

International Organization for Migration



September 2005

MIGRATION



Editor in Chief:

Jean-Philippe Chauzy

Editors:

Christopher Lom, Jemini Pandya,
Niurka Piñeiro

Contributors:

IOM Staff worldwide

Editorial Board:

Gervais Appave, Laurentiu
Ciobanica, Jill Helke, Michele
Klein Solomon, Frank Laczko,
Robert Paiva, Yorio Tanimura,
Erica Usher

Layout:

Angela Pedersen

Cover photo:

School children in Port-au-Prince

© Daniel Pepper 2005

Migration is published quarterly
in English, French and Spanish.
All correspondence and inquiries
concerning *Migration* should be
sent to:

International Organization
for Migration (IOM)
PO box 71
CH 1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 717 91 11
Fax: +41 22 798 61 50
E-mail: info@iom.int

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.

ISSN 1813-2839

Migration is available online
on the IOM website:

<http://www.iom.int>

Contents

An Epic Trek Home for Displaced Sudanese	3
Bill's Diary	5
A Different Sort of Gang	8
Better the Second Time Round: Returnees Rebuild after the Tsunami	12
Helping Children Back to School	14
Migration and the Millennium Development Goals	16
The Scorched Childhoods of Yemen	18
Thailand Grapples with Costs and Benefits of Migration	20
The Invisible Migrants: Internal Migration, Development and the Fight Against Poverty in Asia	22



A member of the "Shovel Army" mends a goal net at a football field in Martissant, Port-au-Prince.

For more information on IOM's work on the Haiti Transition Initiative, please turn to page 8.

An Epic Trek Home for Displaced Sudanese

By Alexis Masciarelli,
BBC Nairobi

A little more than three months after the signing of a peace agreement to end a 21-year-old civil war, a group of 5,000 Sudanese internally displaced persons (IDPs) began an epic journey through forests and swamps to return to their former homes in the south-west of the country. The journey was also a race against the heavy rains of July that could have left them stranded en route. As part of a multi-agency "Operation Rescue", IOM accompanied the group, providing transport for those too weak to walk and medical aid.

The regular thump of axes and machetes on hard wood stops all of a sudden. Warning shouts echo in the jungle as another tree comes crashing down, bringing those who were forced to flee their villages in Sudan's Western Bahr El Ghazal a bit closer to home.

All have spent four years in exile in a camp for IDPs in Mabilia, a small town south of Tambura in Equatoria province, near the border with the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



A small group of IDPs is inching its way through the dense tropical forest. They are part of a much larger group of some 5,000 IDPs who decided in mid-April to return to their homes in Raga and Wau districts, an epic trek of some 350 kilometres.

This team of "cutters", some 30 men and women, including young mothers with babies on their back, have the Herculean task of opening a "road" for the weakest members of

the group who do not have the strength to walk.

The "vulnerable", young mothers with newborn babies, the elderly, the handicapped and victims of river blindness, which is prevalent in this part of south-western Sudan, travel on board IOM trucks.

Teams of "cutters" have felled thousands of trees and have used heavy trunks to build bridges across swollen rivers and across swamps, battling the



Left to right:
Hamida with her two young children.
Cutting their way through the forest.
The bridge over the Busseri river.

© Alexis Masciarelli/BBC Nairobi 2005



bites of mosquitoes and the tsetse fly. After seven weeks of agonizingly slow progress, the group had barely covered half the distance.

"The main road through Wau has been mined and many bridges were destroyed during the war. That's why we decided to cut our way across the forests and swamps."

So why had they chosen to trek across such difficult terrain?

"We decided to take a short cut," says Kamil Wana, a former administrator of Raga district who heads a team of cutters. "It was safer for us. Government forces mined the road we used four years ago. The main road through Wau has also been mined and many bridges were destroyed during the war. That's why we decided to cut our way across the forests and swamps. But the rains have made progress difficult. Some days, we only cover a kilometre."

Half past six and dusk sets in. Big billowing clouds gather in the evening sky, an indication of yet more thunderstorms and heavy rains.

Everyone hurries back to the camp after an exhausting day felling trees, hunting, fishing or gathering food in the forest.

"The worst is at night when it pours down," says Stanley Jonah Tanar, who is travelling with his wife and six children. "Rain brings malaria and many suffer from diarrhoea because they drink water from streams. Food is fairly easy to come by. We fish and poach for wild animals such as boar and buffalo. There are also plenty of edible fruit and berries to be found in the forest."

Overnight downpours turn the camp near the banks of the Busseri River into a mud bath. Families shelter under branches and plastic sheeting. These are testing times for all.

In the morning, small groups of women and children manage to cross the Busseri River on an impromptu wooden bridge built by the displaced. An IOM truck, which was to transport them across the river, is bogged down in a torrent of mud.

"Nothing will stop us from going home. We always find ways round difficulties. If need be, we'll swim to cross rivers!"

Hamida Abdulrazik is 20 years old. A mother of two, she is carrying a bundle on her head and her baby

daughter on her back. Aisha was born during the trek.

"The birth was very difficult," recalls Hamida, sitting down under a tarpaulin to boil a handful of sorghum. "Labour lasted for six hours and I was grateful we had midwives in the group. Our baby is in good health and I'm happy."

Her husband has stayed on the other side of the river to take care of their other two children and his elderly mother. "When we eventually reach Raja, I really hope we'll find some of our family members," says Hamida. "We haven't seen them for four years and I hope they will be able to help us."

Sitting next to Hamida is 42-year-old Lino Ugali and his 13-year-old son, Lawrence. "Nothing will stop us from going home. We always find ways round difficulties. If need be, we'll swim to cross rivers!"

This optimism is remarkable, considering this odyssey was marked earlier on by tragedy. Just after the group left Mabia, a local truck transporting families overturned on a bridge, crushing 23 people to death.

All are now hopeful that after 21 years of civil war, they will be able to rebuild their lives in southern Sudan. Their only ambition is to have a home and find work, to resume some kind of a normal life.

Bill's Diary

Bill Lorenz, Aden Guliye, Andrew Gethi and Abbass Ahmed made up the IOM team assisting the IDPs on this trek in southern Sudan this summer. This is a summary of a diary Bill kept for the BBC during the latter part of the journey.



Wednesday 29th June

I am awoken at 4 a.m. by a heavy, rhythmic pounding. It takes a few seconds before I realize what it is. The women are crushing maize and sorghum to make flour.

It's 52 days now since we joined the group. It seems relentless.

News has got back that the advance group of the IDPs have opened the first 15 of the 42 kilometres of road we still have to travel before we get to the next camp.

Last night we had a meeting with the community elders. More of the able bodied people need to be walking as the trucks are really for those who can't. The message seems to have got through. This morning, lots of people left on foot.

I hear from Andrew and Abbas, two IOM staff, stuck in marshes further back with new fuel supplies. Without the fuel, we won't be able to move anywhere. I am also worried about my colleagues but reassured by the good radio contact we have. They tell me they've had to rebuild one bridge on the route taken so far and cross two swamps before reaching the marshes.

The news concerns me for other reasons too. The rains are making the 200 kilometres of road that have been built for this trek since we left Tambura in May, impassable. This road is our logistical pipeline. I really hope that fuel arrives tonight.

Monday 4th July

At last! The hold-up over fuel is now over. But there is a new problem.

One of our big six-wheel trucks broke down trying to rescue the truck stuck in the marshes last week.

Together with the elders, we started a new system of identifying the most vulnerable among the group today. We need to have fewer people on the trucks. But this whole experience has made me think. How does one define vulnerability? It's easy when there is an elderly blind person or a mother with a small baby. But what do you do with their family? Whatever the definition, it's a moral dilemma.

The last two kilometres of road to Kuru are being cleared today. There are 115 men in the advance group. Fifteen men mark out the route and two teams of 50 hack the trees. The end result is a road three to four metres wide. Just enough for the trucks to pass.

