

# Gender and Migration News

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The Gender Issues Coordination is proud to announce that IOM now counts 116 Gender Focal Points worldwide. Among them, 21 focal points are male colleagues. These dedicated colleagues are posted in 86 countries and are active in disseminating information on gender and migration and supporting our colleagues in mainstreaming gender and staffing activities on gender issues. Those field colleagues are supported in Headquarters by the Working Group on Gender Issues (WGGI) which now counts 16 members.

### **African Gender Forum on “African Women for Africa’s Development: Building Partnerships with the Diaspora” in Dakar, December 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>**

The NGO Femmes Africa Solidarité, which was granted observer status during the last IOM Council in November, organized the African Gender Forum 2007 in partnership with IOM. This event, which took place in Dakar from December 10 to 12, represented an opportunity for dialogue between African women on one side and the African Diaspora on the other.

The discussions focused on the situation of women in regards to migration, and the socio-economic and political implications of female migration. The forum discussions focused on migration’s positive contributions to development.

The Forum was chaired by H.E Mrs. Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan Africa Parliament and Mrs. Viviane Wade, the First Lady of Senegal who opened the first session.

IOM Deputy Director General Mrs. Ndioro Ndiaye took the floor during the first session and gave an overview on the topic of Women and Migration with a presentation on “Women on the move: a step towards gender equality?” She explained how gender inequalities in Africa in access to education, resources and productive means have consequences on the migratory patterns of men and women. She also presented the specific vulnerability of migrant women and made concrete recommendations for the inclusion of gender concerns in migration management in Africa.

During the panel on policy recommendations, on the second day, Ms. Abibatou Wane, Migration and Development Officer in MRF Dakar gave a presentation on IOM MIDA programmes focusing on women. She presented the background of the MIDA programme as a framework for professionals in the diaspora to offer their skills for the development of their country of origin. She highlighted MIDA programmes specifically designed for women.

During the closing of the forum, Mrs. Ndioro Ndiaye launched the IOM Database of African Professional Women. This database not only consolidates different MIDA databases but also encompasses the two databases managed by Africa Recruit (an employment-oriented diaspora association based in the UK) and Femmes Africa Solidarité.



Opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM.

## Around the World: Gender and Migration News

- African Gender Forum on “African Women for Africa’s Development: Building Partnerships with the Diaspora”
- Working to End Female Genital Mutilation
- The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women examines the situation of migrant women in 8 countries
- EU Seminar- Prevention of Gender-based Violence against Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Europe
- Women in Armed Conflicts – the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325
- Gender Perspective on Climate Change
- New National Plan of Action in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign to end violence against women and girls

This database is part of a broader diaspora database IOM is setting up. The objective is to give more visibility to women’s skills as well as connecting women in the diaspora with one another and offering them opportunities to undertake temporary professional missions in their country of origin. The launch was attended by H.E the Vice-President of Liberia, Mr. Joseph Nyumah Boakai.

As a result of the discussions, the participants committed to several follow-up actions including:

1. Send a delegation representing the African Gender Forum to the second Global Forum on Migration and Development (Manila, October 2008) to increase the visibility of migrant women’s concerns and ensure that the voice of Africa is heard
2. Involve prominent African women and diaspora women in the dialogue to ensure the positive utilization of the diaspora resource base
3. Continue to promote migrant women success stories
4. Promote micro-finance schemes that will allow for a better use of remittances by women and allow women an easier access to bank/commercial credit

### Working to End Female Genital Mutilation

With between 100 and 140 million women living mainly in 28 African countries and migrant women in various developed countries subjected to genital mutilation, the question of what needs to be done to end the practice was addressed on 6 February at a round table in Geneva to mark the International Day of Zero Tolerance against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), IOM, the Département des institutions de l’Etat de Geneve and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (IAC), the round table at the IPU’s office in Geneva, brought together a range of actors working on the issue. These include representatives from the World Health Organization, the Office of the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF as well as academics and organizations from Africa.

In Switzerland itself, there are an estimated 6-7,000 women who have already been victims to FGM or at risk of being so. Seventy percent of those subjected to FGM living in Switzerland are resident in mainly French speaking parts of the country, particularly Geneva, with Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean women representing the bulk of those already mutilated.

IOM has, therefore, initiated a programme to raise awareness of the dangers of following the practice among these migrant communities and to help improve the knowledge of FGM among health professionals in the canton of Geneva.

A 2004 UNICEF study found that a significant part of these migrant communities continue to believe in the practice of FGM and that a large number of health professionals in Switzerland had not only come across cases of FGM in their work, but also felt that they needed more information on an issue which causes major health problems requiring medical care and monitoring.

IOM, in collaboration with the cantonal authorities in charge of women’s affairs (Service pour la Promotion de l’Egalité entre Homme et Femme –SPPE), integration, health and youth, aims to empower women through cultural orientation, literacy courses and discussion groups on FGM and to inform and strengthen the capacities of the cantonal health professionals regarding the care of FGM victims.

Efforts are now largely focused on an information campaign among the Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali and Sudanese communities in the Geneva Canton, targeting both women and men to combat some of the myths that surround FGM. These include beliefs that FGM is an act decreed by religion or that girls who do not undergo the practice are more promiscuous. Information such as the illegality of performing FGM in Switzerland and on where to go to get help for those who have been subjected to FGM will also be provided.

### The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women examined the situation of migrant women in 8 countries

Adopted on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979 by the UN General Assembly, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines discrimination against women and sets out an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.



Three years following the adoption of the Convention, a Committee was established as a follow up mechanism with the specific mandate to monitor the progress made for women in countries that are parties to the Convention. Composed of 23 experts on women's issues from around the world, the Committee carries out annual reviews of national efforts to achieve gender equality in law and in practice.

