



Summary

Many of the same inequalities that drive the spread of HIV also drive migration.

Through its HIV/AIDS programme, IOM works to prevent and counter the misinformation, misunderstanding and stigmatization that continue to foster the perceived relationship between migration and HIV/AIDS.

IOM uses a pragmatic and rights-based approach to bring AIDS prevention and access to care and support to mobile populations throughout the world.

IOM IS COMMITTED TO THE PRINCIPLE THAT HUMANE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION BENEFITS MIGRANTS AND SOCIETY.

AS AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL BODY, 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

WORK TOWARDS EFFECTIVE RESPECT OF THE HUMAN DIGNITY AND WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS.



HIV Prevention Activities, Ukwimi Refugee Camp, Zambia – “Kicking AIDS out of Ukwimi”.

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Population Mobility and HIV/AIDS

BACKGROUND

The rapid spread of HIV across communities, countries and continents is a testimony of the linkages between population movement and the growing epidemic. Studies on certain highly mobile groups (e.g. truck drivers, traders, military, seafarers) have identified travel and migration as one of the factors related to HIV infection. In many countries, regions reporting higher seasonal and long-term mobility also have higher rates of infection, and higher rates of infection can also be found along transport routes and in border regions. Such studies indicate that migration and mobility increase vulnerability to HIV/AIDS – both for those who are mobile and for their partners back home.

People may move from one place to another – temporarily, seasonally or permanently – for a host of reasons: in search of professional or economic opportunity, to join family members, pushed by war, human rights abuses, ethnic tensions, violence, famine, persecution.

The link between mobility and HIV/AIDS is related to the conditions and structure of the migration process, including poverty, exploitation, separation from families and partners, and separation from the sociocultural norms that guide behaviours in stable communities.

Some of the factors that make mobile populations more vulnerable to HIV infection are:

- isolation resulting from stigma, discrimination and differences in languages and culture;
- separation from regular sexual partners;
- lack of support and friendship;
- sense of anonymity;
- lack of access to health and social services.

Addressing these factors means bringing together key actors from source, transit, and destination countries. It requires going beyond national approaches to develop regional and cross-regional approaches.



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WHAT IS IOM DOING TO ADDRESS HIV/AIDS?

Addressing HIV/AIDS issues fits well within the mandate of IOM, the only international agency to deal with the entire spectrum of migrant and mobile populations and during all phases of mobility.

IOM has been working closely with UNAIDS since 1997. In November 2002 the cooperation framework between UNAIDS and IOM – first signed in 1999 – was strengthened and renewed. The organizations cooperate in the areas of advocacy; of capacity building and programmatic support; and of best practice and information dissemination.

IOM works also with a wide range of international organizations, governments and NGOs in its HIV/AIDS programme.

IOM'S PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

Advocacy and policy development

- **engage** in a variety of activities to increase international understanding and recognition of the vulnerability of migrant and mobile populations to HIV/AIDS and to promote their HIV/AIDS-related legal and human rights;
- **support** policy development that will reduce the HIV vulnerability of mobile populations;
- **build** networks and organize events with a wide range of stakeholders to build consensus around priorities, policies and actions;
- **promote** access to adequate AIDS prevention, care and support services;
- **advocate** for the protection of migrants' rights, including access to information, to decent working and living conditions, and to health promotion and care.

Capacity building

- **assist** in building the capacity of governments and NGOs to address HIV/AIDS vulnerability among mobile populations.

Mainstreaming

- **assist** governments and NGOs to integrate HIV/AIDS and population mobility into planning, policies and programmes;
- **ensure** that HIV/AIDS issues are appropriately addressed in other IOM activities, such as counter-trafficking and demobilization.

Research and information dissemination

- **commission** research for advocacy purposes and to inform policy development;
- **identify** and generate best practice information on AIDS prevention and access to care for migrants.

In a world on the move, improving the health of migrants will ultimately improve the health of all.

CURRENT IOM PROJECTS ON HIV/AIDS

Projects are developed in partnership with other international agencies, with governments and with NGOs.

IOM's HIV/AIDS-related projects are based on a multi-disciplinary approach. They address the specific vulnerabilities of mobile populations to HIV/AIDS, attempting to intervene in the factors – such as powerlessness and exploitation – that push them to engage in HIV risk behaviours.

Examples of IOM's work:

Advocacy and policy development

- producing joint IOM-UNAIDS best practice publications such as the Technical Update on *Population Mobility and AIDS*, *Migrants' Right to Health* and a UNAIDS/IOM statement on HIV/AIDS-related travel restrictions;
- convening and chairing an informal working group on HIV/AIDS and population mobility;
- working with partners to promote the issue of population mobility at the XV International Conference on AIDS.

Capacity building

- establishing a Partnership on HIV/AIDS and Mobile Populations in the Southern African region bringing together sectors employing mobile workers, civil society and international organizations to create a more effective response to HIV/AIDS vulnerabilities of migrant and mobile populations;
- providing VCT and STI treatment for mobile and resident populations in high-risk zones along major trucking routes in Ethiopia; improving access to HIV/AIDS information among linguistic minority groups in Ethiopia;
- providing accurate information on HIV/AIDS to police officers at the Immigration Detention Center in Bangkok to improve the treatment of irregular migrants, trafficked women and children;
- working with mixed groups of journalists and NGOs in Macedonia and Kosovo to improve coverage of HIV/AIDS and mobility issues.

Mainstreaming

- drafting guidelines for HIV counselling and testing in the context of immigration

health assessments, training and supervising HIV/AIDS counsellors;

- constructing an inter-sectorial response to STI/HIV/AIDS among young IDPs in Colombia;
- combining information to prevent trafficking and to prevent HIV/AIDS among female students in Ethiopia;
- giving HIV/AIDS information to departing migrant workers in Bangladesh.

Research and information dissemination

- carrying out research for action on HIV/AIDS and mobile populations in eight Southern African countries;
- carrying out baseline assessments of the HIV/AIDS vulnerability of migrants in Algeria, and in five Caribbean countries, as well as among sea farers in Croatia, internally displaced young people in Uganda and migrant farm workers in the South African Mozambican border.

SELECTED DOCUMENTS

- *Population mobility and AIDS. Technical update.* UNAIDS. February 2001
- *Migrants Right to Health.* IOM and UNAIDS. March 2001
- *HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care among Mobile Groups in the Balkans.* January 2002
- *Labour Migration and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa.* September 2002
- *Mobile Populations and HIV/AIDS in the Southern African Region – Recommendations for Action. Desk Review and Bibliography.* May 2003
- *HIV/AIDS Vulnerability among Migrant Farm Workers on the South African-Mozambican Border,* November 2003
- *Mobilites Internationales et VIH/SIDA en Algerie.* March 2004
- *UNAIDS-IOM Statement on HIV-related Travel Restrictions.* June 2004
- *HIV/AIDS and Mobile Populations in the Caribbean.* July 2004

WHAT IS IOM?

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), established in 1951, is the leading international intergovernmental organization dealing with migration. Its objective is to ensure, throughout the world, the orderly migration of persons in need of international migration assistance.

As of July 2004, IOM has 105 member and 27 observer states, and is working in over 150 locations throughout the world. The organization's operations are mostly global and regional.