I am told work has already begun on the next road – from Kuru to Yakap – including the building of two bridges before Yakap itself. This is where we will be headed in two days to set up camp.

We are doing well for food. Everyone here keeps chickens. It's amazing. I use pieces of soap to trade for eggs. One piece equals four eggs. But today, I give a piece away for nothing. Since last week when she grabbed my hand and demanded "sweetie", a little girl who suffers from epilepsy comes every day for some food. I give her mother some soap to wash her with.

Thursday 7th July

It's been a mixed kind of day. Aden, the IOM doctor, tells me an elderly man died yesterday. He'd been sick for a very long time and had developed a chest infection.

This is the second death this week. A 6-day-old baby girl died on Tuesday of tetanus. Aden and his team had worked all day to save her. It was hard to take. It's weird how life works. The day she died, another baby girl was born. The 20th birth of the journey.

Our progress is slow. Slower than we had anticipated. We'll probably have to ask for another air food drop.

More problems with the trucks. One of them is now stuck in mud and being dug out. We're able to transport fewer people than before – between 700-800. More people have to walk. The upside is we've crossed one of the bridges built before Kuru. My worst fear is a truck full of people not making it over one of these impromptu bridges one day.

Monday 11th July

I have a bout of malaria and am not feeling great. Hope the medication kicks in soon.

We finally arrived at the camp at Yakap this morning. The majority of the 5,000 people are still in three camps behind us. The trucks are moving back and forth between them to transport those that can't make it on foot further ahead.

Commissioner Resiki, a former SPLA commander leading this group back, is anxious to get people together into a tighter group. He's not sure whether local militias at Deim Zubeir, our final destination, are really OK with this return and wants people to stay close together.

Thursday 14th July

About 2,000 people are now at Yakap. People are starting to get excited. They let out a shrill cry when they cross the bridge here. They know they've reached a milestone – the river is the last major hurdle on their journey.

Emmanuel, a northern Sudanese businessman, is taking two motor-bikes to Deim Zubeir to buy some food and gear oil we desperately need. He's a bit of a character, Emmanuel. A heavy set guy dressed in a pair of shorts and a hat with an imprint of the new flag of southern Sudan, he carries both a bible and a gun. For protection he says.

More discussions with the WFP on another food drop. Rations are running low for most or have run out for others. We are reduced to noodle soup. People are looking in the forest for honey, wild vegetables or fruit such as lulu. It tastes like avocado and has oil that can be extracted.

Monday 18th July

Food is really an issue. Even for us. Yesterday, we killed a goat we'd bought a few days ago for \$20 from Zachariah, a young IDP with entrepreneurial instincts and several goats. A lot of meat suddenly to eat with a little pasta.

People are making do with what they've got. There will be disappointment when they find out the food drop for tomorrow has been postponed.

I've just arrived with Hassan, our handyman and Howiya, our cook, to set up a new transit camp. It's about 20 kilometres north of Yakap. We are ahead of everyone except for a group of tree cutters who are now busy working on the next stretch of road.

Dr Aden, Abbas and Andrew, will join me here tonight. Aden is tired and not well. The temporary clinic

he'd set up in Yakap to dress wounds and dispense medicines, had been very busy. But yesterday, the clinic had its first quiet day. A lot of people left the camp to get here in time for the food drop.

Morale is nevertheless good. There are only 60 kilometres left to Deim Zubeir. The light at the end of the tunnel is definitely growing brighter.

Thursday 21st July

No food drop again. The situation is serious but I have to stay optimistic. There may be a solution.

We are now at a new camp – Rede. We will all stay here until the food comes. People are arriving all the time, driven by the promise of food.

Yesterday I noticed a brand new pair of shoes under some plastic sheeting where a family was camping. It surprised me. I am told everyone has packed new clothes and shoes so when they arrive, they will look nice.

Aden delivered a premature baby boy safely yesterday and before that, identical twin girls. Although everyone is fine, the mothers' milk is taking a long time to come. The lack of food, exhaustion and stress of the journey is taking its toll.

As we talk, I hear Hayat, the two-and-a-half-year-old daughter of our cook, crying. I've got very fond of her. She's the only person who has gained weight on this journey. It must be all the biscuits I've given her.

Wednesday 27th July

We're worried about Shefron, a 13-year-old boy with a ruptured appendix. We can't operate on him here in the bush. Aden can only put Shefron on antibiotics and feed and hydrate him intravenously.

There have been a few medical emergencies and tragedies in the past few days that have left us all feeling low, particularly Aden. He tried to organize a medical evacuation of a 17-year-old girl called Akello. She needed a caesarian. But nobody could evacuate her. To save her life, Aden had to cut the front joint of her pelvis to get the baby out. It was dead but at least the mother survived.

Two children have also died. One was a 9-month-old baby of an infection after her canine teeth were pulled. It is a tradition here. The mother is distraught and unable to do anything. This is the third baby she has lost. The grandmother is fetching water, cooking and taking care of the father, crippled by polio.

The other death was that of a 2-year-old girl. She had had diarrhea and pneumonia on and off and had become severely malnourished. She developed an infection and died during the night.

Neither of the families had brought their children to see Aden and it frustrates him.

Since the air food drop – it finally happened on Sunday – people have been too busy pounding maize. They are tired but excited. The cutting teams are hoping to get to Deim Zubeir tomorrow night. It's the only piece of good news I've had in a while.

Saturday 30th July

Aden, Abbas and Andrew have taken our two medical emergencies, Akello and Shefron, to a transit camp 20 kilometres from the final destination. Both are doing fine but they need medical follow-up at a hospital.

About 2,500 people are also there and most of the rest of the group en route. It really is the final push home. But I am much further back at the camp at Rede with about 300 people.

It's finally been decided that the whole group will go to a holding camp at Bile upon arrival, about 10 kilometres west of Deim Zubeir.

Monday 1st August

A call from the UN at 6 a.m. With John Garang's death confirmed, all UN flights are suspended. We are told we will have to stay where we are for the time being.

The mood among the group is sombre. Among the community leaders especially, John Garang was like a shepherd. Commissioner Resiki and the tribal leaders discuss the death. They decide they have to keep calm and keep moving. Get to Bile and then mourn – that's the message.

Tuesday 2nd August

I am leaving Rede this afternoon with as many people as two trucks can possibly carry.

I want to get to Bile as soon as I can. The cutting teams are about one kilometre from Bile but have a final hurdle to jump. The rains have created another swamp right at the end of our journey. What's one more swamp! We all have Bile in our sights.

Saturday 6th August

We are bogged down in so much mud we finally abandon the land cruiser. The rains we have tried so hard to outpace, have beaten us at the last post. The land cruiser is left by a river with no bridge. We cross it on foot, carrying what we can. The water is waist high.

Commissioner Resiki is behind us with the tail end of the community. The heavy rains have put an end to the trucks transporting people. They've either broken down – or are stuck in the mud.

Sunday 7th August

There are amazing thunder storms during the night. Twice we thought

our tents would blow away or collapse under the weight of rainwater.

As we struggle through the last 19 kilometres, I look back over the past 90 days. The group had planned to walk 400 kilometres in 30 days. Their journey has taken 3.5 months instead and the distance was greater. There was a lot of suffering and hardship on the way but I know we've helped to lessen it. The thought comforts me.

These last kilometres are horrible. We cross four more rivers and lots of small swamps in between. By the time we finally arrive at Deim Zubeir, I am just so thankful it is over.

Monday 8th August

The best night's sleep I've had in months. A comfortable bed and no crying babies.

Most of the group is now here at Bile. Only 500-600 people are still to arrive. People are milling around. A lot of them have nice clothes on. Starched even. They're talking to each other and enthusiastically greeting any new arrivals. Theirs is not a hugging culture. But still, one hears the joy in the voices. It's impressive that they made it.