The Committee has recently moved to Geneva and IOM has taken this opportunity to collaborate more closely and to contribute effectively to its work especially towards a better protection of women migrants.

During its 40<sup>th</sup> session which ended last February, the Committee reviewed the situation of women in Bolivia, Burundi, Saudi Arabia, France, Lebanon, Luxemburg, Morocco and Sweden.

In its concluding comments to those countries, the Committee has paid particular attention to the impact of migration status on women's capacity to enjoy their rights in the host country.

Among other issues, the committee has drawn the attention of the 8 State parties to specific provisions of the treaty calling on signatories to:

- better guarantee the protection of migrant workers in particular domestic workers
- take all necessary measures to protect women and girls from trafficking by decreasing their economic vulnerability
- ensure the full access of migrant women to health, education, employment and justice services in their country of residence or transit
- combat the violence and discrimination against women migrant, refugee and asylum seekers in their community and in the society.

The country reports and concluding remarks from the Committee are available on line at this link:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws40.htm>

## **EU Seminar-Prevention of Gender-Based Violence against Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Europe**

13-15 February 2008

Roumyana Petrova from IOM Brussels, Aoife Gillespie from Dublin and Paola Pace from HQ participated in the EU Seminar on Prevention of Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Asylum-Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in Europe. The seminar is part of an EC Daphne funding project. The project is steered by Belgian, Dutch and British research centers and organizations active in the field of gender-based violence, women rights and migration health. It is coordinated by the International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) of the University of Ghent.

During the seminar, the results of the study "Hidden Violence is a Silent Rape" were presented together with a Prevention Tool for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants in the form of a user-friendly diary. The tool enhances knowledge and provides the reader with useful addresses.

The seminar was organized around 8 different workshops; each of them produced specific recommendations to better prevent gender-based violence against women.

For more information, the recommendations are available at this link: <http://www.icrh.org/files/Workshop%20Recommendations%20Hidden%20Violence%20is%20a%20Silent%20Rape%2014-15%20February%202008.pdf>

## **Women in Armed Conflicts – The Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325**

Vienna, 19 February 2008, National Defence Academy

Organised by NATO in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and the Austrian Ministry of Defence, the conference "Women in Armed Conflicts – The Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325" brought together participants from international organizations, national institutions and civil society.

The conference was opened by the Austrian Federal Deputy Minister for European and International Affairs Ursula Plassnik and Ambassador Robert F. Simmons, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Security Cooperation and Partnership. The conference dealt with the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the challenges it poses to its implementation at the international and national levels. Emphasis was also given to field experiences in cooperating gender issues in peacekeeping and conflict resolution operations. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which was passed unanimously in 2000, points to the impact of armed conflict on women and recognizes the contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building. It stresses the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. To achieve this goal, the resolution urges Member States to "ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict". The resolution also calls for the protection of women and girls from gender based violence in armed conflicts.

## **Gender perspectives on Climate Change**

Gender and climate change have increasingly become important issues of our time. Both are closely related to each other; on the one hand women have a significant role in the global effort to address climate change and its adverse impacts on human societies, on the other hand, they are disproportionately affected.



Climate change has now become an undeniable global phenomenon. It is causing seasons to shift tremendously; changing patterns of rain intensity, leading to floods and landslides, longer dry seasons, land degradation and even desertification; and extreme changes in air pressure that cause hurricanes and tornados. As well as natural disasters, these changes have brought about a number of social problems such as food scarcity, endemic diseases, environmentally induced displacement and migration. According to one study, several small island states are at risk of ceasing to exist raising complex political and legal questions to do with citizenship and economic rights. The recently concluded United Nations Bali Climate Change Conference had clearly signaled Governments' commitment to addressing global warming with the international community gearing up to draft, by the end of 2009, a post-Kyoto Protocol strategy to protect the Earth's climate.

Because of heightened interest in the subject, on 28 February 2008 the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women held a panel discussion on the Issue of Gender Perspectives on Climate Change in which IOM participated.

Two key points were highlighted: Women are more affected by natural disasters and underrepresented in the decision-making process. Impoverished women's disadvantages – their limited access to resources, restricted rights, limited mobility and muted voices in shaping decisions – make them highly vulnerable to climate change.

The experts cited numerous studies showing that global warming was not a gender-neutral process and poor women were more vulnerable to natural disasters given socially constructed gender roles and behaviors. "Women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during a disaster. During Hurricane Katrina in the USA, African-American women who were the poorest population in that part of the country faced the greatest obstacles to survival. During the 2004 tsunami, more women died than men – for example in Indonesia and Sri Lanka, male survivors outnumbered female survivors by 3 or 4 to 1." When natural disasters struck, women were often handicapped by little things like the inability to swim or hindered by their dress code from climbing trees. In addition even in such situations some societies forbid women to leave their house without male company.

Women in Africa depend more than men on the natural resources within their communities which will be destroyed by the impact of climate change. In many cases, women's economic livelihoods and social roles rely directly on forest resources and preservation, making them disproportionately affected by deforestation.

Furthermore, migration and mass population displacements can have a degrading effect on the environment and in the long term, even on climate change. In particular, IDP and refugee camps can have a destructive impact on surrounding nature. To mitigate it, there is a need to consider the role of women in fetching firewood and water and to develop environmentally friendly energies such as solar ovens and water management systems in refugee camps to reduce the destruction of vegetation and the impact on the ecosystem.

In that regard, experts stated that it was critical for women to participate in all aspects of the climate change debate, in particular in decision-making on adaptation and mitigation strategies. The panel called on Governments to empower women to participate in planning and decision-making, especially towards the development and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programs. They called for broader support for the development of a gender strategy or plan of action within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the establishment of a system for Governments to use gender-sensitive indicators and criteria when they report to the Convention's Secretariat.

