

# MIGRATION

December 2007

A woman with dark hair, wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and orange rubber gloves, is shown from the chest up. She is holding a small, silvery fish in her right hand. In front of her is a large, shallow metal tray filled with many similar small fish. The background is blurred, showing other people in orange and purple clothing.

## Labour on the Move: Opportunities and Challenges



IOM International Organization for Migration



# MIGRATION

December 2007  
ISSN 1813-2839

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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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# Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy

By Gervais Appave and Ryszard Cholewinski, co-editors, *IOM World Migration 2008*

The task of formulating a workable global approach to the management of international migration remains a formidable challenge for the community, one that will require both time and effort over the coming years. In what terms ought the international community to develop a comprehensive migration management strategy, one that will enable it to achieve coherence of action? What organizing principles should be adopted? Is there, in conceptual terms, a point of leverage to move the debate forward?

Part of the problem lies in the difficulty of coming to a consensus about the fundamental nature of migration and its outcomes. Underlying the current and welcome inclination to acknowledge the potentially beneficial outcomes of migratory phenomena is a discourse still laden with doubt, with inconsistencies and outright contradictions. Should, for instance, migration be considered entirely "natural", seen as a constituent part of human behaviour and occurring throughout human history, or profoundly "unnatural" since it is about the (painful) uprooting of individuals from their places of birth and their (equally difficult) relocation in other countries? Does it lead to the enrichment of countries of origin through the flow of remittances and the transfer of skills and technology, or to their impoverishment through loss of talent?

In the midst of that uncertainty there are suggestions worth exploring perhaps that *contemporary* migration – as opposed to whatever its historical an-

tecedents may have been – is uniquely related to and defined by those processes of economic and social integration collectively known as globalization. The argument is that, whether by design or not, these developments are largely responsible for the creation of an unprecedented context in which *human mobility seeks to find expression on a genuinely global scale*.

In recent international consultations on migration, many governments and private sector representatives have recognized the need for a more effective and efficient global labour market. Existing mismatches between the demand and supply for labour are projected to increase in coming years, with aging and declining populations in much of the industrialized world, and growing populations in much of the developing world. Wage and opportunity disparities between and within the developed and developing worlds are expected to continue, providing a continuing impetus for mobility between and within all regions. Missing, however, are clearly formulated strategies to better match supply with demand in safe, humane and orderly ways.

The *World Migration 2008* due out shortly, tackles this issue in two ways. In the first part of the volume, the emphasis is on the description and analysis of current patterns of labour-related mobility. It consists of a collection of independent studies of highly skilled migration, low- and middle-skilled migration, student movement, tourism and short-term business travel, family migration, internal migration and irregular migration.

The second part of the Report then lays out for discussion a wide range of available policy responses with a particular focus on cooperation between stakeholders, including countries of origin and destination, and on the need for coherence in international collaboration. A final section will update data and analyse migration flows, stocks and trends since the last *World Migration Report* (2005) and survey current migration developments in the major regions of the world. **M**



(Illustration: © Dina Ionesco/IOM, 2007)



# Europe's Population Development, Labour Market and Migration

By Heikki Mattila, IOM Budapest and Marek Kupiszewski, Central European Forum for Migration and Population Research\*

**T**he rapid ageing of populations and the simultaneous relative shrinking of the active labour workforce in practically all European countries are putting new and increasing demands on policymakers and politicians.

Within the European Union (EU), some countries, notably the UK and Ireland, have in recent years been receiving large numbers of immigrant workers from the new members, which in turn now find themselves with labour shortages created not only by the demographic decline, but also through large scale emigration of their workers. A challenge for the EU is to approach these issues in a coordinated manner instead of all members pursuing diverse national policies.

In a recent publication, the Central European Forum for Migration and Population Research (CEFMR) examined what levels of immigration could offset the negative effects of population and labour force ageing in the 27 European countries over the next 50 years.

The research shows that reasonable migration flows can positively influence the labour force, but ageing may be prevented only with very large flows.

The reason is simple: migrants, who usually originate from countries with higher fertility than the receiving countries, quickly adopt the demographic patterns of the receiving countries.

In practice, this means migrants having a similar number of children as the receiving population. Migrants, like the host population, get older, which leads to a need for more migrants to keep the balance between older and younger population intact.

CEFMR simulations have shown that if the aim of population policy is to maintain an unchanged age structure measured by the Potential Support Ratio (PSR) on the same level over 50 years, an inflow of migrants around twice the size of the existing populations at the beginning of simulation would be needed. (PSR indicates the population

aged 15 to 64 divided by the population aged 65 and over. It shows roughly how many people engaged in economic activity correspond to each person over the retirement age.)

Those numbers are absurdly high and certainly hardly anyone would support such high immigration to Europe. So in

▼ Low birth rates and an ageing population in Italy as in many other European countries, means that migrants are needed for jobs that locals don't want, such as providing home care for the elderly (Photo: © Jemini Pandya/IOM, 2005)



▲ Albanian citizen Flurije Lekaj was among those benefitting from an IOM labour migration programme connecting Albanians with the Italian labour market (Photo: © Andi Gjonej/IOM, 2001)





▼ Anticipating future labour force requirements in Europe is a challenge that will have to be addressed for many years to come (Photo: © Jemini Pandya/IOM, 2005)

other words we have to conclude that migration can mitigate, but not completely solve the problem of ageing societies.

The conclusions of the report were echoed in discussions which took place earlier this year in Budapest during an IOM-organized conference entitled: *European Cooperation in Labour Migration – Search for Best Practices*.

This conference, part of a European Commission ARGO-funded project, looked at indicators from nine countries, covering both Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia,), Western Europe (Italy, Portugal, the UK) and Ukraine, a country outside the EU

Participants agreed that plausible levels of immigration in the coming decades would not offset the negative effects of population and labour force ageing. But they also agreed that countries needed to be encouraged towards adopting pro-active immigration policies.

To effectively address the effects of ageing societies, active migration policy needs to be part of a wider policy mix, that would include social, family and educational policy reform.

For example, in order to raise the total working time during a person's lifetime, the age at which they finish their education, the age at which they retire and their retirement benefits are all factors that must be addressed.

New measures to better match vocational and university training to the professional and technical requirements of modern services-oriented economies, are also needed.

The aim of the ARGO project is to produce new information for policymakers to help them to develop pro-active labour migration policies in order to address demographic decline and projected labour shortages in Europe.

The programme also aims to improve coordination among EU member states so that less-wealthy member countries, or other countries of origin do not lose too much of their qualified human capital to wealthier nations.

The project has identified a lack of qualified professionals in various sectors in countries such as Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, whose economies are growing fast and where unemployment has declined considerably.

Emigration from these countries to Western Europe has led some countries, such as Romania and Poland, to recruit skilled and less-skilled migrants from abroad and to put in place measures to encourage the return of their skilled nationals.

Participants at the Budapest conference agreed on the need to steer migration through legal channels in a coherent, pro-active manner to partly offset some of the challenges of ageing populations and weakened support ratios.

They recognized that economic fluctuations, changes in competitiveness, rising productivity, foreign investment and delocalization to low-cost countries mean that anticipating future labour force requirements is a challenge that will need to be addressed for years to come. **M**

*\*The Central European Forum for Migration and Population Research is a research partnership of the Foundation for Population, Migration and Environment of Zurich, the Institute of Geography of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It is managed by IOM.*



# Looking East to Bridge Labour Gap as Poles Head West

By **Bill Atkins**, freelance journalist, Warsaw

While the spectacular increase in the number of Poles who are leaving their country in search of jobs and new horizons elsewhere in the European Union grabs headlines, authorities back home are themselves looking beyond the borders to try to fill a yawning labour gap.

That represents a marked shift in a country without a long-established immigration tradition, and Warsaw's officials are facing a learning curve just as steep as the rise in Polish emigration to Britain and Ireland since EU accession in 2004.

"Labour migration to Poland is a new challenge for policymakers," says Janusz Grzyb, of the Department of Migration at the country's Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Grzyb's department is itself a sign of the times: it was only created in 2006.

Part of its role is to help the authorities take stock of the impact of outward migration on the work force. It was also mandated in October to draw up ways to tap labour abroad. In addition, it is planning to develop integration programmes for labour migrants.

"Until 2005 or 2006, we didn't recognize a need to change our approach to migration," Grzyb explains.

▲ A lack of interest in vocational training among young Poles has meant a possible shortfall of 300,000 skilled workers in the construction industry with numbers of vacancies potentially doubling in coming years (Photo: © Bill Atkins/IOM, 2007)

What sparked the new thinking was the fact that, like other EU newcomers from the former communist bloc, Poland is grappling with a labour shortage.

The construction sector says it is facing a shortfall of 300,000 skilled workers – trades such as joiners, bricklayers or plasterers – and fears that the number of vacancies could double in coming years.

The problem has been accentuated by a lack of interest in vocational training among young Poles, who increasingly prefer to pursue less hands-on studies, such as business, computing or more

academic subjects, until they complete their compulsory education.

The Polish economy has been in robust health since EU accession, growing by 5.8 per cent in 2006 and is forecasted to expand by 6.5 per cent this year.

EU membership has brought massive injections of funds from Brussels, and investment by foreign companies in Poland has spiralled.

## Increasing Labour Needs

As in other EU newcomer countries, the pace of job creation has now out-

▼ Construction companies have been snapping up prime demolition and vacant building lots in Polish cities amid a real estate boom which has fuelled demand for labour (Photo: © Bill Atkins/IOM, 2007)





stripped job cuts, which were a marked and painful feature of the immediate years of free market reforms after the end of communist rule in 1989.

"We recognize the increasing needs of the Polish economy," says Grzyb.

Focusing the minds of Polish officials are the looming Euro 2012 football championships, which the country will host jointly with Ukraine.

The tournament falls on the same year as the Olympics in London, increasing competition in Europe's construction labour market and, eventually, in the service sector.

Over the coming five years, Poland has pledged to build a handful of brand-new venues for the tournament, and is also due to step up new airport and hotel projects.

In a sign of the concern about the lack of workers, some officials have floated the idea that convicts could be employed under guard to build the grounds for Euro 2012.

### Reducing Red Tape

With the EU's new six-year financial cycle underway, Poland is also meant to spend Brussels' funding on major infrastructure projects, including a national motorway network that has to be built almost from scratch.

"We're trying to facilitate access to the labour market because of the needs of Polish employers, and secondly to make more possibilities for legal work in Poland," adds Grzyb.

Warsaw's attention has so far largely been directed at Poland's hinterland, and that is likely to remain the immediate priority.

In September 2006, Poland decided to reduce the red tape in labour rules for seasonal agricultural workers from Ukraine – thousands of whose citizens traditionally come to Poland in seek of temporary work – as well as Belarus and Russia.

The move was also motivated by a desire to cut irregular migration and tackle the informal economy, which has for 18 years been fed by workers from Poland's eastern neighbours.