People come up to Aden, Andrew, Abbas and me and say thank you. It's really nice. I see a boy trying to spin on his head and other children playing.

Officials from various organizations, including the UN's OCHA and WFP and the ICRC, are registering people in the camp. There will be another food distribution on Thursday by WFP. When we arrive, there are about 400 people queuing at a registration point under a clump of trees.

Aden tells me Shefron, the boy with a ruptured appendix, had been well enough to walk the last 20 kilometres, though he will still need an operation. Akello, the other medical emergency, is being brought to Bile by bicycle. Things have worked out well with them.

Although 43 people have died on the journey, including 24 in an accident before we arrived, there have been 33 births. When you think about it, it is amazing. Tomorrow we leave for Nairobi. We have done our best. But now it is time to say goodbye and move on.

Read the full diary at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4134230.stm>

Some of the readers' responses...

Mine is only a thank you for helping my people. I am only crying that I have not seen my parents for the last 17 years and now I am here in the United States. Thank you very much for your help.

Daniel Yamun Ukang,
formerly of Raga

This is a wonderful job, and a remarkable story. It brings tears to my eyes when I hear these harsh, horrific stories of survival. May God help you all in your journey. This is a good beginning of an end.

Marko Tito Tibo, Canada

My sincere thanks to Bill and IOM staff who heartily provided logistical support to Sudanese refugees... travelling back home in Southern Sudan. Please keep supporting Sudanese who want to return home in Southern Sudan. This is the right time for IOM staff to give full support to them.

Peter Tuach, Sudanese

If you were not keeping us abreast of the events during the trek, it would be as if these folks and their struggle didn't exist... you've given them a voice that is tugging on the heartstrings of all who call themselves human. It inspires me to push on with my studies and return to Kenya someday to join the fight for stability and peace of mind for my fellow Africans.

Grace A. Owuor, USA



By Stephanie Broughton,
IOM Port-au-Prince

With crowded, crumbling streets and garbage-filled gutters, the neighbourhood of Martissant resembles most of the neglected communities of Port-au-Prince. A UN peace-keeper surveys the main road from the gunner's seat of his armoured vehicle as colourful "tap-tap" taxis speed past.

As in many parts of Haiti these days, life in Martissant is a constant struggle to survive in an environment of many challenges and few opportu-

nities. Often the days are punctuated by the sharp crack of gunfire, and the youth in the area must content themselves with makeshift football fields and improvised basketball courts. In this neighbourhood, it is the gangs who rule the streets, asserting their power and authority with dramatic names like "Armée Kabul" and "Armée Tupac". It is in this very environment, however, that IOM has helped form a new "gang" who call themselves "l'Armée Pelle", or the Shovel Army.

Since May 2004, IOM has been working to stabilize the most violent neighbourhoods of Haiti with the Haiti Transition Initiative (HTI). Funded by USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, the HTI works with the interim government and local communities on projects that bring short-term employment opportunities and activities for youth. It was on

such projects that the members of the Shovel Army first met.

"We weren't friends before the projects," says "Daddy" Dibuche, the designated spokesman. "By working together, we talked and found we had the same spirit." That spirit was an interest in earning an honest living instead of turning to the gangs.

Members of the Shovel Army range between 17 and 25 years of age and most have completed their third year of secondary school. They challenge the stereotype that manual work is for the illiterate and articulately explain their reasons for working with the HTI. "In our zone, life is difficult. We don't have opportunities but we have responsibilities," says Daddy Dibuche.

Many members of the group have small children and all of them have family for whom they are the sole source of income. They do not have



work or out of school, a condition that could be exploited by political “spoilers” who seek to derail the democratic process. HTI’s strategy is to put people either to work or to play with a two-pronged approach of high-labour infrastructure projects and social/cultural activities.

The HTI works in neglected areas in three districts in Haiti and has developed over US\$ 3 million in community projects. The Martissant area has seen the rehabilitation of a main street, the repair of the local football field, the construction of a basketball court and the staging of two sports tournaments. More than 140 short-term jobs have been created so far in this part of town and new projects are being identified and developed all the time.

These jobs give young people like Daddy the opportunity for safe, legal work.

“I was driving a cab and every day my mother was afraid for me. Now she is so happy she gives me a massage when I come home from work,” he says, laughing.

the new clothes and flashy jewellery worn by many gang members, but that does not matter to them.

“Gang members mocked us the whole time we were working on this job,” recalls Daddy with a proud smile. “We decided to live with our conscience.”

The HTI involvement in Martissant has been a model of the process it employs to use community infrastructure projects and activities to encourage peaceful political transition. In the months prior to the October elections in Haiti, as much as 85 per cent of the population will either be out of







The Martissant area of Port-au-Prince has seen the rehabilitation of a main street, the repair of the local football field, the construction of a basketball court and the staging of two sports tournaments.

All photos © Daniel Pepper 2005

Employment also yields a peace dividend. HTI is working with the UN Mission for Stabilization in Haiti (MINUSTAH)'s disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme on a community disarmament strategy that provides jobs for gang members who voluntarily surrender their weapons. The first project that integrated this approach to the HTI is the repair of a road that connects Martissant with Grand' Ravine, a gang-ridden neighbourhood in the hill above Martissant.

The Shovel Army may work on the road project, but it may be too busy working with the Ministry of Culture to build bench seats in the basketball court that will allow it to double as a performance space. The Shovel Army has a vision of encouraging hard work over gang involvement, a vision supported by their mentor, Sports Association president, "Bamboo" Pierre Joseph.

"Bamboo has given us our dreams," says Mario Archil, a Shovel Army member. Bamboo has been a strong partner on many HTI projects

in the Martissant neighbourhood and a role model for hundreds of local youth. Working closely with the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport, Bamboo led the initiative for the reparation of the football field. He has actively encouraged the Shovel Army to expand on its vision and hopes that continued HTI involvement will bring it more opportunities.

"Give the youth responsibility and things will change," states Bamboo, looking at his young protégés from across the basketball court.

Stories like that of the Shovel Army are few and far between in Haiti. More often the news is of young people dying at the hands of a natural disaster or the street violence that plagues Port-au-Prince. It is easy to forget these challenges exist when talking to

the Shovel Army. Their eyes shine with energy, excitement, and unrelenting hope. They are rising above their challenging conditions and, in turn, becoming role models for their peers.

It is not easy to build a better life in Martissant but these young men are doing so with every brick they place and every shovel they lift. And they have good reason, as Bamboo says what they all feel: "It's my life. It's my neighbourhood."



Better the Second Time Round Returnees Rebuild after the Tsunami

*By Gina Wilkinson,
IOM Colombo*

In a bustling market in Kattankudy on Sri Lanka's east coast, Ibrahim Badurdeen is busy weighing bags of red rice and trading greetings with early morning shoppers. As he makes his first sale of the day, Ibrahim's beaming smile reveals little of the turmoil he's faced in recent years and how the tsunami almost swept away his hopes of building a new life in Sri Lanka.

"After the tsunami I was reduced to such a terrible situation that I thought seriously about giving up," says Ibrahim, who'd abandoned an attempt to win asylum in the UK and returned to Sri Lanka just months before the tsunami. "I considered going back to London, but fortunately the IOM offered to help me once again."

In 2002, Ibrahim left Kattankudy and applied for political asylum in the UK, leaving his wife and three young

children behind. But life in London was difficult and lonely, and in 2004 the 40-year-old decided to return to Sri Lanka under an IOM voluntary return and reintegration programme for failed asylum seekers. IOM purchased Ibrahim's plane ticket back to Sri Lanka, helped with immigration and visa formalities and continued to provide support even after Ibrahim returned home.

"I was dejected and depressed when I first returned to Sri Lanka and I regretted leaving London," says Ibrahim. "However, IOM arranged an orientation programme where I met other people who'd been in similar circumstances and I was encouraged to hear how they managed to resume their lives."