## **New National Action Plan on Gender Equality in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

**Interview with Ms. Elena Grozdanova, State Councilor for Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy about the new National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2008-2012**

"The NAP on Gender Equality is the second national document of this type in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its main aim is to improve the status of women and to provide continuous development in achieving gender equality. The experience gained in the implementation of the previous policy measures for providing equal opportunities, has shown that the dedication, cooperation, partnership and application of the transparent participation principles of all actors from the economic, social, and political life is of exceptional importance in the advocacy for gender equality. This document was made under these principles of the democracy, through a process of months of consultation of governmental institutions, civil sector and international organizations, present and active in this field in the country", says Ms. Grozdanova.

The National Action Plan for Gender Equality contains ten strategic areas of action: 1. Women and Human Rights; 2. Women in the Decision-making Process; 3. Women and Health; 4. Women and Social Care; 5. Women and Education; 6. Women and Employment; 7. Women and Violence; 8. Women and the Media; 9. Women and the Environment; and 10. Women and Peacekeeping Activities. In the area of Women and Violence, the NAP refers to the fight against trafficking in human beings through its strategic objective IV for the Prevention and Protection of the Victims of Trafficking, particularly women and children.

In this regard, the NAP envisages a number of activities to address this negative social phenomenon, which includes activities for prevention, protection, as well as legislative revision in the area of counter trafficking. Ms. Grozdanova confirmed the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Government strong efforts towards the achievement of these objectives.

## Highlights on IOM gender activities:

- Greater Efforts Needed to Ensure Well Being of Families Left Behind in Migration Process
- IOM in Kenya marks IWD with women in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- IOM Croatia Survey of Migrant Women from the former Soviet Union
- IOM Skopje launched new Economic and Social Stabilization Programme for Vulnerable Women
- Research Project on Labour and Migration Process in Mongolia and Vietnam and its impacts on Migrant Rights
- A New Lease on Life
- Gender Parity in Pakistan
- “We Can” Campaign

Many activities envisaged under the NAP are already taking place and some have been already fulfilled such as the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for assistance to victims of trafficking, which were endorsed by the Government in January 2008. IOM has extended its expertise and knowledge and actively participated in the working group for preparation and finalization of the SOP.

“Many more activities will follow in the months and years to come and I believe that this NAP will make significant impact towards the achievement of overall gender equality”, reiterated Ms. Grozdanova.

The reality of the difficult socio-economic situation and high unemployment in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia generate conditions conducive to trafficking in human beings. Over the past three years, the number of nationals of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia trafficked both outside and within the country borders, is slowly but constantly increasing.

### United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign to end violence against women and girls

On February 25<sup>th</sup> 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a multi-year campaign to intensify action to end violence against women and girls. The campaign will aim to mobilize public opinion to ensure that policy makers at the highest level work to prevent and eradicate violence against women.

A key target will be to secure political will and increased resources from governments, international institutions, United Nations entities, the private sector and other donors for policies and programmes to tackle the problem.

The growing commitment of men to prevent and combat violence against women will be leveraged, and the campaign will welcome and encourage the active involvement of men and boys, recognizing the critical role they must play.

Running from 2008 to 2015 – to coincide with the target date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the campaign will focus on three key areas: global advocacy; United Nations leadership by example; and strengthened efforts and partnerships at the national, regional and international levels.

## IOM Commemorated International Women's Day

### Greater Efforts Needed to Ensure Well Being of Families Left Behind in Migration Process

The increasing attention being paid to the safe migration of people in the globalized world and the greater efforts to promote the rights of migrant workers are not being systematically matched by interventions to ensure the safety and well being of families left behind, the International Organization for Migration said last March 8, 2008 as it marked International Women's Day.

“Countries of origin are increasingly dependent on the significant remittances being provided by migrants and see their overseas workers as of major value to their economic development. However, for spouses and children left behind, the absence of a parent from the day-to-day running of the family brings social and economic problems of its own. These have all too often been overlooked in migration and development policies,” says Ndioro Ndiaye, IOM Deputy Director General.

International remittances to developing countries, amounting to an estimated US\$240 billion in 2007, are often the main income of a receiving family and are usually used for day-to-day expenses including school fees and materials. However, the long-term absence of a parent can undermine the very objective that led to the



migration in the first place – bettering a family's prospects. Studies among families of low and semi-skilled migrants in source countries show that being a single head of household usually entails a significant increase in workload and responsibilities. Whilst for women this situation can be empowering, a husband's return often signals the resumption of a traditional role.

IOM research in some Asian countries has found that wives left behind suffer from an increase in health problems due to depression, loneliness and fatigue. Women and girls are also more vulnerable to sexual abuse by male members of an extended household or from within the community.

Women migrants, who represent close to 50 per cent of the nearly 200 million international migrants in the world today, can also face issues relating to alcoholism, marital infidelity or violence upon returning home from husbands unable to handle the responsibilities and loneliness during the separation or their change in status from breadwinner to primary family carer.

"Specific programmes need to be implemented for the families of migrants in the same way that governments, civil society and international organizations are attempting to tackle labour migration, irregular migration and human trafficking," states Ndiaye. "Interventions need to be varied to address a wide range of issues and must be integrated into national migration and development policies." These include the better protection of women migrants in destination countries who are paid much less than men and who often work in unregulated sectors such as domestic work and agriculture. The non-payment of wages or major breaches of contract can have a significant impact on the well-being of remittance-dependent families.

Also needed are more focused interventions on the schooling of children of emigrants, the provision of institutional parenting support to lessen children's vulnerability and the establishment of migrant workers support groups in areas of high emigration. This would give a collective and empowering economic and social voice to spouses left behind as well as represent a group of people who contribute significantly to their country's economy through remittances. More importantly, training to improve the financial management abilities of spouses would not only provide new skills in income generation but would also help families be less dependent on remittance income that instead could be used for long-term investment.