In a further step this July, Poland made it easier for citizens of the three coun-



▲ Poland has slipped from being the top destination for Ukrainian workers to around sixth or seventh as countries such as Spain and Italy win favour (Photo: © Bill Atkins/IOM, 2007)

tries to obtain three-month permits to work in any sector in Poland, provided their future employer files an application costing around 100 zlotys, or the equivalent of 40 US dollars.

That represents a welcome change for employers having trouble meeting their work force needs. They have long criticized as top-heavy labour regulations which cost nine times more and which required them first to advertise a vacancy for a certain period, then to prove that no one from Poland or another EU member state was available to fill it, and finally to apply for a permit.

Those rules still apply to citizens of other countries. But focusing on Ukraine, for example, is not a long-term solution, cautions Pawel Kaczmarszyk, of

Warsaw University's Centre of Migration Research. Poland has slipped from being the top destination for Ukrainian workers to around sixth or seventh preference, as countries such as Spain and Italy win favour, he says.

### Casting the Labour Net Wider

With that in mind, Grzyb says his department's next step is to scout the market in other former Soviet nations, including Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Moldova, as well as in Balkan countries such as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The authorities have also been putting out feelers in Asia, notably sending delegations to China and India to talk about potential labour migration deals.



The emphasis there is likely to be on direct deals between Polish and Asian construction companies, for example, to bring in workers temporarily to carry out a specific contract, rather than opening the door to individual labour migrants.

There are suggestions that encouraging emigrant Poles to return home is a simpler solution than seeking labour migrants further afield, but experts note that lower salaries than in western Europe remain a disincentive.

Estimates vary for the number of Poles who have left for other EU member states since their country joined the union, ranging from around 750,000 to more than 1.5 million.

Poles have been emigrating en masse since controls on leaving the country ended in 1989 with a million people leaving in the 1990's alone.

The vast majority of the post-2004 migrants have been bound for Britain and Ireland which, along with Sweden, opened their labour markets immediately to citizens of the EU's newcomer states.

Other EU members in Western Europe have gradually been lifting their own employment restrictions over the past two years, creating further opportunities for would-be emigrants.

### More Poles in Labour Market

The emigrants represent a significant slice of their homeland's population of just below 38 million, and the fact that their average age is 26 has heightened Polish authorities' concerns about the loss of a swathe of economically active people.

Studies in Britain have shown that at least 20 per cent of Polish migrants have no intention of going back, a similar proportion are considering staying put in their new-found home, and the remainder have yet to make up their mind.

It is tempting to draw a direct line between emigration, Poland's falling unemployment rate – which by September had dropped to 11.7 per cent from 15.3 per cent a year earlier – and labour shortages.

But the picture is not that simple, cautions Kaczmarczyk. "This for me is highly controversial," he says.

He notes there were labour shortages even in the 1990s when unemployment was far higher because of a lack of internal mobility in Poland, caused in part by transport and housing problems.

Labour migration schemes may present a short-term solution but Poland should still do more to try to tap its domestic labour market potential, he adds.

Only 54.5 per cent of the Polish population aged 15-64 was working in 2006, compared with 66 per cent in the EU's 15 more-established western member states. The EU's overall target is 70 per cent participation in the labour force in that age group.

Grzyb says the authorities also recognize that need. "We have to secure national labour sources. That's the absolute priority," he stresses. But, he adds, Warsaw also has to probe the prospects for labour migration because it would be a tall order to enact welfare system reforms quickly enough to get non-working Poles into the labour market to meet the immediate needs of the economy. **M**

▼ Poland has pledged to build new sporting venues for the Euro 2012 football championship it is co-hosting with Ukraine as well as a new airport and hotels. Falling in the same year as the London Olympics, it is facing increasing competition in the construction and service labour markets (Photo: © Bill Atkins/IOM, 2007)





**A** small island developing state nestling in the Indian Ocean and a paradise destination for tourists, Mauritius has already survived one major brush with globalization in the 1970s by diversifying from its dependence on sugar cane. Nearly four decades on, this small but densely populated country is again having to navigate the global economic highway in search of a second economic miracle. Here, Ali Mansoor, former Lead Economist at the World Bank and now Mauritius' Financial Secretary, talks to IOM about how Mauritius is adapting to its new economic and social reality.

# Surviving the Global Economy

## – Mauritius Moves Towards Another Miracle

**IOM:** Mr. Mansoor, why is Mauritius now having to rethink how it operates in the global economy?

**Ali Mansoor:** Mauritius is facing a sharp transition from dependence on trade preferences to open competition in the global economy. The rate of our economic growth dropped from 5-6 per cent to about 2 per cent between 2002-2006. This reflects the failure to respond to the triple shocks of the dismantling of the Multifibre Agreement (a quota system designed to protect clothing and textile manufactures in developed countries while facilitating access for developing countries), soaring oil prices and the sharp cuts in guaranteed sugar prices that have impacted negatively on two of our key sectors – sugar and textile – whilst curtailing the purchasing power of most of the population.

The European Union's reduction of sugar prices by 36 per cent by September 2009 is a major blow to our economy given that about 90 per cent of our sugar production is exported to the European market. The textile and clothing sector, meanwhile, has registered a contraction of 30 per cent in value added and a reduction in its workforce by around 25,000 over the past four years. The World Bank estimates that a further 12,000 low skilled jobs in both industries will be lost over the next three years.

Obviously, employment creation possibilities in these sectors are rather limited and the growth rates in the other two important sectors in Mauritius – tourism and financial services – cannot compensate for the decline in the others.



▲ The European Union's reduction of sugar prices by 36 per cent by September 2009 represents a major blow to the Mauritian economy. About 90 per cent of its sugar production is exported to the European market (Photo: © Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, 2007)



▲ An estimated 12,000 workers in Mauritius's sugar and textile industries will be lost in the next three years according to the World Bank. Many thousands have already been lost. A significant reforming of its labour market is essential through retraining and re-skilling of its workers from these sectors, many of whom are women with little education, if Mauritius is to turn things around (Photo: © Mauritius Sugar Industry Research Institute, 2007)



## IOM: So what is Mauritius doing about it?

**Ali Mansoor:** We're conscious of the need to adapt quickly to this new economic reality. The government has embarked on a comprehensive ten-year Economic Reform Programme focusing on fiscal consolidation and discipline, improving the investment climate in order to be among the top 10 investment-friendly locations, mobilizing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and restructuring the economy to both unlock economic growth and widen the circle of opportunities.

The latter includes not just a fundamental restructuring and modernization of the sugar and textile sectors, but also the promotion of emerging sectors such as information and communication technology (ICT), the seafood hub, aquaculture, a land-based oceanic industry; an international medical hub, a regional knowledge centre, light engineering and the transformation of tourism into a broader hospitality industry.

All of this involves a reform of our labour market which begins with large-scale re-training of textile and sugar cane workers as well as the unemployed, including those with low educational attainment. Our unemployment rate is relatively high, hovering at about 9 per cent for several years. A significant number of the unemployed haven't passed primary school examinations and are women. Despite this, the job vacancy rate has remained relatively pronounced over the years with significant migration to fill skills gaps at all levels. So re-training and re-skilling is essential.

The government is also negotiating temporary labour migration programmes with destination countries. This would enable Mauritians to build up their skills abroad and on return, find employment in new sectors or start a business under a scheme to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

**IOM: Mauritius is not really known as a major labour sending country. Why should migration be a factor in the government's economic restructuring plans?**

**Ali Mansoor:** As an island economy that is undergoing an economic transformation from a labour intensive to a service economy, there is little scope for



▲ The dismantling of the Multifibre Agreement has hit Mauritius hard with the loss of 25,000 jobs in this sector in the past three years alone (Photo: © Mauritius Government Information Systems, 2007)

low skilled workers to find employment. So circular migration to countries in Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Canada would be a good opportunity for the low-skilled, especially women, to get international exposure and rapidly build up both their human capital and financial savings which they could use upon return to start a small business. On an individual human level, it would also help them and their families to uplift their financial, economic and social status.

IOM, with its long-standing operational expertise is playing a prominent role in helping Mauritius to unlock circular migration agreements with countries where there is demand for such low-skilled workers. We are looking for in-

creased visa allocations for our unemployed with some sort of guarantee or bond so that after their temporary stay abroad, they return to Mauritius. More importantly, we would like to develop incentive based schemes with our partners. A matching savings scheme, for example, would both encourage savings and enhance the attractiveness of return. Some progress has already been made. IOM is currently assisting Mauritius in the recruitment of some 85 workers to work for the Maple Leaf Fresh Food Processing Company in Canada and we are initiating discussions with EU member states, including France, with the support of the European Commission. We also look to the World Bank to help us formulate the appropriate incentives and regulatory framework.





## IOM: But why temporary and circular migration?

**Ali Mansoor:** We want to maximize the development potential of migrants returning home after a limited stay abroad, bringing with them new skills, savings and ideas. We also want to encourage remittance flows which will improve long-term benefits to migrants' families and enhance their development impact.

But we also want to facilitate the Mauritian diaspora's return home so they too can assist in the development of the country. Since the early 1970s, an estimated 200,000 Mauritians have migrated to take up employment in countries such as UK, France, Australia and Canada. Now, as Mauritius moves to the next phase of economic development, the need for expertise in new poles of growth is being felt. In this context, the government is encouraging the diaspora to invest and participate actively in the development of the country.

## IOM: So how is Mauritius planning to achieve this?

**Ali Mansoor:** We are creating a conducive environment for SMEs with a new package of incentives being put in place. And together with IOM, the government will ensure that those going abroad on circular labour migration programmes will not face bottlenecks in sending their remittances home and in channeling them into SMEs or other productive sectors of the economy.

As regards the diaspora, Mauritius needs to seek creative solutions in harnessing the intellectual and financial resources of our diaspora – something China and India in particular, have already achieved. To help us, IOM has carried out two studies on diaspora mobilization strategies and an overseas employment plan for Mauritian nationals. One concrete outcome from this is the decision by the government to tax Mauritians on income remitted instead of world wide income and to provide returnees with a concessionary duty when buying a car. We already recognize dual nationality which is a major bottleneck for many other countries to mobilize their diaspora.

▼ The Mauritian government hopes that its emigrants will invest in small and medium enterprises upon their return home in order to build a healthy and vibrant economy (Photo: © Mauritius Government Information Systems, 2007)





**IOM: What measures are you taking to ensure that Mauritian workers are competitive with other nationalities for low-skilled labour?**

**Ali Mansoor:** A key component of the economic reform programme is the Empowerment Programme (EP) which aims to unlock opportunities for the unemployed and those affected by retrenchment, particularly women, through training and re-skilling.

The EP has also been entrusted to oversee the implementation of the circular migration programme which will, amongst other things, match the unemployed with the demand for labour in receiving countries. Through EP, those chosen will be given pre-departure training to meet the requirements of destination countries and in the case of Maple Leaf, this includes functional English language training.

Another important aspect not to forget is that Mauritius has a vibrant and multicultural population that speaks French and English and local Creole. There is also a mix of religions, so we have Hindus, Muslims, Catholics and Buddhists. These are all factors which can potentially facilitate integration into host communities, a major issue in today's globalized world.