Ibrahim decided to get his life back on track by setting up shop as a rice merchant in Kattankudy. IOM provided the father-of-three with stock

"I thank God that one of our neighbours raised the alarm just before the tsunami hit and we were able to escape with our lives," says Ibrahim as he cradles his four-year-old daughter in his arms. "When the waves receded, we found there was nothing left of our house except the brick foundation. All we had were the clothes we were wearing."

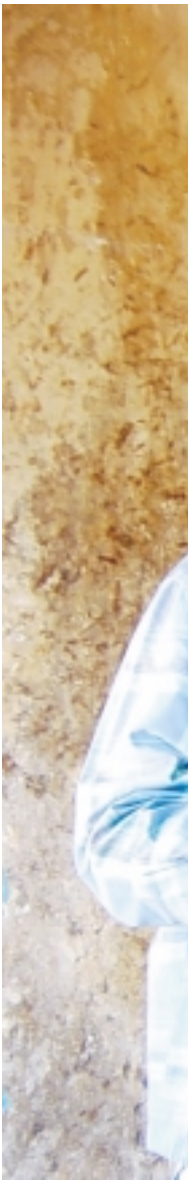
The tsunami did more than sweep away Ibrahim's home and possessions – it also destroyed his fledgling business.

"I kept my entire stock of rice in a storeroom in my house and when the waves hit, everything was lost to the sea," Ibrahim explains. To add to his financial woes, Ibrahim had sold a large quantity of rice on credit and after the tsunami no-one had money to pay their debts. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates 400,000 Sri Lankans like Ibrahim lost their livelihoods to the deadly waves.

"I kept my entire stock of rice in a storeroom in my house and when the waves hit, everything was lost to the sea"

and equipment worth almost US\$900, and arranged sessions with professional business development advisors. Tragically, Ibrahim had little time to enjoy his newfound security and stability before the tsunami swamped Sri Lanka's coast and his life was turned upside down once again.

"So many people were dead and our homes and businesses had been washed away. My future looked very black. But IOM came and evaluated my situation and helped to replace my lost stock and equipment," said Ibrahim. Three months after the tsunami, he was back in business and providing for his family once more.





Ibrahim in his rice shop.

© IOM 2005 (Photo: Gina Wilkinson)

In 2002, IOM launched programmes for failed asylum seekers wanting to return to Sri Lanka from the UK or Europe. A similar scheme began in January this year for people who migrated illegally to the UK. So far, almost 700 Sri Lankans have chosen to return home through these IOM programmes funded by the British Home Office, the European Refugee Fund and the European Union. Almost 500 of the returnees applied for assistance to reintegrate into their communities. Unfortunately, 21 returnees lost their new businesses in the tsunami on 26 December.

"With help from IOM, I worked very hard work to build my business, and soon I was making a profit and

employing three men to work with me," says E Ashokumar, who returned

"Step by step my life is improving... Without IOM it would not have been possible for me to have such dreams."

from the UK last July and began work as a fisherman in the eastern town of Batticaloa. "But I lost my nets and the engine of my boat in the tsunami, so there was no way I or my workers could earn a living."

IOM moved quickly to replace the 36-year-old fisherman's equipment. Soon Ashokumar was back at sea and making more than US\$20 profit a day

– a significant sum in this impoverished nation. In addition to helping returnees like Ashokumar and Ibrahim, IOM has replaced the tools and assets of more than 1,000 Sri Lankans whose businesses were destroyed in the tsunami.

Nahoor Pitechai was working illegally in London when he learned that massive waves had crashed into his homeland. Several of his relatives in southern Sri Lanka were injured and displaced by the disaster. Nahoor was already disillusioned with life as an illegal migrant, working in a series of low-paid jobs half a world away from his family. The tsunami convinced him it was time to return home to help his relatives.

"IOM bought my ticket home and provided me with equipment and stock to establish a small ice cream making business," says 54-year-old Nahoor. "Now I supply ice cream to school canteens and small businesses in my town and I am hoping to expand my business eventually."

Nahoor says now that he makes enough money to support his family, there's no way he would consider leaving his hometown of Matale in central Sri Lanka and returning to the precarious life of an illegal worker overseas.

"Life is too short to spend it so far away from loved ones," says Nahoor. "I'm happy I made the decision to return to Sri Lanka because I can manage my own business and I'm also able to lend a hand to my relatives who were caught up in the tsunami."

Back in Kattankudy on the east coast, rice merchant Ibrahim Badurdeen is also considering ways he can help his battered community recover from the tsunami.

"Step by step my life is improving and I hope this continues so I can expand my business, employ some workers and do what I can in a small way to boost the economy," says Ibrahim. "Without IOM it would not have been possible for me to have such dreams."



Helping Children Back to School

Rizal at his "desk" in an open-sided tent provided by UNICEF.

By Paul Dillon, IOM Aceh

Rizal Kerulbasa's desk is made out of discarded wooden boxes hammered together with nails salvaged from the rubble of homes flattened by the 26 December tsunami.

His classroom, within shouting distance from a busy market, is an open-sided canvas tent provided by UNICEF. He has a single notebook and pencil and while the teachers are friendly and helpful, they are also strangers who don't speak his mother tongue Acehnese.

Despite a long list of possible distractions including the swirling mass of his fellow Krueng Sabee elem-

entary school students chasing soccer balls, lizards and each other through the tent, the second-grader is completely focused on his maths homework.

"The others don't like it but mathematics is my favourite subject. I'm very good at adding numbers together," Rizal says, eyes never leaving the columns of handwritten figures in his notebook. "If I can go to school I am sure I will get a good job one day, maybe working in the government to solve the problems we have in Aceh."

The 7-year-old with a future civil service career is being assisted by a \$2.3 million UNICEF-funded project that will see the International Organization for Migration build 200 transitional schools in Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam province, sufficient for an estimated 44,000 students.

Fifty-one of the schools are scheduled to be built in and around Calang in Aceh Jaya district, an initiative that highlights the tremendous logistical challenges facing organizations involved in the long-term reconstruction of Aceh province, particularly along the remote west coast.

"It's hard, there's absolutely nothing there so basically you have to bring everything that you need with you, otherwise things don't get done," says IOM's school project supervisor, John Gray. "For the lack of a nail, an entire construction site can be brought to a halt."

Only a few months ago, Banda Aceh's tiny Penayung port lay buried beneath two stories of mud, debris and smashed vessels heaved from the main shipping channel into adjacent streets by the force of a tsunami. The disaster claimed an estimated

160,000 lives in coastal Acehese communities.

The tsunami also erased large sections of the only highway linking the provincial capital and west coast towns like Calang, Meulaboh and Singkil. Some roadwork has been done but unseasonable rains and unusually high tides along a coast altered by a 9.3 magnitude earthquake responsible for the tsunami, have closed it to all vehicle traffic but motorcycles and the most adventurous 4x4s.

Captain Syamsuddin ("Call me Sam") of the 60 tonne KM Mega Buana boat, meaning "Universe", is a squat, affable man in his mid-thirties with hands the size of dinner-plates and a lifetime's experience fishing off the west coast of Aceh province. Contracted by Atlas Logistics, he has been ferrying slabs of cement panels from Banda Aceh to Calang since mid-July.

"My crew are pretty lazy," he says, loud enough to be heard by the line of sweating men carrying aboard the slabs of pre-cast cement columns IOM uses in all its construction projects. "But most of them have families and want their children to be able to go to school so they don't have to work this hard. I can trust them to make sure the ship is loaded properly."

The building materials have already travelled a full day by truck to Banda Aceh from a factory in Lhokseumawe run by one of IOM's Acehese contractors, part of a 450 kilometre long road and marine supply line that ends behind young Rizal's tent school, and a dozen others like it.