Reintegration programmes for returning migrants are also critical not just to ensure their successful economic reinsertion in the community after many years of absence but also their social integration.

"By ensuring returning migrants have jobs and livelihood opportunities upon coming home and that they know of them, migration becomes a truly win-win proposition for the family and society as a whole," adds Ndiaye.

## IOM in Kenya marks IWD with women in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs)

IOM Nairobi commemorated the International Women's Day (IWD) with the women in a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North Rift.

To mark the event, IOM reached out to the most vulnerable of those affected by the post-election crisis comprising of the disabled, girls, elderly and HIV/Aids positive women by addressing some of their most pressing, yet hardly mentioned women specific humanitarian needs.

IOM's Regional Representative for Central and Eastern Africa, Mr. Ashraf El Nour said that as Kenya emerges from the emergency situation into the recovery period, IOM will be keen to work with government in providing support aimed at empowering women to reconstruct their lives.

Women and girls sang and danced their hearts out and used these to express their pains and joys while at the same time sending out messages of peace.

The celebrations were organized jointly by IOM, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), and PeaceNet.



*IOM Gender Focal Point lighting a candle for peace*

*Elderly women dancing their hearts out*



*IOM staff members hand over donations for the vulnerable IDP women*



## **IOM Croatia Survey of Migrant Women from the former Soviet Union**

A survey addressing integration of female immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Croatia has been conducted within the framework of the project "You Are Not Alone, We'll Help You", coordinated by IOM office in Zagreb. The purpose of the survey was to assess women's integration in Croatia, and to identify the problems facing their adaptation to life in a new social environment with special focus on domestic violence, trafficking in persons, abuse, harassment at work and xenophobia. The survey took place during June and July of 2007.

Phone interviews assessed the respondents' legal status in Croatia, employment situation, experience of domestic abuse, harassment in the workplace, trafficking as well as experience of discrimination. The majority of respondents were legally employed, with tertiary education, married, and in most cases naturalised citizens. Most of the interviewees (65%) came to Croatia in the period between 1990 and 1999. The primary reason for their arrival was marriage or steady relationship (91%), mostly with Croatian citizens (88%). The sample consisted of a highly educated group, among which 69% had experienced difficulties in obtaining recognition of their qualifications. 37 (19%) of the total number of interviewees experienced domestic violence, 18 (9%) were harassed in the work place, and 17 of the respondents (8%) have come across cases of trafficking in human beings. 79 of respondents (44%) stated that they had been discriminated against.

The recommendations of the research team include the implementation of a wide information campaign about the status and rights of migrants in the Republic of Croatia, as well as strengthening the capacity of competent authorities and NGOs to create and implement efficient support programs for migrant women. The survey was conducted by Ms Varvara Gabrielyan from the NGO "Rodina" and with financial support from the Swiss Embassy in Zagreb.

## **IOM Skopje launched new Economic and Social Stabilization Programme for vulnerable women**

Aiming to tackle the social and economic factors favorable to human trafficking and irregular migration, IOM Skopje has undertaken active measures towards the enhancement of the economic status of vulnerable women residing in border and rural communities.

The new Economic & Social Stabilization programme was officially launched in February 2008 and will be carried out until end of March 2009. The intervention aims to reduce the potential for human trafficking and irregular migration through the social and economic empowerment of 40 women aged from 18 to 35 residing in the border communities of Bitola and Kumanovo.

This income generating and self-employment assistance includes professional vocational training, basic business training courses, aimed to develop the recipients' knowledge on how to set-up and manage a micro-enterprise, and the provision of seed capital to support the establishment of production, service or trade-based small businesses.

## **Research project on the Labour and Marriage Migration Process in Mongolia and Vietnam and its impact on Migrant Rights**

A conference was held on 29 January 2008 on a research project prepared by IOM Seoul on Labour and Marriage Migration Process in Mongolia and Vietnam and its impact on Migrant Rights. The report was presented by the researchers comprising 3 consultants and 1 member of IOM Seoul staff and discussed by 7 commentators from the Government of Korea (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health and welfare, Ministry of Labour, National Human Rights Commission) and Migrant Support NGOs and Lawyers Group.

The report covers the situation of labour and marriage migrants in Korea, a presentation of the background, policies and regulations, practice and problems; an analysis in line with international human rights standards and policy recommendations. The researchers interviewed 96 participants including potential migrants, those who are in the process of migration, returned migrants in Mongolia and Vietnam, migrants in Korea and representatives from government and private agencies.

This research focused on the pre-departure process for both types of migration in countries of origin in order to understand the relation between migrant rights violation problems in the country of destination (Korea) and their 'root-causes' occurring in the country of origin.

On labour migration, the research found that there is still a high illegal sending fee (up to USD20,000) in Vietnam while the fee was well controlled by GOK in Mongolia. It also seemed that the tightened control by the receiving country on the process (through EPS) had an impact on the decrease in illegal sending fee and related corruptions. However, the high demand of out-migration from the two countries and limited quota of Korea caused an over-flow of labour migration through irregular channels.

On marriage migration, the research found some differences with processes within the two countries. While Vietnam has a very well organized broker-network which is against its national law, marriage in Mongolia is arranged mostly by small agencies or individuals.

In both countries, most women are not provided with complete information during the process. They do not know they will be denied the right to choose their husband; instead they are selected by 2-3 men out of 30-300 women with very limited time (2-3 hours) of meeting (maximum 10 minutes of meeting per women). In many cases, if women want divorce, brokers charge USD 500-10,000 as a penalty fee which often, in effect, leads to bonded married life.

Among other recommendations was the ratification of UN Migrant Worker's Rights Convention, Palermo Protocol and relevant ILO Conventions. The report also recommended the establishment of domestic counter-trafficking legislation and international cooperation between the sending and receiving countries for the protection of migrant rights. Further research on other countries of origin, or the topic



of co-relationship between marriage and labour was also suggested. The integrated approach on marriage and labour migration for 'safe migration' in government's policies was emphasized.