▲ Job seekers eagerly search for new employment opportunities through the Mauritian government's Empowerment Programme, a key component of its economic reform. The programme is also overseeing the implementation of a circular migration strategy, including matching the unemployed with demand for labour in receiving countries (© Empowerment Programme, Mauritius/2007)

**IOM: So can Mauritius pull off a second economic miracle?**

**Ali Mansoor:** The government is committed to maintaining a sound, stable and liberal macroeconomic and trading environment which will pave the way for another historic transformation into a high-growth economy, increase competitiveness and efficiency, raise employment levels and reduce poverty and inequalities within society. Already some positive results are being seen,

such as a massive flow of foreign direct investment, the more than doubling of the economic growth rate from 2.3 per cent in 2005 to 5.8 per cent in 2007 and a decrease in the budget deficit and public sector debt.

These are clear indications of what lies ahead and if the indicators continue on the same trend, Mauritius could contemplate a return to sustained growth with equity. **M**

## Circular Labour Migration

**T**he recruitment and departure of 85 Mauritians to Canada to work for the Maple Leaf Fresh Food Processing Company in their pork meat and poultry processing plants is scheduled for early 2008. It represents the first of several agreements to place Mauritian low-skilled workers in countries that need workers in sectors such as agriculture and home care.

The tri-lateral agreement involving IOM, the Mauritian government and Maple Leaf touches on issues such as pre-departure orientation, employment contracts, visas, travel arrangements and language classes. The agreement also ensures migrants' rights are safeguarded and that workers are protected from any form of exploitation.

To ensure integration, the agreement also covers post-arrival assistance, stay and return issues for the migrants who come from a country with a proven history of a well-integrated diaspora.

An IOM Liaison Office has been opened in Mauritius to implement this programme.

In order to develop its circular migration programme further, Mauritius is seeking assistance from external parties which would enable participants to build their skills abroad, save money and on their return, find employment in new sectors or start a business under a small and medium enterprise incubator scheme.

With countries in Europe and the Middle East as well as Australia and Canada facing ageing populations and labour shortages, the programme would be aimed at such markets, particularly in jobs such as carers, home nurses, seasonal agricultural workers, and in agro-processing and manufacturing related work.



# In Search of the Open Door

## Labour Migration from Colombia to Canada

A labour shortage in Canada prompted Maple Leaf Foods to venture into foreign recruitment in 2002.

Lenton explains: "Parts of Canada are booming. For example, in Alberta there is a lot of work and higher pay, so many Canadians are moving to that province. And Manitoba, which is mainly agricultural and not densely populated, is facing a shortage of workers."

This particular Maple Leaf plant, the largest employer in Brandon with 1,650 employees and with plans to increase its workforce to 2,200, recently welcomed 149 migrant workers from Colombia.

By Niurka Piñeiro, IOM Washington DC, in Manitoba

"**E**nriching – Motivating – Comfortable – Absolutely 100 per cent successful!" are the words used by the employees and management of Maple Leaf Foods to describe their experience with labour migration.

"We have nothing but good stories to tell," says Dan Lenton, Production Manager of the Maple Leaf Foods plant in Brandon, Manitoba.

Javier Andrés Avellaneda, who recently arrived from Colombia, chooses the word "comfortable" to describe his experience so far. "When you try something on and it fits and feels good, you say it is comfortable. Well that is how I feel since I arrived in Brandon. Everyone has made us feel welcome. We are respected by our supervisors."

Susan Boeve, Head of International Recruitment for Maple Leaf plants in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan confirms they currently employ more than 1,100 migrant workers from China, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, the Philippines, and Ukraine.

IOM and Maple Leaf have signed bilateral agreements with Colombia and Georgia and trilateral agreements with Honduras and Mauritius. "Over the next years we will be working with IOM to bring more foreign workers to Maple Leaf from these and other countries," explains Boeve who has her bags packed and is ready for her long journey to Mauritius to recruit the next group of Maple Leaf employees.

Twenty-seven-year old Miguel Mahecha arrived in Canada at the end of September. "In Bogotá I worked in the meat processing industry but the wages



▲ Dan Lenton with Miguel Mahecha in the plant's cafeteria (Photo: © Charles Porcel, 2007)



▼ Maple Leaf Foods is a Canadian-based food processing company with more than 22,500 employees across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Asia, and operates more than 100 facilities (Photo: © Charles Porcel, 2007)



were very low and the hours very long. I decided to migrate because of lack of opportunities."

He shares a brand new two-bedroom apartment with three other Colombians, so he is happy and not alone, but he misses his family. "I miss my girlfriend, my mother, father and sister. I call them often. I brought my laptop but I still do not have access to the Internet at my place, so I go to the public library to send emails home."

One month is all it took for Miguel to make one of the most important decisions of his life. "I want to stay in Canada and become a permanent resident," he says confidently. "The people of Brandon have been good to us. The Salvadorians who have been here for a few years have been very helpful. Also, the church has given us furniture, clothing, kitchen utensils and other things to begin our new lives."

Javier Andrés left his wife and three-year old daughter in Colombia. He is very wise for his 25 years. "I see a wide door that has opened for us. I also want to stay in Canada and plan to bring my family as soon as I become a permanent resident. Why would I go back to Colombia? Sure I love my country, but Canada is offering stability; financial and personal security. I can aspire to owning a car, a house; I have so many opportunities here," he explains excitedly.

Maple Leaf managers are proud of the 95 per cent retention rate since they began hiring foreign workers. "In 2002 we were in the initial stages. Now it has become second nature for me to ring Susan and say: 'We need employees. So where are we off to next?' We're in this for the long term," says Lenton.

The face-to-face interview is the most important part of the hiring process. Boeve likens it to bringing a baby to the managers.

"It's their baby, and this is why I always travel with plant personnel to do the final interviews," adds Boeve.

The selected candidates are hired for a period of two years under the temporary foreign worker programme. At the end of the two years, Maple Leaf nominates those wishing to stay in Canada to the Provincial Nominee Programme. Once approved, the migrant is awarded permanent residence status and can bring their spouse and minor children to Canada.

**"Maple Leaf helps those wishing to apply for permanent residence to gather their documents and fill in the required forms. This is a costly process and may require a lawyer," explains Boeve.**

Maple Leaf finds apartments to let in the city and pays the first month's rent. They also provide beds and bedding, a welcome package, a one-month bus pass and grocery coupons to help the new foreign employees until they receive their first paycheck.

Maple Leaf currently produces all of its employee communications in four languages but Boeve says soon it could be more.

"We want to select people from different nationalities to keep the plants culturally mixed. I recently travelled to Honduras. Working with IOM we selected a group of 35 persons for our plant in Alberta. They should be arriving soon."

Leonardo Guerrero, a 27-year old from Bogotá, is an industrial engineer. "In my country I was making the equivalent of CA\$ 400 per month. At Maple Leaf I am making CA\$ 323 per week. Great persons are made from the bottom up, and I know that I can move ahead. This is what prompted me to migrate to Canada. In Colombia the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. High positions are assigned to friends or relatives," he muses.

Miguel interjects: "In Colombia the door is not wide open for everyone to enter. We are opening doors in Canada for other Colombians." **M**

## Where do these young men see themselves in five years?



▲ Leonardo – Living in Canada with my family, feeling totally independent (Photo: © Charles Porcel, 2007)



▲ Miguel – Living in Canada with a wife and children. I will be working at Maple Leaf but will own a restaurant because I love to cook (Photo: © Charles Porcel, 2007)



▲ Javier Andrés – Living in Canada with my family. Back at school and working for Maple Leaf. I know this is what I want. I want to reach top management (Photo: © Charles Porcel, 2007)



# Nurturing Valued Human Resources in Costa Rica

By Jéssica Saavedra, IOM San José

Don Modesto's face lights up in a special way when he speaks of his beloved Nicaragua. This seems to happen to most migrants when fond memories of loved ones, places, and even smells of their country of origin creep up. But eventually they come back to reality and to the fact that they decided to migrate in search of better economic opportunities.

Don Modesto was born and raised in Nicaragua, but has lived in Costa Rica for the past eight years. He says life has been good in his adopted country – better jobs and quality of life. “Guanacaste (the province where he lives in Costa Rica) has provided a good home for me. I have been treated with kindness by Costa Ricans. I think I have found a good place to make a life with good employment opportunities, although sometimes I have experienced humiliation and abuse from unscrupulous persons.”

What Don Modesto is referring to is something experienced by thousands of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica.

In the past three decades, migration flows from Nicaragua to Costa Rica have been prompted by natural disasters, political conflicts and economic downturns. A weak economy and the end of war in Nicaragua have been the main factors for the most recent migration flows. The



▲ Thousands of Nicaraguans migrate to find jobs in the relative prosperity of Costa Rica (Photo: © Jéssica Saavedra/IOM, 2007)

shrinking economy prompted many to migrate to Costa Rica in search of employment in sectors less attractive to the native population with the end of war easing movement across borders.

For unskilled workers and those in sectors suffering from high unemployment, Costa Rica was an attractive and accessible option with a high demand for labour and a better quality of life.





▲ As more Costa Ricans find better paid jobs in the service sector, demand for migrant labour is rising in construction and agriculture (Photo: © Jéssica Saavedra/IOM, 2007)

Although the exact numbers are not available, estimates point to some 250,000 Nicaraguans living in Costa Rica on a permanent basis. A similar number is estimated to be in the country in an irregular fashion, working in seasonal jobs and returning home once the work is over.

The increase in the number of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica is also based on the changes that have occurred in the labour market since the mid 1980s. Costa Rica has seen a marked increase in the demand for labour in the service sector which the local population has readily filled, leaving behind back-breaking work such as coffee picking, harvesting sugar cane, citrus and other fruits, as well as domestic work and construction.

Fear and ignorance of the law are the main reasons why migrant workers prefer not to register with the social security system. For employers this represents huge savings, but for the workers it means that they are not protected in case of on-the-job accidents. When irregular migrants are hired in the construction industry, for example, no written contract is offered, they are paid below minimum wages and are not covered by social security, which includes workman's compensation insurance.

Working conditions on construction sites near border areas are worse: the living conditions offered by employers are below minimum standards, the work days are long and the diet consists of the most basic fare – rice, beans, corn tortillas and coffee. There is none of the

much-needed protein needed to perform the strenuous work.

The Costa Rican government has worked tirelessly to protect the rights of migrant workers, but there are certain gaps such as when employers use irregular migrant labour.

Johnny Ruiz, Head of Costa Rica's Labour Migration Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, is an advocate of organized labour migration schemes. "When a migrant from Nicaragua decides to migrate to our country in search of work, they should do so legally so that he or she can be protected by our laws. This way we can be sure that employers are complying with the labour laws," he says.

In the past few years, Costa Rica has experienced a boom in various economic sectors, particularly tourism-related construction. In 2007, more than 4 million square metres of new construction will be finished. This includes almost 3 million square metres for family dwellings and close to 1 million for commerce and industry. According to the Chamber of Commerce, 41 per cent of this building boom is taking place in coastal regions.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS by its Spanish acronym) has confirmed that the country is facing a scarcity of manpower, especially in the Guanacaste area where most construction companies complain of a serious shortage of local manpower. As a result, more than 60 per cent of construction workers in this region are migrants from Nicaragua.