The Mega Buana's 300 hp diesel engine will make the scenic 130 kilometre trip in about eight hours when the seas are calm. But these are the months of Anggin Barat, the powerful and unpredictable westerlies that whip up the seas and push sensible fishermen inland for up to two months. There's no guar-

antee that it won't take two or three days for the ship to arrive in Pelabuhan Rigaih, a shallow port north of Calang.

At the other end, IOM's Calang site coordinator, Rizaldi Fajardo, is juggling three thirsty five-ton trucks in a town where fuel is hard to find and where bureaucracy, edgy contractors and local village leaders insist that only their people be allowed to work on the construction sites. The reconstruction effort is also made more difficult by washed-out bridges and brutal roads that can turn a routine site visit into a daylong adventure.

"It's a big challenge and every day there's something new," says Fajardo over coffee at the UN's stark tent compound 300 metres from the sea and the UNHAS helipad cum football pitch.

"The local government is very happy with this project and wants it to speed up but I think everyone is starting to realize that this is not going to happen overnight. The transport logis-

tics are a nightmare and even identifying places we can build is a big problem."

There's a lack of knowledge about what constitutes a suitable building site leading to unnecessary delays in the approval process. The coast's altered topography means that some areas where schools once stood are no longer usable because the water table is inches below the surface. Populations remain fairly mobile so polling the number of school-aged children in a particular community or kampung one day does not guarantee they will be there a month later. Furthermore, most pre-tsunami land-title records were washed away so even when level property is located near an accessible road, building approvals can get bogged down.

"Really, my job is to check the sites that the government and UNICEF have identified with someone from the UNOPS (UN Operations for Project Services) to make sure it's okay and then get construction going," Fajardo explains. "We don't make excuses but so far I'm doing this mostly by myself so it is taking longer than we expected."

For the past five months, seven-year-old Firdia has been attending class beneath green plastic sheeting tied to a rickety wooden frame in a weedy field where Kampung Baro Elementary School once stood. The sheeting has been torn in the wind and the regular rains drive the children home to their tents. However, local labourers under IOM's supervision are putting the finishing touches on the village's new transitional school, so the 74 young tsunami survivors are among the lucky ones.

"We cannot go to school now when it rains," Firdia says, tugging at the edges of her headscarf. "But the new school will be dry and safe from the wind. Every day we pray that we will be able to move in very soon."



Unloading cement blocks from the KM Mega Buana.

Migration and the Millennium Development Goals

By Sofia Warttmann,
IOM Geneva

Five years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, governments are meeting this month in New York during the 60th session of the General Assembly. They will assess progress made in the implementation of the Declaration including its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹

Though migration did not feature prominently in the original framework, there is an increasing recognition that migration plays an important role in the achievement of the MDGs. The UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, in his recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration ("In larger freedom") enumerates migration as one of the "major substantive issues of the day".²

Migration has irrevocably become part of livelihood strategies of people all over the world and is viewed as an essential element of globalization and development processes.³ It is important, therefore, that migration be considered as an indispensable part of the implementation of the MDG framework. This would not only help identify and address opportunities and challenges arising from migration for the achievement of the MDGs, but it would also contribute to the strengthening and implementa-

tion of more development conscious migration policies.

The links between migration and the MDGs are numerous and complex. The increasingly multi-faceted and diversified nature of current migration processes makes it difficult to generalize their impact and ramifications. Nonetheless, a few examples can serve to illustrate these links and shed some light on the issue.

The most evident link is to Goal 1, which refers to poverty reduction. It is well-known that remittances constitute the second largest financial flow to developing countries after Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), and are more than double the size of Official Development Assistance (ODA), thereby constituting a major development resource. Remittances assume the function of a social safety net at the household level, enable investments in education and health, or allow for additional consumption – essential elements for the achievement of the MDGs.

A more indirect effect of migration on the achievement of Goal 1 results from the involvement of diasporas in their home country's development processes. Migrants contribute not just through financial transfers, but also through investments, the creation of trade links⁴ and through the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology.⁵

The impact and scope of diaspora initiatives depend also on the financial, social and human capital among the diaspora as well as the political and economic conditions in countries of origin and destination.

Diaspora initiatives range from Home Town Associations of migrants in the US channelling remittances into community development projects in their regions of origin, a strategy often employed by migrants from Latin American and Caribbean countries, to overseas Chinese investors, who have become the major source of FDI in China.

However, migration can also create immediate challenges for the achievement of the MDGs. The outflow of professionals at a rate faster than they can be replaced contributes to a shortage of skills in the country of origin.

In many countries, this "brain drain" is especially problematic in the health sector. The emigration of health professionals can impede the delivery of health care and exacerbate existing challenges related to the achievement of Goal 6, aimed at fighting HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In countries with a high incidence of these diseases, the impact of a shortage in health care professionals is even greater. Health worker migration can also adversely affect the achievement of Goals 4

1 <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

2. See: In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all. Report of the Secretary-General, A/59/2005.

3. Tasneem Siddiqui: Migration and Millennium Development Goals – DFID-RMMRU Partnership, Paper prepared for UNFPA meeting on Migration and the MDGs, Marrakech, May 2005.

4. Kathleen Newland: *Beyond Remittances: The Role of Diaspora in Poverty Reduction in their Countries of Origin*, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, July 2004.

5. The role migrants play in the transfer of technology is relevant for the achievement of Goal 8 as well. Target 18 under Goal 8 is to "...make available the benefits of new technologies..."

and 5, on reducing the mortality rates of children, and improving maternal health.

Migration can also contribute to Goal 3 on gender equality, but it can also exacerbate existing inequalities. Gender is possibly the single most important factor shaping the migration experience, and migration holds different sets of risks and opportunities for female and male migrants. Today, women are increasingly migrating not just as dependents of male migrants, but on their own – often becoming the principal wage earners of their families. Migration can thus be an opportunity for women to gain greater autonomy over their lives.

However, migration can also lead to the disruption of social ties and support systems in countries of origin. In addition, while migration can contribute to the empowerment of women, female migrants do remain more vulnerable than men to being trafficked or otherwise exploited during the process of migration. This includes being more often exposed to unstable working conditions, discrimination and abuse. This is particularly the case if they work in sectors often not covered by national labour laws, such as the domestic sector, and where access to legal protection is subsequently more difficult.

These examples demonstrate that migration can work both ways for the

achievement of the MDGs. To harness the positive elements of migration an enabling policy environment is needed in which migrants and countries of origin and destination are encouraged and helped to maximize their contributions to development. An integral part of this is the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants, as well as their integration into society.

Failure to do so will not only prevent the MDGs from becoming a reality for migrants, but will also curtail their capacity to contribute to development in countries of both origin and destination.

Examples of IOM Projects and Programmes Relevant for the Achievement of the MDGs

IOM approaches the links between migration and the MDGs from the perspective that international migration, if properly managed, can contribute to the growth and prosperity of countries of origin and of destination, as well as of migrants themselves. Numerous IOM projects contribute directly or indirectly to the achievement of the MDGs. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples.

Goal 1: ENHANCING THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF REMITTANCES IN TAJIKISTAN

This joint IOM-UNDP initiative aims to promote migrant remittances as a tool for building sustainable livelihoods through investment in micro-enterprise schemes. Migrant remittances that are invested in the creation of small businesses will be matched with additional low-interest loans, so as to facilitate the development of sustainable sources of income and employment, and development opportunities in rural areas. Additional micro-credit schemes, training and advisory services are available for persons not receiving remittances as well.

Goal 3: MICRO-ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN IN GUINEA WITH SUPPORT FROM THE DIASPORA

IOM contributes to the economic and social empowerment of Guinean women through the mobilization of women of the Guinean diaspora living in the ECOWAS region. While 56 women received loans to open their own businesses, qualified women from the Guinean diaspora are training them in the creation and management of micro-enterprises and loans. By now, nearly all the loans have been fully reimbursed and the women are in the process of forming entrepreneur collectives through which they will manage a revolving fund to continue disbursing loans and pass on skills and knowledge to future beneficiaries.