## A New Lease on Life

Nadeera Perera\* is a young, attractive woman, daring and full of dreams. She is preparing herself for another busy day in her shop in Wennappuwa - a sleepy, fishing village on the western coast of Sri Lanka. The shop, although small, sells a variety of gift and baby items and clothes. "Life has become quite hectic and interesting as of late. I not only manage the shop now but also run a salon at home", says Nadeera.

Nadeera started to dream about greener pastures at a very young age after listening to the enticing tales of villagers who have made Europe their home. She too has friends and relatives in Italy who encouraged her to join them. Being the youngest, her parents opposed her decision. However, Nadeera was adamant; hence she paid an

But fate had it otherwise. One leg of the journey was free of hassle with a representative of the agent receiving them each time they arrived in a new In Poland they started the second leg of the journey. A group of them were packed like sardines into a covered lorry and were being transported towards Italy when they were caught at the border by the police.



***"He said he obtained all the necessary documents and visas for me to go and work in Italy. I had nothing to fear as I had a visa stamped on my passport."***

"I felt as if that was the end of my dreams. The months to follow were even more depressing; I feel sick just thinking about the whole ordeal", says Nadeera, evidently relieved to be reunited with her family. It was through an interpreter who visited her at the Polish police detention centre that she first heard about IOM. "Although the Polish authorities treated the group well whenever she called us from the centre, she cried asking us to get her down to Sri Lanka", says Nadeera's mother, unable to hold back her tears. Nadeera has received pre-departure, logistical, and transit support from IOM Poland and IOM Sri Lanka

She cannot believe that it was only a few months back that she was lost in thought, wondering what to do, how to pay back the loan she has taken out to pay the agent. "IOM's three-day workshop on business development taught me the ABC's on how to start a business, earn profits, expand the business, market my goods etc. And the IOM reintegration grant gave me the required money to open this shop", she adds.

Nadeera has bounced back to life within months. "I started a course on beauty therapy and I am so engrossed in it. I already have clients coming for facials, haircuts and I have even accepted to dress brides in the coming months. I am so excited about it and as there is a high demand for this in the area I feel as if I finally have something to look forward to" says a beaming Nadeera. She is already working on her next goal - demolishing the present structure that houses the gift shop and constructing a two-storey building which will also have a separate section for her salon. She feels as if she has taken many risks to overcome many challenges for her 25 years and she is also certain that she will soon be able to savor the success of her businesses.

"I am happy about being able to stand on my feet again after such an experience", concludes Nadeera while attending to a customer who walked into her shop. Nadeera is just one of the many female beneficiaries IOM Sri Lanka has assisted under its Assisted Voluntary Returnee programme. To date, the programme has supported countless men and women to return to the island and reintegrate into society.

*\*not her real name*

## "We Can" Campaign educating IDP communities on violence against girls and women in Eastern Sri Lanka.

IOM Sri Lanka, together with the Socio-Economic Development Organization of Trincomalee (SEDOT), a local grass root level NGO, launched a campaign to raise awareness among internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Trincomalee district in the East of Sri Lanka on discrimination against girls and women, women's rights, their status and different forms of violence they face.

The "We Can" (end all violence against women) campaign, started by Oxfam in 2004 in India, is a coalition of over 400 organizations, collectives and individuals active in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The campaign attempts to increase public awareness and challenge and change deep seated gender-biased attitudes and practices that endorse inequality and discrimination.

The main objective of the 'we can' campaign conducted in November and December 2007 in Trincomalee was to encourage people within the community to recognize the root causes of discrimination against girls and women and to motivate them to change their perceptions towards women, thus becoming "Change Makers" within their community.

The campaign works through these Change Makers - people who actively encourage more positive attitudes and behaviour towards women within the communities in which they live and work. Both men and women are involved in this 'awareness-to-action' process and are encouraged to become Change Makers.



Approximately five hundred men and women from IOM who managed tsunami and conflict shelter sites participated in the campaign. A trained 'we can' resource person from SEDOT facilitated the open and group discussions using pictures and other materials to examine topics such as: is change necessary; is change possible? Can roles of women and men change over time? Does society treat men and women equally? What are the reasons for violence? and how do we respond to violence against women?

Other activities that took place included poster painting, briefings on discrimination and violence against women and women's rights and the distribution of campaign kits (which included information material that Change Makers in turn could use in their communities).

The campaign in the shelter sites not only encouraged attitudinal and behavioural changes by the participants regarding issues such as discrimination and violence faced by women, but also identified 'Change Makers' who could continue to advocate on these issues in their communities. During the campaign over 100 participants volunteered to become Change Makers within their communities.

During the campaign over 100 participants volunteered to become Change Makers within their communities. These Change Makers will now attempt to break the cycle of violence by talking to friends, neighbours and colleagues to influence their opinion on violence against women; by increasing their own awareness on the issue and making changes in their own lives; by disseminating information on the campaign and by supporting women who experience violence.



The feedback received from the participants at the end of the campaign revealed that both male and female participants had either broadened their understanding of the difficulties faced by women or gained an understanding on gender roles, reasons for violence against women and how the community and individuals can respond to it. The participants expressed their willingness to adopt some of the lessons learnt through the campaign in their daily lives. They were also keen to take the messages, the posters and the stories of people from the campaign to their respective shelter sites to be shared with the residents who were unable to participate in the campaign.

The campaign concluded with a slogan, "Living with out violence will create a happier life".