To harness the development potential inherent in migration flows, spur economic development and improve living conditions in areas with high rates of migration, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI by its Spanish acronym) provided funding to IOM to put in a place a co-development project between Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

One of the main objectives is to regularize the flow of Nicaraguan migrant workers to Costa Rica by ensuring legal integration into the local labour market, improve the economic and psychosocial situation of the migrants and their families and to promote the social integration of migrants into Costa Rican society.



To help achieve this, IOM offices in Costa Rica and Nicaragua are working with the ministries of labour, foreign affairs and immigration services to ensure that Nicaraguans registered in a labour migration database are matched with the current labour needs in Costa Rica based on requests made by employers to the MTSS.

Once in Costa Rica, each migrant receives a work permit which includes the name of the employer and the length of the contract.

Ruiz believes that the success of this project depends on the willingness of all parties to work together.

**“We need to create and establish a solid working relationship between the officials in both countries. This will ensure that Nicaraguans have the information needed to make an informed decision and to migrate in a regular and orderly fashion.”**

▼ Regularizing migration flows and issuing work permits will give Nicaraguan construction workers protection under Costa Rican labour laws (Photo: © Jéssica Saavedra/IOM, 2007)

“The project is benefiting both countries,” explains Jorge Peraza, IOM programme officer in San José. “In October 2007, the Costa Rican government announced that a quota of 10,000 migrant workers from Nicaragua will be admitted under temporary labour migration permits”.

For 2008, preliminary estimates indicate that more than 61,000 workers will be needed for the construction sector alone, and more than 77,000 for 2009 and 2010.

Horacio Argueta of Nicaragua’s Ministry of Labour welcomes the IOM-managed project. “The greatest benefit for our government will be the benefit that our nationals will receive. Nicaraguan workers will be well informed and protected under Costa Rican laws. This project has stepped in to fill a great gap: labour migration that truly benefits the migrants,” she says.

Everyone involved in the co-development project is hoping that all migrants like Don Modesto are able to make their dream a reality.

“No doubt that Costa Rica and Nicaragua are different, but I cannot allow myself to think of going back to my country of birth. It was here that I was able to reach my goals. Life has been good to me here. But Nicaragua will forever remain in my heart,” Don Modesto asserts with an air of melancholy. **M**





# Irregular Migration from Senegal

## *Through Artists' Eyes*

For each of the some 32,000 irregular migrants who successfully reached Spain's Canary Islands in 2006, an unknown number of others died. Some drowned when the small boats that brought them from West African ports foundered on the high seas. Others simply disappeared – perhaps robbed and thrown overboard by smugglers evading coastguards short of their destination.

The West African state of Senegal is the source of many of the thousands of young people who put their lives in the hands of smugglers to find a better life in Europe.

Irregular migration has reached epic proportions in Senegal and public debate on its implications for both the migrants and the country is a hot social and political topic.

In September 2007 IOM's Regional Office in Dakar, which plays a key role in informing potential migrants about the realities of irregular migration, hosted an exhibition of artwork by local artists

and young Senegalese who failed in their attempts to reach Europe.

A selection of striking works from the exhibition: "Regards croisés sur l'émigration clandestine" are featured in this issue of Migration.

All the pieces were offered for sale to support the activities of GIE TEKKE FI CI SENEGAL (To Succeed Here in Senegal), an NGO for young Senegalese migrants who have been returned from Europe.

The exhibition was part of a European Commission-funded IOM programme to reinforce the capacities of the Senegalese government to manage migration and fight irregular migration. **M**



**Mor Faye**  
"Exile II"  
Acrylique on canvas  
150 cm x 100 cm



**Amadou Gueye Mbaye**  
"The Route"  
Acrylique on canvas  
70 cm x 100 cm

**SOLD**



**Die Fall Kane**  
"Illegal Migration 2"  
Acrylique on canvas  
100 cm x 70 cm





**GIE Tekki Fi Ci Senegal**  
*"The Journey 3"*  
 Acrylique on canvas  
 90 cm x 100 cm



**Die Fall Kane**  
*"Illegal Migration 4"*  
 Acrylique on canvas  
 100 cm x 70 cm



**Oumar Faye**  
*"The Hopeless"*  
 Acrylique on canvas  
 90 cm x 110 cm

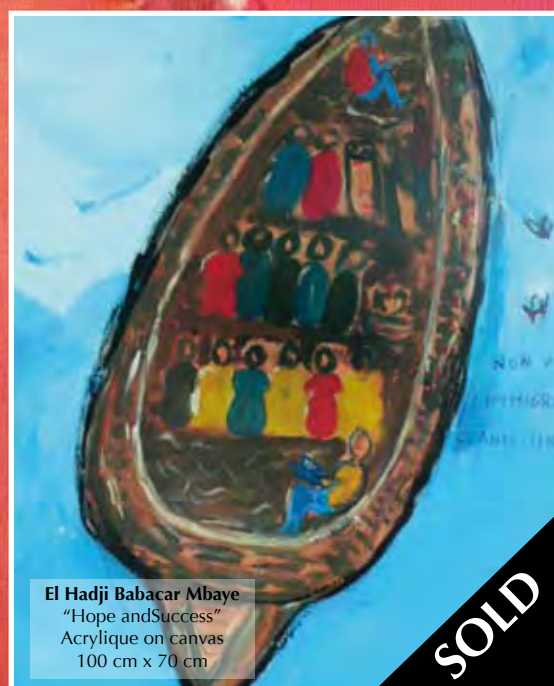


**Ibou Gueye**  
*"Trafficking of Illegal Migrants"*  
 Acrylique on canvas  
 90 cm x 110 cm

**SOLD**



**Thierno Soulemane Sow**  
*"The Illegal Migrant"*  
 Technique mix - collage  
 70 cm x 100 cm



**El Hadji Babacar Mbaye**  
*"Hope and Success"*  
 Acrylique on canvas  
 100 cm x 70 cm

**SOLD**

For more information about the exhibition, the artists and how to purchase the works, please contact Jo-Lind Roberts at IOM Dakar. Tel: +221 869 62 30. Email: [jlroberts@iom.int](mailto:jlroberts@iom.int)



# Smugglers Prey on Migrants

**Chris Petch of the Danish Refugee Council/IOM, Advisor for the Mixed Migration Task Force based in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, reports from Somalia on the desperate plight of irregular migrants caught in one of the most tragic human smuggling hotspots in the world.**

**A**s the world's eyes are fixed on the mass killings in Darfur, another forgotten tale of terrible hardships, injustice, injuries and death, is unfolding daily in the Horn of Africa.

Every year, tens of thousands of migrants travel vast distances on foot, by truck, in cars and boats to flee the region's endless wars, economic hardships, floods, droughts and famines. Mainly young men, but also women with small children, they come from Ethiopia and Somalia.

**They pay large amounts of money to smugglers who promise to bring them to foreign lands where they can earn a decent wage. Instead they are frequently robbed, raped, murdered or abandoned in the Somali desert by local guides.**

Some Ethiopians leave for political reasons, but most leave home for economic reasons, persuaded by fellow villagers returning from the Arabian Gulf to poverty-stricken villages with money to improve their lives.

But ethnic Somalis from the Ogaden region, victims of protracted fighting between the Ogaden separatist and Ethiopian forces, tell stories of their villages being burnt and children and livestock killed.

Others from the centre and south of Somalia say that the increasing violence in Mogadishu and the surrounding region has pushed them beyond the limit. Many have lost all their possessions to the armed forces and militias operating numerous checkpoints.

The migrants are heading for Bossasso in Somalia's Puntland on the Gulf of Aden. From there, smugglers will take them on the short, dangerous sea voyage to Yemen in small, bare boats for US\$50-120.

People smuggling is a major industry in Bossasso, involving at least 600 people who rent out campsites, sell food, rent trucks and operate telephone call shops, as well as the boat owners themselves.

Near the port, hundreds of Ethiopians pay landlords to stay within bare, walled compounds. With only cardboard sheets under them and no shelter, women and young men alike sleep rough with very limited washing and toilet facilities. But Bossasso also has to cope with the many informal camps around the town, where thousands of displaced families live in shelters constructed from rags that flap in the sea breeze.

The sheer numbers have overwhelmed the Bossasso local authorities, despite help from local and international NGOs. Health care is insufficient, food is scarce and children are undernourished. Women living in the camps have been raped at night while going to the toilet, and young men have been beaten and shot.

**Migrants are trapped and will stay here for years, trying to eke out an existence, but too unwilling or afraid to return home. Others will only stay long enough to earn money from badly paying jobs to**

▼ A cave restaurant at Marero, 12 kms east of Bossasso, where migrants buy food before boarding boats to Yemen (Photo: © Chris Petch – DRC/IOM, 2007)



▼ Shelter for the migrants living in Bossasso's camps is often little more than rags (Photo: © Johanne Hjort/DRC, 2007)





# Fleeing the Horn of Africa

**fund the next stage of their journey and pay the smugglers.**

When the seas in the Gulf of Aden are calm, the smuggling season begins in earnest in late August and the migrants collect in Bossasso, waiting for the chance to cross. In the town, the smugglers recruit their passengers in the cafés and telephone shops. They are well known and walk the streets freely.

Loading points for their human cargo are also well known. One even has a restaurant which has operated for a decade a makeshift tent in a cave overlooking the Marero loading bay where migrants buy their last meal before embarking on the smugglers' boats.

The fare for a place in an open boat under the blazing sun pays for fuel, the wages of the crew and the bribes needed to operate a multi-million dollar business.

The boats are full of young men, squatting, sometimes beside mothers with small babies in their arms. Many are aware of the dangers posed by the sea and the ruthless men manning the boats known to beat, stab, shoot or throw overboard migrants who question their authority.

During one such voyage at the beginning of September, 20 people died. Seven were thrown overboard, seven died of asphyxiation in the hold, four died from dehydration and two more subsequently died from their injuries. In October, 66 more drowned in one

voyage after being thrown overboard by smugglers.

The surviving passengers of these boats, who were all forced to swim ashore to protect the smugglers from encountering the Yemeni Coast Guards, reported that the smugglers had beaten them with belts, sticks and hammers. Some suffered stab wounds. The smugglers also confiscated the small quantity of water that they carried with them.

Migrants surviving the trip are met by UNHCR staff in Yemen, offered medical assistance and a chance to claim asylum. Some of the Ethiopians are arrested by the Yemeni authorities, but others manage to escape to continue their journey across the Saudi desert. Those washed ashore dead are buried without ceremony on the beach.

▼ Squalid camps house thousands of stranded migrants in Bossasso (Photo: © Johanne Hjort/DRC, 2007)







▲ Children in Bossasso's camps face malnutrition and little healthcare (Photo: © Johanne Hjort/DRC, 2007)

The protection and humanitarian issues of this mixed migration of economic migrants, asylum seekers and displaced people is now being addressed by a joint agency Task Force of UNOCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, the Danish Refugee Council and Norwegian Refugee Council.