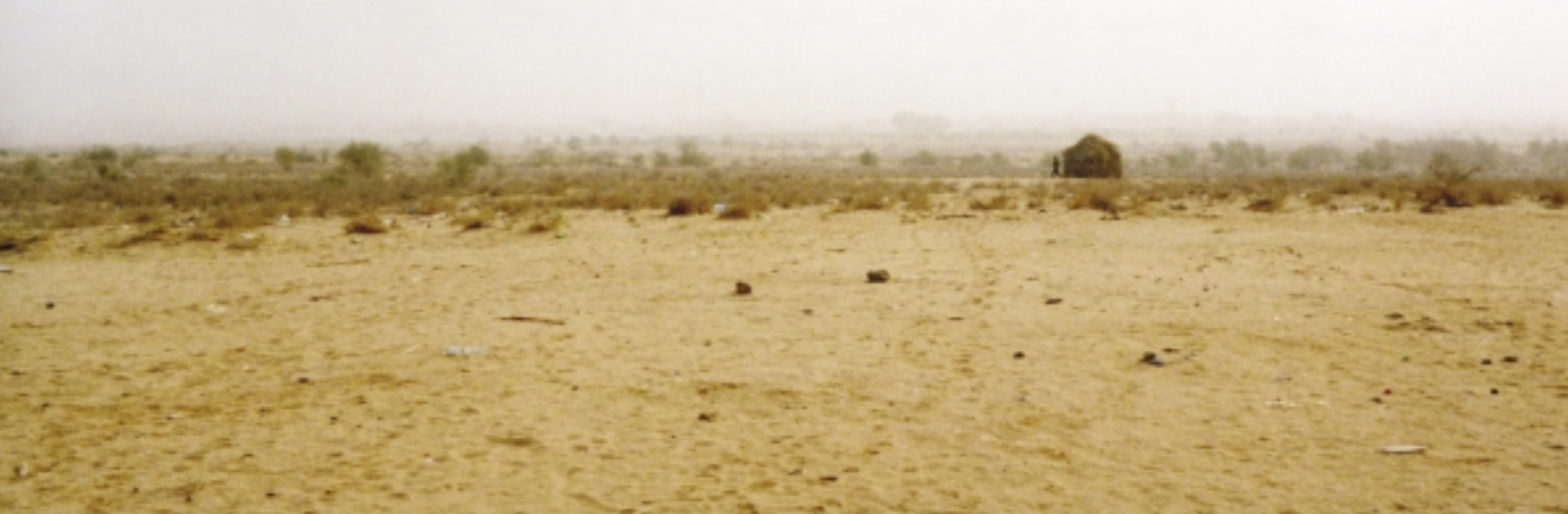
Goal 6: A BRAIN GAIN INITIATIVE FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR IN GHANA

A project aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the emigration of health workers from Ghana by giving Ghanaian health professionals residing in the Netherlands the opportunity to take up short-term assignments in hospitals and other health institutions in Ghana, thereby making their knowledge, skills and experience available to the Ghanaian health sector. In addition, health professionals from Ghana will do internships in hospitals in the Netherlands to strengthen cooperation and knowledge sharing between professionals in both country of origin and country of destination.

Goal 7: PROVIDING TEMPORARY HOUSING FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN BANDA ACEH

Contributing to the Indonesian government's efforts to promote socio-economic recovery and restoration of services, IOM's shelter programme provides those displaced by the tsunami with adequate shelter as the first step towards recovery. Collaboration with the Research Institute for Human Settlement of the Ministry for Public Works has led to the design of a modular housing unit. A degree of sustainability is ensured since the houses can be easily moved, added to, or adapted for permanent settlement. The housing units adhere to SPHERE standards and only certified wood is used in their production.

The Scorched Childhoods of Yemen



*By Laurentiu Ciobanica,
IOM Geneva*

"We are thirsty and there is water across the border".

In his metaphor-imbued language so typical of Yemeni ordinary speech, Ameen, the village community leader, sums it all up in a few words.

It is a story of poverty, sacrifice and tough survival choices – the day-to-day life in rural Yemen and the quest for a better future elsewhere.

His flat, resigned tone of voice and the fallen shoulder line also speak of resignation and pain. The ones that go forth to quench the thirst he speaks of are Yemen's most vulnerable and fragile – its children.

It started as a trickle, but slowly it became a torrent over the past 15 years. More and more Yemeni children, mostly young boys, are making

their way over the border into Saudi Arabia. What awaits most is insecurity, exploitation and eventual deportation. For a few fortunate ones, there is the chance of a menial job for a few days or at best, weeks. Jobs could be in sheep and cattle care or domestic help. However, the more likely "occupation" – because it is more financially productive – is begging. It's an occupation that shows signs of becoming a more organized "industry".

If lucky, the children make it back home with some money. Little though it may be, it increases the family income on average by 50 to 60 per cent. Most of the children don't see any of the money they've begged for, while a good number have most of their pathetically small earnings taken from them at the border. Border guards on both sides of the frontier know all too well what the unaccompanied Yemeni children are there for and extract their share.

The phenomenon affects mostly the governorates in the northern part of Yemen but there are signs that it is moving inland. Exactly how many children are affected is difficult to assess. A recent study commissioned by UNICEF and the Yemeni Ministry

of Social Affairs and carried out by the Yemeni Centre for Social and Labour Studies, puts the figure of child deportees for the first quarter of 2004 at around 10,000.

But what is not clear is if they are all different cases or the same children getting caught over and over again. Neither is it known just how many children make it through without getting caught. And, most of all, why and how does this happen?

Until recently, the Aflah Al-Sham district in the Hajjah governorate held the sad privilege of having the highest number of children going to Saudi Arabia. Worst hit areas were some of the more remote, mountain-perched villages. An IOM team decided to go there to look for some answers. They were not long in coming.

It was a hard climb even by four-wheel drive to get to one of the villages. For the villagers, it's a three-hour arduous climb on foot. It was mostly women carrying huge loads on their heads venturing out under the sweltering sun. Many have lost their hair because of this.

We eventually made our way to the top and headed for a place where we sat down with the village leaders and talked. Open debate and collect-

ive decision-making runs deep in Yemeni culture.

Yes, they know about the kids. Some come from broken, one-parent families, some are orphans. And some are just doing that universally adolescent thing, running away from home. It's difficult for parents and communities to exert control over all of them. Particularly when there is so little to put in the balance.

School has failed them miserably. Out of a population of 50,000 in the nearby district of Harad, only 250 children are enrolled in school. The high cost of schooling and the physical violence in class used as a "pedagogical" tool, are cited as some of the reasons for the dismal enrolment figures.

But the prevailing and openly admitted reason is that neither parents

nor children see any benefit from education. It takes eight years to complete elementary education while graduate jobs are scarce. And with so many mouths to feed and so little money, few families can afford such a luxury.

This poverty is the sadder and more frequent reason for child departures. Families voluntarily send their kids abroad. In order to get a child into Saudi Arabia, a middleman is paid a fee either up front or a percentage of future earnings. The middlemen are often community members or even relatives. Both parents and children know what they're in for – exploitation, possible sexual abuse and physical violence. Some may not even come back to their homes with money. But some will. It is far better survival odds for them and the entire family.

The Yemeni government has now decided to act on the issue. But needs are huge and resources meagre. It has enlisted the help of international organizations such as UNICEF and IOM. As part of a larger, multi-pronged UNICEF counter-trafficking project, IOM will carry out a mass-information campaign, build up capacity at a newly-opened reception centre for child trafficking victims, and train border guards. UNICEF activities will include income generation and education.