This is what some participants had to say about the "We Can" campaign:

***"Changes cannot be made overnight, it will take some time to change our attitudes but what is important is "We can".***

***"We want to especially make the young generations aware about violence against women."***

***"The real change must come from our attitudes".***

***"Men must share the domestic chores then we can reduce the work load of women"***

## IOM Banda Aceh Basic Gender Training

IOM Banda Aceh devised and successfully implemented a Basic Gender Training Module targeting a group of about 10-15 participants with limited experience in both gender and academic study. In the introductory training that was designed to last half a day, the module was used to train drivers and security guards who had no previous gender training experience. The overall aim of the module was to sensitize them about gender in the work environment.

The module was divided into three sessions: Social Construction of Gender, Gender-Based Inequality, and Defining a Framework for a more respectful work environment. In the first session, participants learned about the differences between sex and gender, the common understanding of how gender is constructed, maintained, and reinforced, and diversity in gender construction. It was followed by two activities for the first session. Giving participants the opportunity to classify whether an activity is for men or women helped them identify the different characteristics stereotypically attributed to males/females. The second session on Gender-based Inequality taught participants how social-construction of gender (in sense of norms or values) could lead to gender-based inequality. It also stressed the importance of gender equality not just in the workplace, but in all areas of the community. Participants listened to a radio drama and watched a short film and discussed the inequalities they saw and heard in them. They also had a chance to discuss their own experiences of inequalities. By addressing these gender-based inequalities and explaining how they affect everyday life, participants understood how important it is to create a respectful working environment for the benefit and empowerment of everyone. The last session, Defining a Framework for a more respectful work environment, taught participants about the conditions of a respectful working environment, and how to create an agreement or rule (practical guideline) to implement a respectful working environment. Participants worked in groups of 2's or 3's and were tasked to perform a skit and formulate rules to avoid problems in the future. The guidelines that were agreed upon signaled the conclusion of the training.

Banda Aceh Post Conflict Community project has adapted this module and trained all PCC project staff. There are plans to roll it out to all IOM Banda Aceh Staff.

The module is available on request; if you are interested, please contact Paul Greening at [pgreening@iom.int](mailto:pgreening@iom.int).

## IOM Afghanistan breaks Gender Stereotypes with Majority Female International Staff Members

### Inside IOM: What's New?

- IOM Banda Aceh Basic Gender Training Module
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- Gender Sensitization at IOM Skopje
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IOM Afghanistan is challenging gender stereotypes by maintaining a majority of female international staff in the mission. Currently, 62% of the international staff and 70% of the international senior managers are female.

In an effort to better understand the experience of female international aid workers in Afghanistan, IOM conducted a survey among all male and female international staff concerning their experiences in the field relating to gender. The questions centered on pre-arrival conceptions, working experiences, personal and family life and recommendations. One of the most dynamic aspects of the mission in Afghanistan is the diversity amongst the staff. Staff members represent different religions, cultures, ages, races and nationalities. These characteristics were only slightly evident in the responses to the survey questions.

In addition, several national male colleagues also responded to the survey questions giving input about their perception of the female staff and the differences they perceive between male and female international staff members.

#### Pre-Arrival Conceptions

Almost all of the female colleagues in the mission remarked that their knowledge of the treatment of women in Afghanistan was a consideration before they arrived. The main concerns were the dress code and attitudes of national male colleagues in the workplace. Interestingly enough none of the respondents said that this was a factor in whether they accepted the position or not but rather just another aspect of their preparation before coming to the mission. No one viewed it an obstacle that could not be overcome. Several of the staff had worked in conservative environments previously and felt it had prepared them for Afghanistan.

#### Working Experiences

In response to these set of questions, initially the majority of women in the mission felt that the behavior towards international women by their national male colleagues was very respectful for the most part. It is important to note however, that the majority of respondents have also had some difficulties or experienced uncomfortable situations with national male staff at some point. Respondents noted having their authority and knowledge challenged, feeling uncomfortable because of being stared at constantly and some harassment. None of the participants felt that these events were the norm but instead events that occurred and were resolved leading to, in some cases, a better understanding and working relationship. In other cases they resulted in the setting of needed boundaries and redefinition of what is acceptable in the work place.

A major obstacle mentioned by all participants was the lack of mobility and freedom due to the security situation. It was recognized however that this is an aspect of the mission that is not gender-specific and affects everyone.

The restrictive dress code was mentioned by eighty percent of the participants as one of the more frustrating things they had to deal with, "One of the most difficult things about living in Afghanistan for me is the dress code, which sometimes in the summer has made me feel in a bad mood because I felt forced to dress in a certain way..After spending one year and a summer here, the dress code is becoming harder to bear."

All of the male international staff felt that their female colleagues were excellent professionals and expressed their admiration towards them for their dedicated efforts to work in an environment that can sometimes be difficult for women. One of the male respondents remarked that he had noticed the overall improvement of the mission coincided with the increase of female staff.

Another commented that, "the effective participation of female staff at the supervisory, management as well as at advisory and decision-making positions has brought diversity and harmony to the workplace." Though not as stressed by the female international staff, both the international and national male staff stated that they felt that the environment and inferior perception of women in society is evident and must be a concern for international female staff.

All Afghan male participants said that they notice a significant difference in the working habits of male and female colleagues. Seventy-five percent remarked that they often prefer working with female international staff because they are more willing to spend time discussing issues and listen to varying opinions before making a decision.

***"The effective participation of female staff at the supervisory, management as well as at advisory and decision-making positions has brought diversity and harmony to the workplace."***

Lastly, it was also noted by one of the female staff that she felt the male dominated society also affected the international male attitude towards international women at times, "I think that the international males sometimes feel that they can get away with respecting women less in certain situations because the environment around them does not demand it, whereas in Western countries there are more checks on what might be considered inappropriate behavior."

## Personal Life

Maintaining personal relationships and family life was mentioned by over half of the female participants as one of the most difficult aspects of the mission. Afghanistan is a place where accessing communication systems can sometimes be difficult.

