Even for me when I wanted to go to France to promote my new book!

Cirlande - Why are you so critical towards European governments?

Ndione - Because people should be free to travel wherever and whenever they wish. In the 18th and 19th century, Europeans sailed to Brazil and other South American countries because of food shortages at home. It's the same

for us today. So let's give visas to people who wish to emigrate to work in Europe, even if it's to sweep streets. The door to labour migration, which is currently closed, must be opened wider.

Cirlande - But won't opening the door encourage more people to leave?

Ndione - My own children want to leave because they say there's nothing to do here. That's why it is in the government's

▼ Ndione and his wife also have children who want to leave Senegal in search of work. © IOM 2008 - MSN0008 (Photo: Séverine Cirlande)



"Mbeke mi" is a story lived by thousands of desperate young Africans who decide to brave the sea in fragile small boats in search of a fictional European Eden. Crammed into the "pirogues", they travel from the poverty-stricken purgatory of village life to the hell of the high seas. The reader shares their hope and exhilaration, spellbound by the beauty of the ocean before descending into a dark abyss of thirst, hunger, delirium, rape and ultimately death.

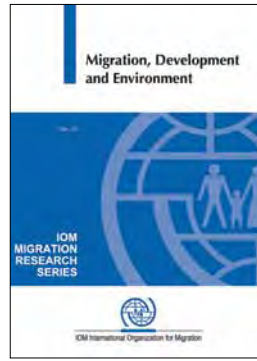
Mbeki mi is published by Edition Gallimard.



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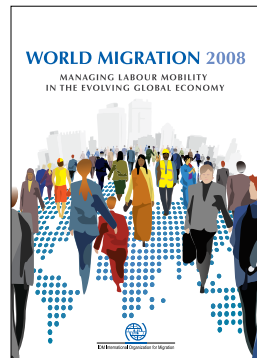
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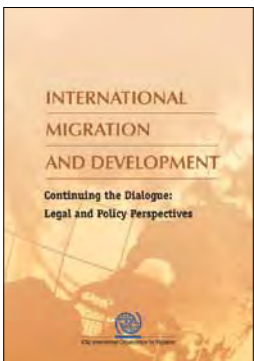
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