IOM's information campaign will include using a regional radio station to provide information, education and advice to communities on the issue. The danger and risks of irregular migration to Saudi Arabia will be highlighted and it will also work with parents and communities not to lose faith in the future of their children.

Border guards around Harad, one of the main crossing points into Saudi Arabia, will be trained how to recognize child trafficking and how to deal with it. It is an essential step for most officials still grappling with denial.

The reception centre for deported children in Harad is home to 30 children, most of them boys. It is jointly funded by the Yemeni Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNICEF, and it is where IOM will train personnel in psychosocial assistance and shelter management.

When we went, the children were in good spirits and were visibly enjoying their new surroundings. We struck up a conversation about football and words flowed easily. But when asked about their experiences across the border, silence fell like a shroud. Eventually, one of the children found the courage to say a few words. "We didn't have any choice".

This will not be an easy battle for IOM and UNICEF to fight. The foes are formidable – severe poverty and sacrifice. But it is definitely a battle worth fighting. And winning.

The ones that go forth to quench the thirst that Ameen, the village community leader, speaks of are Yemen's most vulnerable and fragile – its children.



Thailand Grapples with Costs and Benefits of Migration

*By Chris Lom,
IOM Bangkok*

Thailand's emergence as an Asian economic tiger and a glittering tourist destination owes much to its open economy and embrace of globalization.

But according to a new report* commissioned by IOM and UN agencies, the same openness has generated complex challenges for both the government and the hundreds of thousands of economic migrants and refugees from neighbouring countries attracted by Thailand's relative affluence and stability.

The report, commissioned by IOM on behalf of the UN Thematic Working Group on International Migration, welcomes moves by the Thai authorities to regularize the status of over 1.28 million migrant workers from neighbouring countries in 2004, but says that rapidly evolving migration trends across a broad range of issues have resulted in some Thai government policies and legislation lagging behind.

According to report authors Jerrold W. Huguette and Sureeporn Punpuing, the solution should be "a comprehensive national migration management system with an appropriate coordination mechanism to deal with all types of migration – asylum seekers, regular migrants and irregular migrants – in an integrated manner."

High on the list of challenges is how to resolve the plight of some 135,000 displaced Burmese living in nine "temporary" camps along the border with Myanmar. The camps, which were closed to new arrivals in 2001, offer basic shelter, food, schooling and health care provided by the international community, but residents are not permitted to leave in order to find work in Thailand.

Tham Hin camp in Ratchaburi province, for example, has now housed displaced Karen people fleeing Myanmar for over 20 years. Few of them want to stay in the camp, but while the human rights situation in Myanmar remains difficult, none want to return home.

One solution not yet open to camp residents has been resettlement in third countries, although IOM began to resettle 3,600 "urban" Burmese identified as refugees by UNHCR in 2004. The programme has run in parallel with its resettlement of some 15,000 Lao Hmong refugees from Wat Tham Krabok near Bangkok to the USA over the same period.



But Thailand's complex relationship with migration from Myanmar extends beyond the refugee issue. When the Thai Ministry of the Interior decided to regularize unauthorized labour migration through a registration of all labour migrants from neighbouring countries in July 2004, 1,280,000 workers registered. Over 70 per cent came from Myanmar – suggesting that Burmese migrants are an important source of cheap labour in key sectors of the Thai economy.

Following the registration, over 817,000 migrant workers paid to enroll in a Thai health insurance scheme and 814,000 applied for work permits, including some 600,000 from Myanmar and 100,000 each from Cambodia and the Lao PDR.

"Given the lack of economic opportunities and civil rights in their own countries, it is likely that significant numbers of the 1.3 million [registered] migrants in Thailand will want to remain in the country indefinitely," says the report. "[But] the political and governmental structure in Thailand does not accord full rights to them, including such basic rights as education, movement and free association. The lack of rights for migrant workers often leads to abuse, exploitation and trafficking," it observes.

**International Migration in Thailand can be downloaded as a PDF file from the IOM website: www.iom.int.*



Lao Hmong refugees awaiting US resettlement, Wat Tham Krabok.

© IOM 2004 - MTH0022 (Photo: Chris Lom)

Migrants' rights, however, are regarded as a serious political issue in Thailand, not least due to the experiences of Thai workers overseas. Thailand currently exports some 150,000 overseas contract workers and receives about US\$ 1.5 billion a year in remittances through official channels. Four out of five are relatively uneducated young men, many of whom work in the Arabian Gulf.

The report indicates that while migrant Burmese, Lao and Cambodian workers with Thai work permits and their families should enjoy the same rights as Thai workers, this is by no means always the case. For example, the 2004 registration recorded over 93,000 children under the age of 15. While children of registered migrants have the right to attend Thai schools, the authors note that only a very

small percentage of them are actually receiving any formal or informal education. Many of the older children are believed to be working without permission, and often in exploitative situations.

Female domestic workers, whether registered or not, are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because they work in isolation

in individual homes, according to the report. Thai law currently makes no provision for the rights and labour standards of domestic workers, irrespective of nationality.

While the report admits that there is no reliable estimate of irregular migrants from neighbouring countries living in Thailand, it claims that numbers could be "hundreds of thousands," a significant proportion of whom could be defined as victims of human trafficking. Citing a survey of migrants in Chiang Mai, Tak and Ranong provinces it suggests that this

may be as high as 12 per cent. Over 5 per cent of survey respondents said that they had been forced into prostitution.

Finally the report points to the health risks associated with the marginalization of migrant communities. Isolation from the local community, separation from regular partners, anonymity and lack of access to health services and information makes migrants extremely vulnerable to HIV infection and transmission. Sex workers and seafarers – two sectors in which Burmese migrants are active – are identified in the report as particularly vulnerable groups.

The report's recommendations include a call for improved refugee screening procedures on the Myanmar border; a cheaper and simpler way to issue work permits; better information about their rights for migrants and their families; proactive inspections of workplaces by the Thai Ministry of Labour to ensure compliance with labour standards and the enforcement of counter-trafficking legislation; and HIV/AIDS information and prevention programmes targeting mobile and difficult-to-reach populations, including cross-border intervention programmes.

Burmese migrant workers shell mussels, Samut Sakhon.

© IOM 2005 (Photo: Molly Angstman)



The Invisible Migrants:

Internal Migration, Development and the Fight Against Poverty in Asia

By *Dina Ionescu,*
IOM Geneva

Every year millions of people migrate, yet they go unseen.

While international migration has a high degree of visibility, internal migration flows remain largely obscure and uncharted. Despite this, estimates of the size of internal migration movements are impressive. India estimates its internal migrant population at 232 million, China at 121 million, mainly directed towards urban centres. To put such figures into context, global international migrant stocks in 2000 stood at 175 million, of which 44 million were in Asia.¹

A broad and complex notion

As the notion of internal migration is itself not always easy to determine, such statistics may well underestimate the real dimensions of internal migration flows. Internal migration covers all kinds of population movements: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban and urban to rural. Nor does

the notion distinguish between permanent, temporary or seasonal migration flows. In India, for instance, the number of seasonal labour migrants is estimated at between 15 and 20 million (Western India Rain Fed Forest Project). A large proportion of such movements, in particular in the informal sector, remain beyond the reach of statistical accounting.

“Internal migration” is also close to the notion of “population mobility”, but should not be confused with “labour mobility” as this would ignore one of the primary factors of mobility, which is, quite simply, marriage.

In Asia, seasonal movements feature significantly in internal migration flows, with the population in many towns increasing sharply during the dry season. In many Asian countries, internal labour migration remains predominantly rural, such as in India (62%), Nepal (68%) or Cambodia (72%).

Although internal migration contributes to urbanization, it is not synonymous with it. It is in fact difficult to gauge the net contribution made by internal migration to the urbanization process since this is also affected by the natural increase of the urban population. However, according to 2003 UN projections, by 2030 over 50 per cent of the global urban population will be in Asia. These projections take into account the expected economic development of the



region. Undeniably, industrialization has always been accompanied by population movements towards urban centres.