The majority of participants remarked that it can be a challenge to maintain regular contact with friends and family at times. Extra effort needs to be made to keep the lines of communication open and regular. The media coverage of Afghanistan in the international scene rarely portrays positive images. Several staff members remarked that maintaining regular communication with their

*"The effective participation of female staff at the supervisory, management as well as at advisory and decision-making positions has brought diversity and harmony to the workplace."*

families and friends was a coping mechanism for dealing with the day to day strain of the mission but it also serves as a stress relief for loved ones. One female staff member said, "One issue that I deal with is the fact that I am aware that my family and friends worry about me being in Afghanistan and so I take greater effort to be in touch and reassure them that I am doing okay."

Participants were thankful for the regular R&R cycle. They remarked that being so far away from home was helpful in maintaining their personal and family relationships. Some commented that the time apart and the fact that family members are not allowed to visit the mission can make it difficult over time for family and friends to relate to their experiences.

"The most difficult challenge is to work and stay away from my family. The positive side is that it makes us re-estimate our attachment to each other and remember how important it is to support one another," remarked one female participant.

It was clear that participants were all dedicated to their work but also wanted to maintain a work/personal life balance. They noted that maintaining the balance between work and personal life may be a struggle but can be accomplished through effort and compromise and is essential for healthy living. When asked if they felt having such a large number of women in the mission was a source of support, answers varied. Forty percent of respondents said that they did not feel that the number of women in the mission was an extra support or had never considered the issue. Sixty percent of respondents said that they felt it was an additional support whether directly or indirectly.

Some comments were:

*"Frequently the only source of support is sharing the problems with each other or just to express yourself. To talk when you need to and listen to others when they need to be heard."*

*"Though I associate socially with more male colleagues, I find it comforting to know that other women are also striving in the same way as I am."*

## Recommendations

The female staff in the IOM Afghanistan mission unanimously encouraged other women interested in field work to come to Afghanistan. The staff stressed however the importance of being ready to respect the conservative local culture and the challenge of learning how to get things done to make a positive impact on the reconstruction efforts within the existing environment. Participants mentioned patience, flexibility, good stress management and enthusiasm as important qualities to bring with you into the mission.

"I would say that to live and work here we do have to restrict ourselves somewhat, but in the end the positives outweigh the negatives..."



IOM Afghanistan Staff

(From L – R): MAMADJONOVA Nigina; KRZALIC Enira; NORTHING Catherine; RIVAS Althea; JUMAKULIYEVA Guleser; FORS Helene; PROROVSKAYA Olga; COLIC Milada; KAYA Katsui; VIDAL Nuria Fernandez; AFROZ Tahmina; SAYED Sammayya.  
Missing: LANDO Lorena (DCoM); TIMONEN Annika and DI MATTEO Serena

## Gender Sensitization at IOM Skopje

With the aim to better understand gender and bring IOM Skopje staff closer to the issue, a half-day Gender Briefing Session was organized in the IOM Skopje office in March 2008 filled with activities and initiatives to mainstream gender, uphold gender-equality and give emphasis to the Gender related work done throughout the years.

In order to understand gender in IOM, a brief background information on IOM policies and Machinery for gender mainstreaming was provided by IOM Skopje GFPs using the "How Can I..." series, which is a very helpful tool in developing and undertaking gender related actions.

To enhance the overall gender knowledge and awareness, the session began with the introduction of basic gender concepts for the whole team, including administration, logistics, IT and security staff, followed by a session on gender in programming by introducing the concepts of gender analysis and gender planning aimed to equip programme staff with essential knowledge and tools to be able to effectively mainstream gender throughout programme development.



A UNFPA gender expert was invited to facilitate the session. Applying an interactive and participatory methodology, the session used a lot of discussion and brainstorming that acknowledges and respects the knowledge of IOM staff in own fields of work, while simultaneously providing tools to discuss gender mainstreaming into their ongoing work.

Very positive feedback was obtained from colleagues after the session on how refreshing and beneficial an experience this gender sensitization gathering was; for some this may be the first gender skills building training, but the importance of it was equally valued by all members of the team. The programme staff viewed this session as being of great benefit for the overall process of planning and designing projects that are gender sensitive and which take into account the impact of differing gender roles and gender needs of women and men in the target communities.

IOM Skopje continues to explore possibilities and actions to mainstream gender all through its work, activities, and projects.

## US Secretary of State Award Honours Two IOM Staff Members

Two IOM staff members have received the Women of Courage Award for their courage and leadership as they struggle for social justice and women's rights.

In celebration of International Women's Day, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented the second annual Award for International Women of Courage to eight women from around the world. Among them were Cynthia Bendlin, manager of the IOM counter trafficking information campaign in the tri-border area (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay), and Dr. Eaman Al-Gobory, IOM's National Medical Officer in Iraq.

They were selected from more than 90 exceptional women nominated by U.S. embassies worldwide for their extraordinary work in advancing women's rights. When she learned that she had been selected to receive the award, Dr. Al-Gobory said: "I want to accept my award as a staff member of IOM because without my family, my IOM family, I would not have been able to fulfill my duties for the people of Iraq. I sincerely want to share this recognition with IOM staff all over the world, especially the Medical Health Unit."

The award comes on the day the body of the husband of an IOM doctor and colleague of Dr. Al-Gobory was found. Also a doctor, he had been kidnapped on Sunday. His death highlights the reality of the incredible dangers of living and working in Iraq.

At the request of the Iraqi Ministry of Health, IOM implements a medical evacuation programme for Iraqis who cannot be treated for their conditions inside the country. The programme matches Iraqi patients who require urgent medical attention with pro-bono medical assistance provided by hospitals in the region and abroad.

Approximately 6,000 Iraqis are currently on the official list of the Ministry of Health awaiting life-saving assistance for various conditions including heart disease, cancer, spinal cord injuries and neurological disorders. Many of the patients are children or war wounded.