The challenge facing the Task Force is to ensure that all needs are addressed and there are no gaps. Their efforts include support for local health services, so that the migrants can go to existing hospitals and clinics.

A network of international and local NGOs are monitoring the migrants' routes, the risks that they face and finding ways to protect them. Last year, IOM offered safe return for migrants stranded in Bossasso to travel back to their homes in Ethiopia, thereby avoiding the hazardous boat trip to Yemen.

IOM is also opening an office in Bossasso, initially with UN funding, which will focus on outreach and advocacy. If further funds become available from the international community, it will design migration management programmes that build the regional authorities' ca-

capacity to cope with this massive and intractable humanitarian problem. It will also help the government to develop the legislation, training, documentation and specialist skills and technical equipment needed to safeguard the migrants' rights. **M**

▼ A smuggler's boat waits for its human load at Marero (Photo: © Chris Petch/DRC/IOM, 2007)





# Mexico's Complex Migratory Phenomenon

**By Mauricio Farah Gebara, Fifth Visitor General of the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico**

In 1980 Mexico's National Migration Institute returned 10,000 irregular migrants to their countries of origin. At the time, this number set an all-time record.

In 2004, 2005 and 2006, the annual average of persons apprehended and returned was 215,000. In a period of 25 years, migration flows into and through Mexico multiplied by more than 20.

The quantitative increase meant qualitative changes and vice versa. Mexico suddenly found its southern border converted into a major operations centre for human traffickers, a gigantic migration corridor, a place of human pain and suffering, and a region where human rights abuses against migrants are commonplace.

Despite the fact that these changes began well before the dawn of the new millennium, Mexican authorities did not gauge the need to establish a migration policy and allowed inertia to take charge of migration, perhaps trusting that the consequences would be mostly imperceptible as the majority of migrants crossing the southern border where Central Americans using Mexico as a stepping stone into the United States. So they simply watched transmigration pass by.

Officially, Central American migrants were merely a growing statistic. Corrupt public officials and delinquents discov-

ered in them a defenceless booty. So, they became subject to a horrific catalogue of abuses. In Mexico the suffering of migrants ranged from humiliation to mutilation, from robbery to extortion, from contempt to abduction and rape, from mistreatment to death.

The Mexican National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH by its Spanish acronym) and other migrants' rights organizations pointed out and deplored the unacceptable incongruence: Mexico was not giving migrants entering their territory the fair treatment they were demanding for their nationals in the United States.

And the contradiction remains. As a source country for migrants, Mexico has the right to demand the fair treatment of their nationals in the United States. But at the same time, Mexico has a moral and legal obligation to protect and respect the human rights of irregular migrants inside their territory.

Despite the enormous and undisputed contributions made by Mexican migrants to the economic development of the United States, the politics of contention and the practice of abuse continue to be part of the migratory phenomenon in the receiving country.



▲ An increasing number of Central American migrants have been transiting through Mexico (Photo: © Marc Henry André, 2004)



► Salvadoran migrants lucky to escape death from suffocation while being smuggled in a container (Photo: © Marc Henry André, 2004)



Nevertheless, it is estimated that in the first six years of this century, between 2 to 2.5 million Mexicans migrated to the United States. According to Mexico's National Population Council, another 560,000 Mexicans will migrate to the United States in 2007, 40 per cent more than the annual average of the past five years.

Although the United States offers employment opportunities to the vast majority of the Mexican migrants, they face disadvantageous working conditions when compared to those of citizens and regular migrants. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, irregular Mexican workers' salaries can be up to 60 per cent lower. They live in *de facto* marginalization, in virtual confinement on the edges of society which takes advantage of their labour but refuses to accept them as people.

Official figures released by the US Border Patrol of Mexicans who are apprehended and returned to their country, reveal one very distressing note: more than 4,000 migrants have died on the border in the past 12 years. This translates into one death per day for more than a decade. This is the result of a strategy that has pushed migratory flows toward higher-risk and inhospitable places.

Since 1994, when Operation Guardian aimed at tightening border controls and crossings got underway, the United States has spent approximately US\$30 billion on increased security and detection, by increasing the number of border patrol agents from 6,000 to 18,000, building large sections of fencing or walls along the border, and installing more sophisticated technology. During this period, migration has in fact

increased, as well as the presence of criminal gangs, violence on the border, and the death of migrants. Also, circular migration, which used to allow migration to be an essentially temporary phenomenon, is no longer possible.

The indefinite postponement of US immigration reform, which is now part of presidential campaign speeches, has increased the vulnerability of the migrants. Although some experts say that the suspension of the legislative process was produced by the failure to reach an agreement, one could say that the opposite is true. By not passing legislation, senators have agreed that the status quo should remain.

**Allowing things to remain as they are is not welcome news because this means that some 12 million people will continue to live on the margins of society; that without legal recourse, migrants will continue to be forced to hire smugglers to cross into the United States; that families will remain torn apart; that hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Central Americans will continue to risk their lives in the mountains, the rivers and the deserts that line the border.**

Alongside the politics of containment, the facts indicate that there is an underlying policy, perverse, not uttered out loud, that is slowly but systematically increasing the vulnerability of migrant workers by hounding them, threatening them, cornering them to the point of submission. This would force migrants to accept the exploitation, the low wages, and the lack of social benefits. All in exchange for the privilege of living and working in the United States, where, by some peculiar logic, the need for additional labour force is recognized but migrants are shunned.

Meanwhile, Mexico opts for a lack of definition or vagueness. The authorities choose their language according to the moment and circumstance. When addressing what is happening in the United States, there is energetic and rhetorical protest. But on the subject of what is happening in Mexico, they choose indifference or promises without a firm date of compliance.

CNDH has processed more than 1,000 complaints from migrants in the past two and a half years. It has also fought, by way of written recommendations to concerned authorities, for due process asking for an immediate stop to unauthorized verification of migration status by authorities not authorized to conduct them, for more humane living conditions in migrant detention centres and for the unrestricted respect for the human rights of migrants.



At the same time, we have pointed out the need to reform Mexico's legal framework on migration which has remained practically unchanged for more than three decades while the migratory phenomenon has undergone enormous transformations.

A few aspects of Mexico's General Population Law that need to be revisited and revised include: excess of discretionary decisions by authorities; irregular migrants do not have, de facto, access to justice, which perpetuates the never-ending circle of impunity; legislation lacks harmonization with all international instruments of which Mexico is a signatory; there is no separate provision for the protection of particularly vulnerable groups such as women and children and last but not least, the penalization of migration, the revocation of which is currently being discussed.

▼ Central American migrants crossing between Guatemala and Mexico (Photo: © D. Decesare, 2002)

**Mexico, which publicizes and applauds the demonstrations carried out by Hispanics in the US in defence of their rights should listen to their complaints not only from a position of victim, but also from that of the perpetrator.**

In both countries migrants have been forced to live underground, without options, without rights. Keeping them in the darkest corners is more than a fortuitous fact it increases a migrant's vulnerability, leading to more room for abuse, exploitation, and submission.

Notwithstanding the complexity of Mexico's migratory phenomenon, it is possible to find better ways to manage migration. A first step would be to cre-

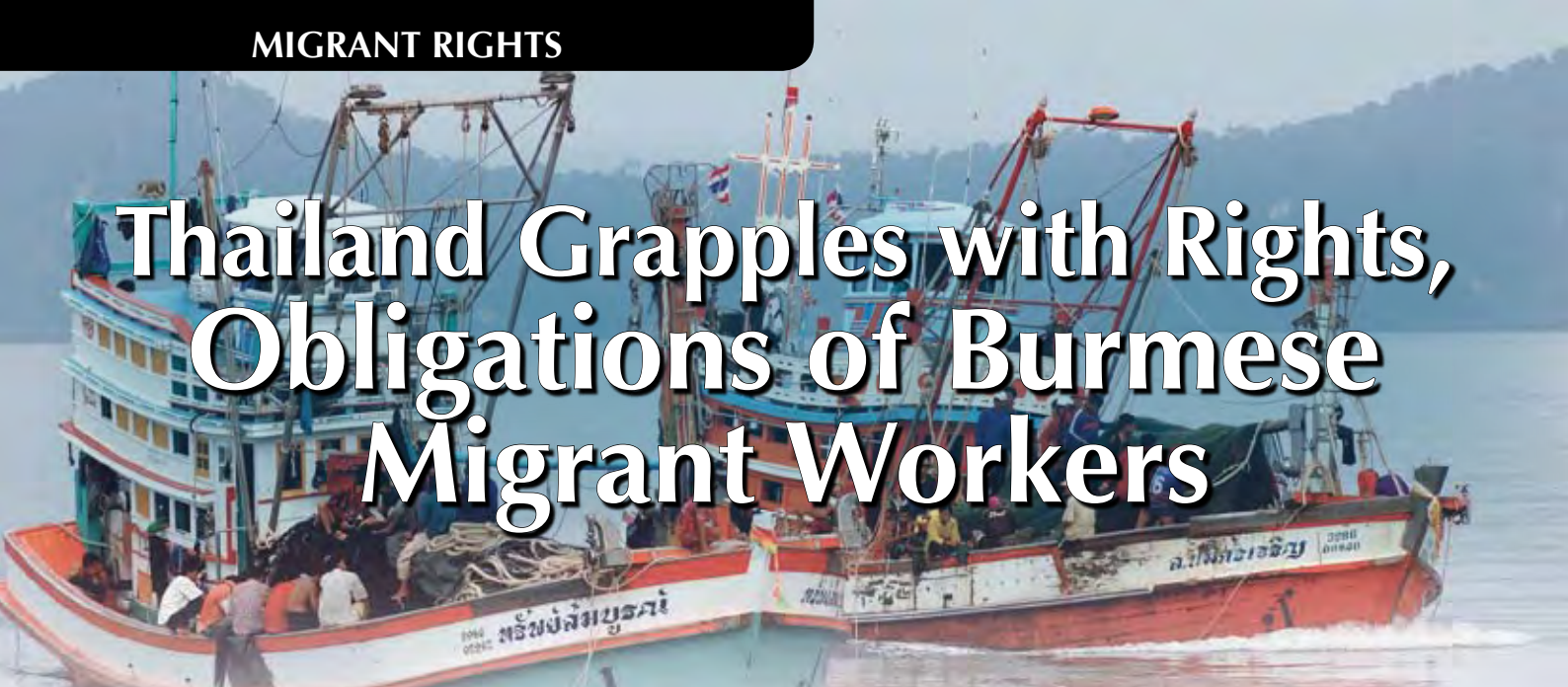
ate regional development programmes, and even better, development cooperation actions. The game of selective containment has been used to obtain cheap labour. But it is not the solution. The answer would be to reduce the need to migrate by making it an individual option and not a forced fate as it is today for hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Central Americans.