The vulnerability of internal migrants

Whether driven by natural disasters, poverty, lack of work or food shortages, or attracted by the prospect of new opportunities, the lives and conditions of migrants are closely interlinked with questions of economic and social development.

Though the primary motivation for migrants is to secure new opportunities and sustainable livelihoods, internal migration may also be the cause of social exclusion and vulnerability. Indeed, internal migration is frequently synonymous with deplorable living and working conditions. Often it means no more than the

1. All figures reproduced in this article are taken from *Migration, Development and Poverty Reduction in Asia*, IOM, 2005.



Street vendors in Lanzhou.

© IOM 2005 (Photo: Dina Ionescu)

transfer of rural poverty to urban settings, made worse by heavy debt burdens incurred by the family to finance the migration process to urban centres. As access to basic social services depends on residence, migrants are all too often excluded. The potentially negative effects on families of the absence of a family member must also be considered. The risks and uncertainties become even greater when the growing incidence of trafficking in human beings is taken into account. In fact, their precarious social and economic conditions render migrants particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

Internal migration as a catalyst for development

The challenge for governments is to find ways of supporting "good" migration, that is, migration apt to engender a virtuous cycle of economic growth, development and social process.

It is important to note that those countries with the highest internal migration rates also experienced a significant decline in their poverty rates. In Bangladesh, the poverty rate dropped from 59 per cent in 1988 to 43 per cent in 2000, and rates in Viet Nam fell from 58 per cent in 1993 to 37 per cent in 1998. Furthermore, an estimated 16 per cent of China's GNP growth since 1990 is attributable to internal labour migration. Eighty per cent of garment workers in Bangladesh who had no income before migrating are now living above the poverty line. In contrast, during the Asian economic crisis in the 1990s, internal migration flows diminished as many migrants returned to their places of origin, causing a sharp increase in unemployment.

Internal migration is an integral part of individual and family livelihood strategies as many families seek to supplement their rural income with urban earnings and take advantage of money transfers, or remittances. In India, Cambodia and Viet Nam, such transfers have helped to improve nutrition, housing and education for the families of migrants, and act as a form of social safety net. Moreover, internal money transfers seem to be primarily directed towards the poorest regions and families, as opposed to international remittances that can actually accentuate the income differentials between rich and poor regions.

Generalizations regarding the links between internal migration and socio-economic development are fraught with difficulties as numerous factors and different contexts play an important role. For instance, it is generally assumed that migrants who return to their places of origin do so having acquired new skills, accumulated savings and familiarization with different socio-economic and cultural contexts. However, this can all go to waste if there is no market for their newly acquired skills, or there are poor banking services or a cumbersome local bureaucracy at home.

In Sri Lanka, for example, women migrants undoubtedly benefit in the short term from their migratory experience as this boosts their financial and personal autonomy, but once

they return home, they have to fit into more traditional social roles and structures that are difficult to shake off.

The political challenge: how to stimulate the positive effects of migration?

Despite the links, positive or negative, between migration and development, internal migration is only rarely taken into account in official poverty reduction strategies or national or local economic development policies.

Factoring internal migration into development policies isn't necessarily a solution to poverty, but it does result in a more integrated approach to development, tackling simultaneously urban and rural concerns.

It should not be forgotten that migration remains an individual undertaking, strewn with risks and difficulties and that macroeconomic development should not be pursued at the expense of migrants' individual survival strategies thus excluding them from socio-economic development efforts.

Therefore, this would imply the setting up of programmes to inform and prepare migrants for their migration process, provide support for migrants' families and increased protection of migrant rights. This would not only make them more visible in the political eye, but also make their voices more heard.

Finally, let us imagine for an instant that internal migration did not exist...The poorest would remain dependent on local unproductive agriculture, local labour markets would offer little or no opportunities, land would continue to be divided into ever smaller and less productive plots, and local cultures would not intermingle. And what would that do to the state of matrimony? So let us be clear, internal migration is part and parcel of development.

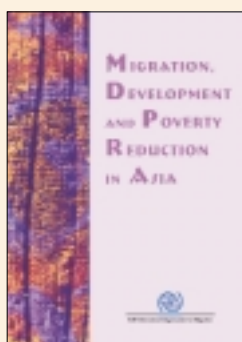
For more information on internal migration and development issues in Asia, go to: <http://www.iom.int/chinaconference/>

Migration, Development and Poverty Reduction in Asia

Earlier versions of the papers in this volume were presented at the Regional Conference on Migration and Development in Asia, held in Lanzhou, China, 14-16 March 2005.

Though there has been increasing attention paid to the potential role migration can play in fostering development, most of that attention has tended to focus on international migration. Internal migration has been somewhat neglected but is also an extremely important policy area. One of the key aims of the Lanzhou conference was to identify more effective ways to enhance the benefits of internal migration for poverty reduction and development, and how this could be complemented by strategies to ensure that migrants have decent working conditions and access to health and social services.

274 pages – US\$ 35 – ISBN 978 92 9068 248 6



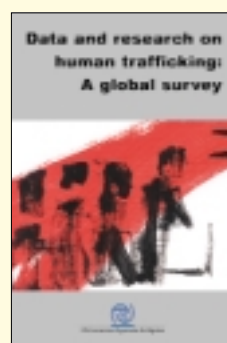
New Titles!

Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey

Human trafficking has become a global business, reaping huge profits for traffickers and organized crime syndicates, generating massive human rights violations, and causing serious problems for governments. Despite the magnitude of the problem, however, it has only recently seized policy makers' attention.

This review of research and data on trafficking shows that despite the growing literature on trafficking around the world, relatively few studies are based on extensive or empirical research, and information on the actual numbers of people trafficked remains very sketchy. The book, which includes 9 regional chapters, and 3 chapters dealing with methodological issues, suggests a number of ways in which to enhance research and data on human trafficking.

342 pages – US\$ 35 – ISBN 978 92 9068 240 X



International Dialogue on Migration N° 6 – Health and Migration: Bridging the Gap



This publication details the broad range of issues discussed during the Seminar on Health and Migration, held in Geneva from 9 to 11 June 2004 with the co-sponsorship of the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Panels of experts encouraged debate on topics

such as the use of pre-departure health assessments, the need to address the mental health of migrants, healthcare access for irregular migrants, and the migration of healthcare workers. The records of the discussions contained in the following chapters set out the main challenges and areas for policy reform, such as the need for programme support, local capacity building, information-sharing and communication of best practices.

134 pages – US\$ 16 – ISSN 1726-2224

International Agenda for Migration Management

The Berne Initiative process was launched by the Government of Switzerland in 2001. In 2003, the Berne Initiative produced a study on international legal norms and migration as well as a compilation of significant international statements on migration. The *International Agenda for Migration Management* is the next major product of the Berne Initiative and is designed to assist government migration practitioners in developing effective measures for the management of migration. It offers a non-binding yet comprehensive reference system for dialogue, cooperation and capacity building at the national, regional and global level.

The *International Agenda for Migration Management* represents views of States throughout the world. Its main elements – common understandings and effective practices – have been developed in a process of consultations among States from all regions, fully respecting their sovereignty in the field, and with other stakeholders in migration.

Trilingual publication in English, French and Spanish

228 pages – Free of charge – ISBN 978 92 9068 251 6



The list of IOM publications can be found on the IOM website:

<http://www.iom.int>

IOM publications are available from:

International Organization for Migration, Research and Publications Division
17 route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 19 Switzerland
Tel: +41.22.717 91 11, Fax: +41.22.798 61 50, E-mail: publications@iom.int

IOM publications are also available from the sales offices of the United Nations
E-mail: unpubli@unog.ch (Geneva) or publications@un.org (New York)