Over the years, IOM's medical evacuation programme has assisted several hundred people with support from Kuwait, the European Union and various other countries. Currently, the programme is being funded from the proceeds of German author, Dr. Juergen Todenhoefer's latest book on Iraq.

Dr. Al-Gobory, a recipient of the IOM Director General's Award for Outstanding Staff in 2005, is also involved in helping to re-build the Iraq healthcare system by providing medical training and education. She works closely with IOM partners including Project Hope, Operation Smile, the National Spinal Cord Injury Association and Operation Give.

For Cynthia Bendlin in Paraguay, the "award provides renewed strength so that we can continue with the important work that lies ahead. There are an estimated 6,000 potential victims in the tri border area, so we must respond in a clear, forceful and effective manner."

The IOM information and awareness raising campaign in the tri-border funded by the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP) and managed by Bendlin, covered the towns of Puerto Iguazu, Argentina; Foz de Iguazu, Brazil; and Ciudad del Este in Paraguay. The area is a hot spot marked by diverse criminal activities and large regular and irregular movements of people through the porous borders, including the smuggling and trafficking of human beings.

The majority of the victims trafficked for sexual exploitation in the region are young women from poor rural areas. They are lured with false promises of jobs as waitresses or domestic helpers, and are taken to small cities and towns.

Cynthia and her colleagues work under extremely difficult situations in the tri border areas. As the human trafficking criminal network operating in the area saw their livelihood threatened by IOM's information campaign, they issued death threats against Cynthia and her team.

## Parental Leave: Not only for Women

Some of my dear fellow IOM colleagues might remember receiving on 09.02.2007 an e-mail from an - admittedly - somewhat overexcited colleague from Paris:

*"I just would like to share with you a private moment of happiness: My wife Annuska has yesterday given birth to a healthy baby, - a boy who will carry the name "Yorio William Nicolas Forster". Annuska and the baby are perfectly fine! I am afraid just the father is a bit wrecked... It all went very fast and - because the baby came a bit too early - also pretty unexpected. But thanks to the French Police (!), which escorted us over the "Place de la Concorde" and the "Champs Elysées" right to the Hospital in Neuilly/Paris, where the baby was born just minutes later, we did after all manage just fine... Florian."*



Well, giving birth went fine and was fast. But how did the story continue? How to organize childcare in a "modern couple" where both wife and husband pursue professional careers?

My wife, a social anthropologist working mainly on South East Asia with universities in Switzerland, Cambodia and Thailand, and I had planned to organize ourselves as follows: During the first 3 months of her maternity leave, my wife would take care of the baby; she would then resume her part-time work and we would hire a nanny to take care of Yorio during working days; eventually we would bring him to a "crèche" (nursery for kids under 3 years).

The only problem was that my wife imperatively had to conduct a long-planned field research in 2007 in Thailand. This was a clear call for me to assume fully my fatherly duties. So I asked the HQ for a combined paternity/accumulated annual leave of 15 weeks! Of course, I had to propose a solution on how to temporarily replace me as the Head of IOM's Special Liaison Mission in France. Thanks to the great solidarity of two HQ-colleagues, Anne-Marie and Philippe, and my entire team in France, a workable solution was developed!

On 15.07.08 we left Paris me being fully in charge of the baby - changing diapers, warming the milk bottle, preparing first small meals. We moved to Rayong, a flourishing industrial town southeast of Bangkok. While my wife started her research with a Cambodian migrant fisherman, I looked for a house (which turned out to be quite easy to find), organized a car, bought some essentials for our home, got connected to the web and so we settled down.

Looking back, these months seem to have passed so quickly for the days were after all quite busy: My son first got chicken-pox and then later on, two more children's diseases. It wasn't a big deal, but to an already aged first time father, it was a lot of work and worries. We also had a lot of fun and awesome experiences in and around Rayong – meeting elephants at the harbor, shopping in the huge Thai malls, doing some hikes in a close-by rainforest, meeting many other Thai children (and mainly their mothers), feeding fish, and going swimming in the Gulf of Thailand.

I received quite some feedback; - especially female IOM colleagues commented very positively that such sharing of family duties on a regular basis would also give them a stronger position and more freedom in that it would make a strong argument

***Such attitude becomes fully obsolete when fathers, too, take their family responsibilities seriously.***

against still existing perceptions that "one should not assign a woman to this or that job for she might soon take a break to give birth to a child". Such attitude becomes fully obsolete when fathers, too, take their family responsibilities seriously. What can we do to get there? The IOM budget-line to cover for maternity/paternity replacements should be increased. The administration should remain open, possible even become pro-active and encourage male staff members to use the paternity leave option. Modern, sensitive HR policies help making IOM an attractive employer and a stronger organization. Last but not least: solidarity among colleagues is paramount!

How did things work out during my paternity leave? On a personal side I think I have developed an excellent, deep relationship with my son (well, let us see what he will say 15 years from now). And on a professional side, IOM France did not collapse but -just the opposite- expanded with the opening of a new office in Marseille! As already the Romans knew: "*exempla trahunt*" (good examples work): In a period of just 18 months following Yorio's birth, the 6 staff members working



at IOM Paris will have managed to have 6 new-born babies (out of which I will have contributed two!). In Europe, where birth numbers are declining sharply, this is a particularly welcome development. And it can not just be the famous "Parisian air" that is responsible for such a feat: fair policies and practices, which allow for a harmonious combination of fatherhood/motherhood and work surely do play a role.

## Recommended Reading

"Climate change a further challenge for gender equity: How men and women farmers are differently affected".

<http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000809/index.html>

UNHCR has launched its new handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls.

You can access it here:

<http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/47cfae612.html>

It replaces the 1991 UNHCR Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and encompasses many interesting field practice examples.

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