There is also a need to create channels for legal labour migration; to offer regularization options for long-established migrants; to draft modern and realistic legislation, as well as to build understanding between sending and receiving countries given the bilateral and multi-lateral nature of migration.

Migration must be rescued from the national security and terrorism agenda of today's world and transferred to its rightful place: the development, social justice, and human rights agendas. **M**







# Thailand Grapples with Rights, Obligations of Burmese Migrant Workers

By Chris Lom, IOM Regional Office for Southeast Asia, Bangkok

**L**ittle evidence remains of the December 2004 tsunami on the palm-fringed white sand beaches that stretch for 200 kms north from the Thai resort island of Phuket to the Myanmar border.

International holiday makers have flocked back to one of the world's top tourist playgrounds rebuilt mainly by migrant labour from Myanmar less than three years after the disaster levelled hotels and fishing villages alike, leaving over 8,000 dead and tens of thousands displaced.

For Aye, a 28-year old Burmese migrant who earns THB 100 (US\$3) a day as a bricklayer in the resort of Khao Lak, the tsunami brought tragedy when her younger brother, who worked on the same building site, died.

"Our boss recognized the tsunami and drove us from the site to high ground in time. But my brother was collecting building materials in a pickup with another man and they both drowned," she says.

"When we came back to the site we saw their bodies laid out on the beach, but the police told us that we couldn't take them as they had to be formally identified at the police station. But we were afraid that they would arrest us if we came back," she explains.

A year later, encouraged by an older brother from Myanmar and with help from IOM/Ministry of Public Health community health workers, Aye went

to the PhangNga Thai Tsunami Victim Identification (TTVI) morgue to provide a DNA sample and formally claim her brother's body from hundreds stored in refrigerated containers – many of them other Burmese migrants whose families were also too afraid to claim them.

For the estimated 2 million Burmese migrants working both legally and illegally in Thailand, fear of arrest and deportation to Myanmar – a country in economic and political turmoil – is a daily reality. The lack of economic opportunities back home means that even the worst jobs in Thailand's flourishing economy are an opportunity that few will pass up.

"If they are deported from (the southern city of) Ranong, they can usually find a way to come back. But if they are deported from Mae Sot (further north), there is a much higher risk of being robbed or ending up as forced labour for the Burmese military," says Aye's sympathetic Thai employer in Khao Lak.

Like many Thai employers, he values the Burmese as good workers whom, he says, work harder and for less money than their Thai counterparts.

But a complicated and relatively expensive registration process for migrant workers in Thailand means that many Burmese and their Thai employers still avoid legal registration – leaving employers liable to prosecution and workers uninsured and exposed to potential abuse.

IOM Thailand's labour migration programme manager, Vipunjit Ketunuti, who manages a USAID-funded IOM

project that informs migrant workers, employers and local government officials about labour migration law, rights and obligations, says that confusion and lack of information has led some provincial Thai governments to introduce new legislation that is actually exacerbating the problem.

"Employers and migrants who respect Thai law and register with the authorities should be encouraged and protected. But new legislation introduced in four border provinces this year to improve the regulation of migrant workers will likely be counter-productive," she says.

In PhangNga, where Aye works, and on the holiday island of Phuket for example, registered migrants are now subject to an 8:00 pm to 6:00 am curfew. If they are picked up by the police at any time without their identity papers, they risk immediate deportation.

They are forbidden to travel outside the province in which they work without special permission and are not allowed to drive cars or motorcycles. They are also banned from gathering in groups of more than five people and not allowed to own mobile phones without the prior approval of their employer.

"The legislation requires employers to only hire registered workers and to provide them with decent accommodation. But while employers may face small fines for non-compliance, legally registered migrants are now theoretically at greater risk of deportation than before," says Ketunuti.

For many low-paid Burmese migrant workers already reluctant to pay an an-



nual registration fee that represents over a month's wages and wary of using the Thai public health services to which it entitles them, that may tip the balance between working legally or illegally in Thailand.

In addition, few legal channels exist for Burmese workers wanting to work in Thailand, so most enter the country illegally. Thailand has not offered irregular migrants the opportunity to register and regularize their status since 2004.

Migrants who are already registered and have work permits are allowed to renew them annually for THB 3,800 (US\$ 112), of which THB 600 is for a medical check up and THB 1,300 for health insurance.

But many Burmese migrants rely on middlemen to process their applications, increasing the cost by as much as 50 per cent – representing another disincentive to renew their work permits each year.

“Some unscrupulous employers also see an upside in hiring irregular migrants who exist on the margins of Thai society, living with the risk of summary deportation and powerless to negotiate their terms and conditions of employment,” says IOM regional labour migration specialist, Federico Soda.

But the Thai authorities are acutely aware of the social, public health and other risks associated with marginalizing some 1.5 million irregular migrants and their families living in Thailand and driving them underground, according to Ketunuti.

“Marginalizing a generation of migrant kids by excluding them from education or excluding migrant communities from national preparedness plans to combat a bird flu pandemic or a second tsunami are now widely recognized as issues that have to be addressed by government,” she notes.

“IOM's migrant rights project in Thailand is designed to support government efforts to cope with these challenges. By bringing together government officials, employers and migrant workers through sharing information and building trust, we believe that we are contributing to a more transparent system that will eventually optimize the obvious economic benefits of labour migration, while protecting the human rights of migrants and their families to an acceptable international standard,” she adds. **M**



► Burmese migrants working in PhangNga's rubber plantations are now subject to an 8:00 pm – 6:00 am curfew (Photo: © Thierry Falise/IOM, 2006)



► PhangNga's thriving fishing industry employs mainly Burmese migrant labour (Photo: © Thierry Falise/IOM, 2006)



► “Aye” lays bricks on a Khao Lak building site. She can no longer own a mobile phone or a motor scooter (Photo: © Thierry Falise/IOM, 2006)



# A Migrant's Regal Effort to Help Her People

**As young Ghanaian men leave their villages in search of work anywhere else, the queen mother of a traditional area in Ghana, doubling as a nurse in Italy, has stepped forward with an ambitious plan to rescue her people from poverty and put an end to the out migration from her region.**

**By Jemini Pandya, IOM Geneva, in Ghana**

**T**rying to reach the Suma Traditional Area which lies in the north west corner of Ghana's Brong Ahafo region is not easy. At some point an hour and a half before one reaches the capital, Suma Ahenkro, the tarmac ends and a very bumpy dirt road begins.

To the left hand of what serves as a road and just a stone's throw away is the border with the Côte d'Ivoire. There is a remoteness here and with it a certain isolation reinforced by the lack of proper roads that inhibit business development.

Consisting of 30 small towns and villages, 80 per cent of the population of Suma Traditional Area is made up of subsistence farmers with the burden of work and responsibility for feeding the family lying with the woman. With the exception of schools, there is little else in terms of facilities and certainly not much opportunity for finding work in the area, making labour plentiful and very cheap.

It is because of this, the resulting poverty and perhaps the proximity of the border with Côte d'Ivoire filling heads with dreams of a new, riches-filled life in Europe that are significant factors to emigration from the area. No one here knows exactly how many people have left.

But looking around in Suma Ahenkro, there is a visible lack of young men amidst the people going about their daily business. Lots of old men and women, children and mothers, young and

old. But few young men. They tend to leave to find work in Ghana's urban areas or abroad – if they are lucky enough to make it. Several village boys and men have died making the long and perilous journey to Europe.

It is partly to prevent this heartache and that of those who do manage to make it to Europe and who soon realize that the streets there are not paved with gold but much pain and suffering, and partly to lessen the suffering of the women in the area, that Belinda Comfort Damoah felt pushed to act.

Alias Nana Akwamma Trepfo Odiakotene, Belinda is no ordinary person. She is the Queen Mother of the Suma Traditional Area (STA) although she is now a resident of Lecco, near the northern Italian city of Milan, and another recipient of IOM support under its Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme for Ghana. It encourages African migrant diaspora to contribute to the development of their country of origin through skills transfer and investment in enterprise with co-funding from partners including IOM.

Belinda's successful proposal put forward in the second phase of the MIDA Ghana programme funded by the Italian government is an ambitious plan to revolutionize agriculture in Suma and with it, provide

► Belinda shows the haphazard way subsistence farmers in her region plant crops. More productive use of land can be made in order to help her people lift themselves out of poverty (Photo: © Jemini Pandya/IOM, 2007)

decent new job opportunities for people and improve the lives of the women there.

With thousands of acres of land lying fallow in the area, Belinda has created an agricultural cooperative society supported by the Suma Rural Bank as well as IOM with plans to utilize 500 hectares in the cultivation of much prized cash crops such as cashew and teak as well as vegetables and fruit such as mangoes, cassava and okra. Traders from India are already beating the path to Suma for the well-loved nut and the



▲ The support of Nana Adane Okofrobour-Krontihene, Paramount King of the Suma Traditional Area, is critical to Belinda's plans. He and other chiefs have offered the use of fallow land in Suma for mass scale farming (Photo: © IOM, 2007)





cooperative could soon be selling their produce directly to the Indians.

She bemoans the current waste of subsistence farming and has plenty of ideas for diversification. Take the cashews, for example, which grow well and easily in the area with the district in which Suma lies being the biggest producer of cashew nuts in Ghana.

"There are many things we can do with the cashew but we only take the seed and sell it. While the fruit, we can have juice or can conserve it or make marmalade," she explains.

By also organizing local farmers into co-operatives and with plans to access adequate storage facilities, the current lack of which forces farmers into selling any little surplus produce at ridiculously low prices during glut periods, she's hoping that agriculture here can become large scale and a real business. It's an ambition backed by all the traditional chiefs.

Speaking at the official launch of the Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society accompanied by much pomp and ceremony, Nana Adane Okofrobour-Krontihene, Paramount King of the Suma Traditional Area, reiterated support through the provision of land held in trust by the chiefs and queen mothers for large-scale farming.

"With arable land and energetic workforce, there is no over-emphasizing the agricultural potential of the Suma Traditional Area," he says.

The women in Suma Ahenkro are ecstatic about the project. Belinda has already organized them into a baking cooperative which provides bread for the whole village.

"The burden of life is on the women here. They do everything. They provide everything. The economic contribution of the men is negligible. The women are really happy and excited about this development. They feel very strongly about organizing a cooperative," says Martin Adane, Advisor to the Suma Agricultural Cooperative Society.

Belinda is passionate about making a difference to the lives of the people here. She'd left her home in 1984 for Libya where she worked as a nurse for five years before trying to reach the UK.

But fortune favoured her and she ended up as a regularized migrant in Italy. Since the birth of her last child in 1992, she's been working as an auxiliary nurse and is now taking exams to be a general nurse.

There is a purpose. Not content to revolutionize the livelihood potential of Suma and help stop her people leaving their villages in search of work, she's been instrumental to the building of a primary health care centre in Suma Ahenkro. At some point soon, she's planning to come to Suma for several months at a time, allowing her to contribute her nursing skills at the health centre.

And then there is this other passion. A good education for all children. She's already supporting 80 children in the village to attend school. But the building at the moment is a collection of kiosks and with the number of children now going to the school increasing, she is trying urgently to raise funds for a proper building for them.

**"I have learnt a lot. I can help them, the women especially. I want to bring all the knowledge that I have acquired in Europe to help my people because I know they need me. They need my knowledge," says Belinda.**

No-one would dispute her. Otherwise, who knows, heads might roll..... **M**



▲ Villagers show Belinda an old, dried piece of yam. With no way of storing their subsistence crops, what little food villagers have left between harvests is usually poor in taste and nutritious content (Photo: © Jemini Pandya/IOM, 2007)



▲ "The burden of life is on the women here. They do everything. They provide everything..." Back-breaking work for women searching for the highly prized cashew nut among the leaves in a cashew grove (Photo: © Jemini Pandya/IOM, 2007)



# Diaspora Expert Helps Special Needs Children in Rwanda

By Ailsa Jones, IOM Brussels, in Rwanda

▲ (Photo: © Gasana Ndoba Rwanda, 2007)

At the Tubiteho Day Care Centre in central Kigali, 30 attentive teachers, care assistants and parents listen intently to the lecturer on the last day of an intensive training course on psychological and educational care for children with special needs.

The focus of their attention – Silas Iyakaremye – is a Belgium-based Rwandan psychotherapist and communication expert on a three-month mission funded by IOM's Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme for the Great Lakes region.

"Our aim is to train staff from *Tubiteho* and similar centres to ensure all children with special needs reach their full potential," says Iyakaremye, who has worked for over 20 years in the fields of health, educational psychology and special needs teaching.

*Tubiteho* – meaning "Let's Take Care of Them" in Kinyarwanda – was set up by Gasana Ndoba and Dr Innocent Gakwaya, two former members of the Belgium Rwandan diaspora, each of whom had a special need daughter.

Gasana Ndoba, who now runs the Tubiteho Association, decided to return home to Rwanda in 1999 after living and working in Belgium for 22 years. But it was a difficult decision because his daughter, Rusaro, suffers from moderate cerebral palsy. In Belgium, access to special care and educational

services was readily available, but in Rwanda special needs centres were very scarce.

Gasana eventually found a centre outside Kigali where Rusaro could be taken care of, but it turned out to be too far from their family home, so he decided to try to set up a new facility in Kigali with the help of Dr Innocent Gakwaya.

Together they managed to raise 2 million Rwandan Francs (US\$ 4,000) from other parents of children with special needs and various NGOs, including the Irish development organization Trocaire, to open the Tubiteho Centre in October 2005.

Today Tubiteho is run entirely through parental contributions and only the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff compensates for its lack of resources. It lacks physiotherapy and exercise equipment, and has no computers and educational software to help the children.

It also cannot admit children whose parents cannot afford to pay, but is trying to set up a sponsorship programme with families and centres in other countries to raise funds that will allow non-paying children to attend.

The centre has also been actively involved in efforts to improve the situation of the mentally disabled in Rwanda. In January 2007, Rwanda passed its first law on the rights of the disabled but the law focuses primarily on physical rather than mental disability.

IOM became involved with the centre when the latter asked for training assistance through the MIDA office at the Ministry for Labour and Public Services in Rwanda. The IOM MIDA team in Brussels advertised for specialist trainers and eventually selected Silas Iyakaremye.

The NGO Handicap International then stepped in, providing transport to allow

▼ Proud participants pose for a photo with their certificates after the closing ceremony of the training (Photo: © Ailsa Jones/IOM, 2007)





other special needs centres in the Kigali area to also benefit from the training programme.

Training participant Agnès Mukashyaka set up the Izere Mubyeyi (Parents' Hope) Centre in 2002 because she was unable to find a centre to take care of her teenage son. "Parents in Rwanda tend to hide away children with mental disabilities because they are often ashamed. We had to work very hard to inform parents about how they could help their children," she says.

"We have many needs, but we did not have the know-how. This training has taught us a lot about special needs education. If we had known before what we know now, we could have improved many things much earlier," says Mukashyaka, whose centre currently cares for 72 children.

The training, which is carried out in Kinyarwanda and in French, covers topics such as the clinical assessment of children with handicaps, special education techniques and family outreach practices.

Another training participant, teacher Ancilla Kayiraba, heads the Hirwa Iwanyu ("Make Yourself at Home") Centre, which she started to support her disabled daughter, Umutoni.

"Before Umutoni was very frustrated and marginalized. She did not understand why she could not go to school like her siblings. The impact of her going to the centre has been incredibly positive. Every day she gets ready for school like the others, she is so happy," says Kayiraba.



▲ Children at the Tubiteho Day Care Centre (Photo: © Gasana Ndoba Rwanda, 2007)

Therese Safari, also testifies to the value of day care for her daughter Constance who has attended the Tubiteho Day Care Centre since 2006. "Now she is with other children and she is learning to read and write, this gives her self esteem," she notes.

Aline Kanobayita, who has run the Tubiteho Centre since 2005, studied social work at university, but says that she and her staff all need training in special education to properly care for the children in their charge.

"Before Silas came to train us we had to train ourselves. We would search on the Internet for solutions for the children. We would visit other centres to see how they worked. But with this training, things are much more structured and we can now work on a case-by-case approach," she says.

Silas Iyakaremye welcomes the positive feedback, but admits that much more needs to be done. "I have had so many requests to come back, to do more training. The needs are immense and resources limited," he says.

He points to the lack of individual assessment for each child and the lack of diagnosis, which means that some children with easily treatable disorders are unnecessarily excluded from mainstream schooling.

"Correct diagnosis of conditions such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorders, epilepsy and hearing difficulties could allow many children to attend ordinary school. Much more needs to be done to ensure that children are given access to the treatment they need," he says. **M**

▼ Diaspora expert Silas Iyakaremye teaching special needs teachers and care workers at the Tubiteho Day Care Centre in Kigali (Photo: © Ailsa Jones/IOM, 2007)



▼ Children with a staff member outside the Tubiteho Day Care Centre (Photo: © Gasana Ndoba Rwanda, 2007)





# Music to Strike A Harmonious Note on Irregular Migration

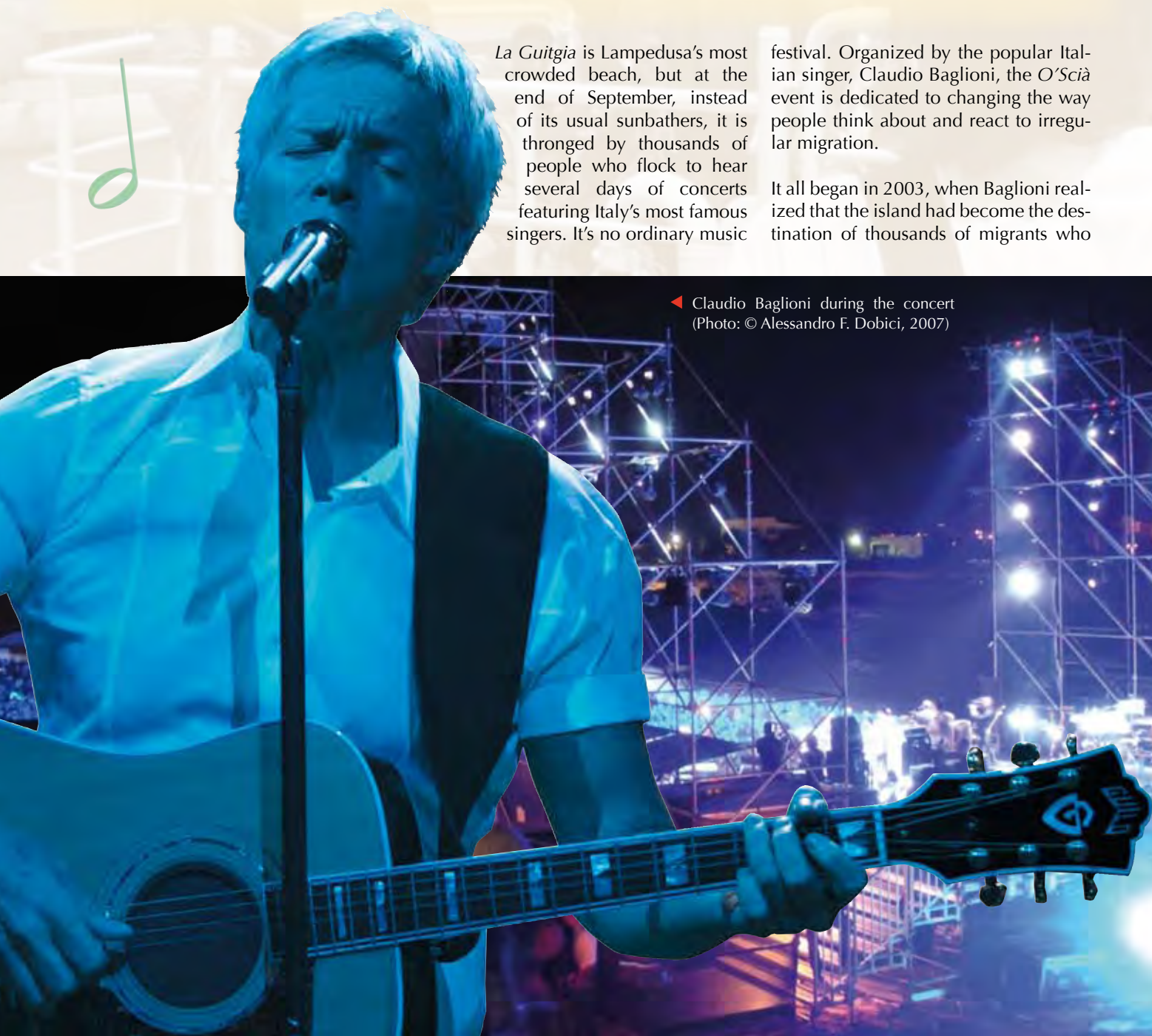
**F**or the fifth year, the Italian island of Lampedusa rocked to the music of famous Italian artists to promote a better understanding of irregular migration. The annual event, organized by the O'Scià Foundation, has grown not only in size over time, but also in scope. Recognizing the power of music to change hearts and minds, IOM has joined up with O'Scià for the first time this year to help sponsor its activities. IOM's Flavio di Giacomo reports from Lampedusa.

*La Guitgia* is Lampedusa's most crowded beach, but at the end of September, instead of its usual sunbathers, it is thronged by thousands of people who flock to hear several days of concerts featuring Italy's most famous singers. It's no ordinary music

festival. Organized by the popular Italian singer, Claudio Baglioni, the O'Scià event is dedicated to changing the way people think about and react to irregular migration.

It all began in 2003, when Baglioni realized that the island had become the destination of thousands of migrants who

◀ Claudio Baglioni during the concert  
(Photo: © Alessandro F. Dobici, 2007)





put themselves in the hands of smugglers to cross the part of the Mediterranean that separates Libya and Tunisia from southern Europe. The flimsy and overcrowded boats used to transport desperate migrants have been the cause of thousands of deaths and human tragedies.

The Roman singer, who owns a holiday home on Lampedusa, decided to put his star power to use to raise awareness on what was going on in Europe's backyard and to help change some of the attitudes and reaction towards the phenomenon. Over the years, the island had witnessed a decline in the number of tourists coming there, a situation locals blamed on the reporting of irregular migration there.

Using *O'Scià*, a Lampedusa greeting meaning "my breath" in the local dialect, he held a concert performing his own songs. Its success led to the decision to take the initiative further. For the following year's concert, he invited additional singers to join him in an effort to gain visibility. A landscape of Italian artists joined Baglioni and even international stars such as Bob Geldof and Khaled wanted to participate.

Now in its fifth year and having built up a serious reputation, *O'Scià* has been formalized into a foundation with broader objectives, including taking its messages to other Mediterranean countries. Lampedusa this year followed hard on the heels of another event in Malta, also a destination point for irregular migrants. Here, Baglioni performed with two other popular Italian artists, Gianni Morandi and Riccardo Cocciante.

However, this year, the Foundation decided to mix roundtable discussions and cultural performances during a week-long event, including a showing of films on migration issues in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Social Solidarity.

The Foundation's broader objectives reflected in the expanded events led to a request to IOM to help sponsor *O'Scià's* festivals this year. IOM has a presence on the island which last year saw nearly 19,000 irregular migrants washed up on its shores. The Organization works together with the Italian Red Cross and UNHCR at Lampedusa's migrant reception centre where it provides migrants with information on their rights, status and the realities of irregular migration and stay in Italy.

For IOM, there was no hesitation in teaming up with *O'Scià*. Baglioni is managing to get the local population on Lampedusa to understand the complexities of the phenomena that make people risk their lives to reach Europe – a very important but extremely difficult thing to achieve. And through his concerts, he has contributed to making the island a destination for thousands of music fans, thus reversing the trend of shrinking tourist arrivals.

"Claudio Baglioni has the ability to effectively draw public attention to the disasters that continue to take place in the Mediterranean," says Peter Schatzer, IOM's Chief of Mission in Rome. "It's a delicate situation and it's critical that correct and balanced information is provided to the general public on migration issues and an event like *O'Scià* can go a long way in doing just that."

▼ IOM's Gina Villone with newly arrived irregular migrants at Lampedusa's harbour (Photo: © Peter Schatzer/IOM, 2007)



With its festive atmosphere, approximately 10,000 people gathered at the Lampedusa event's three main concerts, where Baglioni spread messages of tolerance for those who come to Europe in search of a better life.

“  
One of our goals is to  
free words like “clandestine” and “immigrant”  
of their negative connotations,” the singer says.  
And support the rights  
of others in order to  
support our own rights.  
Since we can no longer  
search for a new world,  
we have to construct our  
own new world.  
”

Among the crowd were 50 or so immigrants, personally greeted by Baglioni. Most of them were Ivorians, shipwreck survivors who had been picked up a few days earlier by an Italian fishing boat off the island's coast. They appeared slightly puzzled by the friendly atmosphere that greeted them after their perilous journey, some of them repeating "*O'Scià*" again and again.

Broadening horizons and bringing diverse worlds together in order to spread the message of solidarity and tolerance – Baglioni's "new world" – is starting to take shape in Lampedusa, thanks to efforts by humanitarian organizations such as IOM working together with Italian institutions.

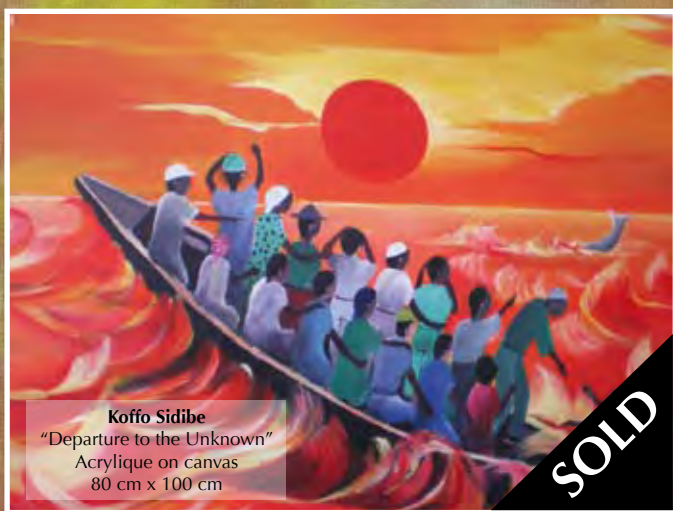
*O'Scià* Lampedusa is over for 2007 and the Foundation has its eyes fixed on the future – a future filled with greater ambitions. A concert in Libya whose shores are a departure point for the hundreds of boats that do or don't make it to islands such as Lampedusa and Malta, is being discussed with authorities in Tripoli. It would be another step forward in bringing people from the Mediterranean closer together. **M**



# Irregular Migration from Senegal

## *Through Artists' Eyes*

For more information about the exhibition, the artists and how to purchase the works, please contact Jo-Lind Roberts at IOM Dakar. Tel: +221 869 62 30. Email: [jlroberts@iom.int](mailto:jlroberts@iom.int)



**Koffo Sidibe**  
"Departure to the Unknown"  
Acrylique on canvas  
80 cm x 100 cm

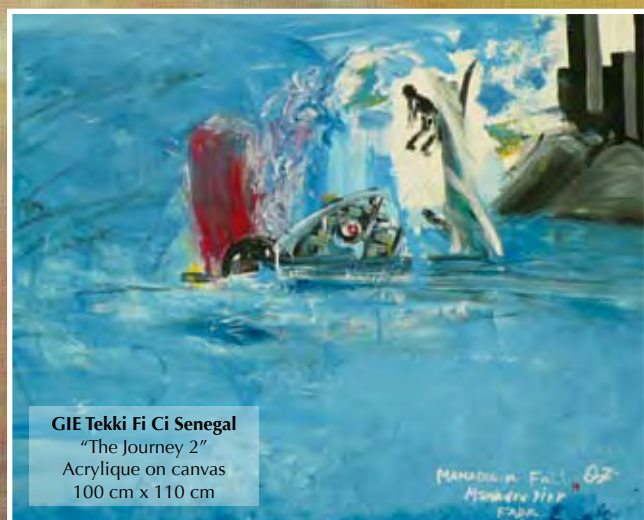
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**Amadou Diaw**  
"The risks of Illegal Migration 2"  
Acrylique on canvas  
100 cm x 70 cm



**Amadou Gueye Mbaye**  
"The Fishing Boat"  
Acrylique on canvas  
110 cm x 90 cm



**GIE Tekki Fi Ci Senegal**  
"The Journey 2"  
Acrylique on canvas  
100 cm x 110 cm





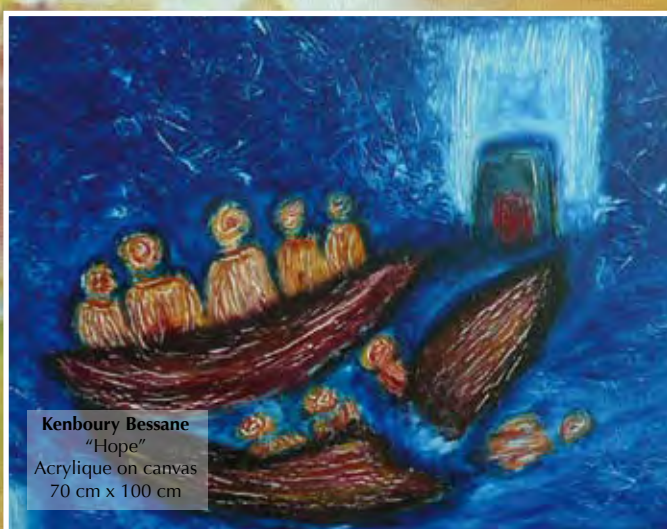
**Kenbourn Bessane**  
"Leaving"  
Acrylique on canvas  
110 cm x 90 cm



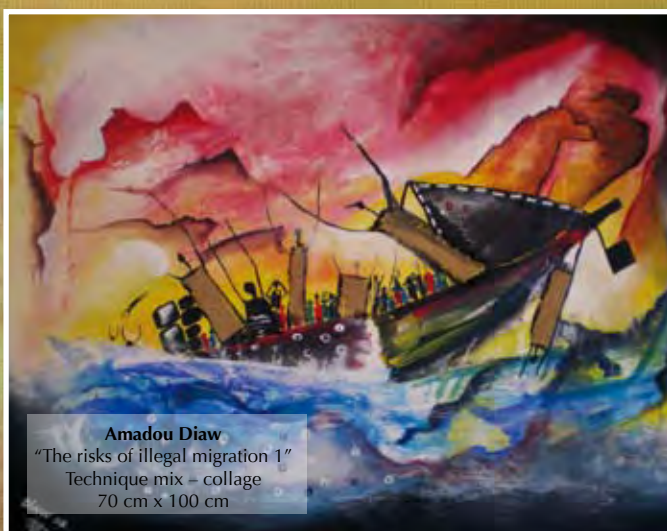
**Thierno Soulemame Sow**  
"Hope"  
Acrylique on canvas  
100 cm x 70 cm



**GIE Tekki Fi Ci Senegal**  
"The Journey 1"  
Acrylique on canvas  
90 cm x 100 cm



**Kenbourn Bessane**  
"Hope"  
Acrylique on canvas  
70 cm x 100 cm

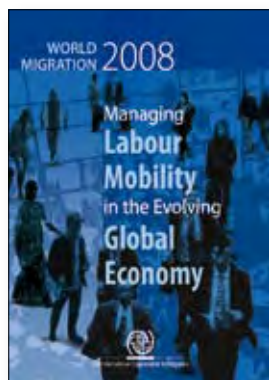


**Amadou Diaw**  
"The risks of illegal migration 1"  
Technique mix - collage  
70 cm x 100 cm



**Ibou Gueye**  
"Hope for the future"  
Acrylique on canvas  
100 cm x 70 cm

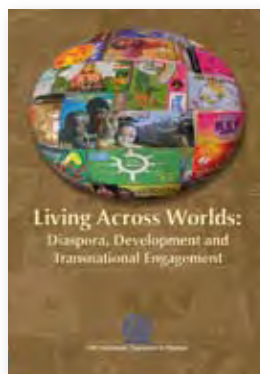




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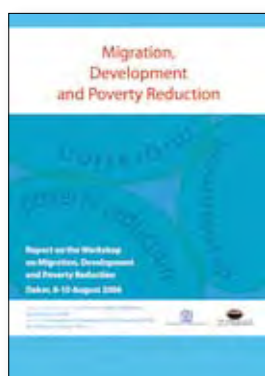
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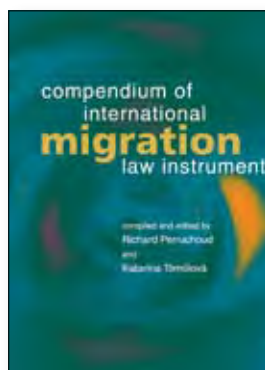
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