IOM Nairobi hosts Regional Workshop on Voluntary Return and Reintegration

The British Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) in collaboration with IOM held a two day Horn of Africa regional workshop to identify regional problems in implementing IOM’s Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VAARP) and possible solutions. The workshop also sought ways to raise awareness of VAARP activities in the region among the Diaspora with the aim of increasing the intake.

IOM’s Regional Representative for East and Central Africa, Mr. Ashraf El Nour, in his opening remarks said that migration is a pertinent issue in the region and assisted voluntary return (AVR) is an important element of the migration management process.

He added that IOM, as a specialized agency in providing migration management services, is committed to ensuring the AVR programme works to the benefit of all its member states and to the migrants in particular to return in safety and dignity and to be able to effectively reintegrate to their home society.

During the workshop, participants, mainly IOM officials implementing the VAARP programme in Kenya, Uganda, DRC, Ethiopia and Sudan, made recommendations among them building partnerships with the private sector in countries of return to encourage them to employ qualified returnees, establishing a reintegration opportunity database where the returnees can have access to information of what business opportunities are available to them in their countries, government regulations for establishing businesses, job opportunities available, among other crucial information.

The UK VAARP programme is funded by the British government and implemented by IOM. It offers failed asylum seekers, detained and irregular migrants in the UK an opportunity to return home in a dignified manner in addition to assisting them to get reintegrated back into their societies through various reintegration packages. These include; a relocation grant, temporary housing, education, vocational training, business set up and job placement. Different packages are available for the various categories of migrants.
IOM is also supporting the Ministry of Labour to set up a website where counter trafficking information will be posted. The main target for the website is potential labour migrants who will get tips on how to avoid becoming victims of trafficking and who to contact if caught up in the situation.

Several activities have been lined up for the campaign among them infomercials (information commercials) scheduled to air just before four prime time news bulletins in the national radio, the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. The infomercials will be broadcasted in Kiswahili, the national language, and will be preceded by 30 second promotions to introduce the messages. The national television will also air a court drama on human trafficking in the popular ‘Vioja Mahakamani’ programme.

In addition to this, IOM will get 30 minutes to one hour radio spots in other radio stations where listeners can call in and ask questions on human trafficking. Some TV stations are also targeted and one has already committed to giving IOM half an hour airtime just after the morning primetime news.

Apart from the media campaign, IOM will use IEC materials that will be distributed to education institutions, NGO partners through various networks and various public places for awareness raising. The messages contain information on where to report cases of human trafficking.
IOM Nairobi embraces PRISM for Financial Resource Management

MRF hosted a two week end-user prism training for 31 participants from ten missions in Africa and Europe.

Prism is a financial, procurement and human resource system that is replacing the MOSAIC and PAS systems. “This system will take IOM into the next generation of resource management that is more efficient, economic and effective,” according to Mr. Ovais Sarmad, IOM’s Director of Resource Management.

Mr. Sarmad said that PRISM is a fully integrated world class system that will replace the fragmented systems that are currently in use. As such, the new system will enhance IOM’s credibility and integrity of the resource management function with member states, donors and other stakeholders.

It is a more comprehensive system and more compatible with donors’ requirements as it has features that can give donors specific information. In addition, PRISM is a real-time online system that can capture commitments, making it a useful tool for planning.

The roll out of the new system is being undertaken through a phased approach that started in January 2008. It is anticipated that it will be finalized by mid next year, by which time all IOM missions world-wide will have gone live in PRISM.

“The new system is complex, demanding and intense and will require users to change their mindset in order to embrace it,” added Mr. Sarmad. He however, noted that the benefits of PRISM far outweigh the demands it will put on users.

IOM relocates refugees from Dadaab to Kakuma Refugee Camps

The International Organization for Migration in July finalized the relocation of 2,000 refugees from the Dadaab to Kakuma Refugee Camps in Kenya as an initial action towards decongesting the Dadaab Camp.

The relocation was funded by UNHCR with IOM carrying out the actual movement of the refugees. The first movement of 500 refugees was done by air late last year while 1,500 were transferred by road in the last three weeks in batches of 500.

“We were giving priority to vulnerable cases such as those that need protection and children and women headed families,” says Gideon Gitari, IOM’s Operations Assistant who was in charge of the relocation operation.

In addition to IOM’s operation and medical staff, the ten bus convoy also had translators, UNHCR and police escort accompanying the refugees on the 1200 km journey from North Eastern to North Western Kenya that took three days for each of the three trips.

Dadaab has been hit by an influx of refugees mainly from Somalia, fleeing the ongoing conflict in the country and the camp currently has a population of almost 200,000 refugees, which is double its capacity.

“Due to the ongoing repatriation programme of Sudanese refugees at the Kakuma camp, the camp is able to take on the refugees being relocated from Dadaab,” adds Gitari.

This new system is complex, demanding and intense and will require users to change their mindset in order to embrace it.”

Some of the refugees waiting to be relocated   IOM staff assisting refugees to board one of the buses   IOM escorts the convoy
The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres this year joined refugees in Kenya in celebrations to mark the World Refugee Day (WRD) that were held at the University of Nairobi grounds. He was accompanied by Hon. Otieno Kajwang, the Kenyan Minister for Immigration and Registration of Persons, the ministry under which refugee affairs fall. Mr. Guterres also toured refugee camps in Northern Kenya.

WRD is marked on 20th June to recognize and celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout the world. This year’s theme was “To Feel at Home.”

IOM in Kenya joined the refugee community and other stakeholders working with refugees in commemorating the day by sponsoring performances by refugee groups entertaining the guests and also having an exhibition stand where staff exhibited and gave presentations of services IOM offers to refugees.

HIV surveillance is widely regarded as the cornerstone of an evidence-informed AIDS response. According to Adrienne Testa, IOM’s head of office in Hargeisa, the ‘bio’ component establishes who is HIV-infected, which is then linked to ‘behavioural’ indicators of risk practices.

The findings will guide the Somali HIV response to develop and inform programmes for MARPs, including sex workers, truck drivers, uniformed services and other vulnerable groups. Baseline prevalence of risk behaviours and HIV infection will also be established. The community-based surveillance among MARPs will complement WHO HIV surveillance among those who attend antenatal clinic in Somaliland.

Data collection starts in August 2008 and aims at establishing HIV and STI prevalence, as well as HIV and STI risk perceptions, condom usage patterns, barriers to condom usage, gender-based violence and integrated health service needs.

IOM Kenya marks the World Refugee Day

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres this year joined refugees in Kenya in celebrations to mark the World Refugee Day (WRD) that were held at the University of Nairobi grounds. He was accompanied by Hon. Otieno Kajwang, the Kenyan Minister for Immigration and Registration of Persons, the ministry under which refugee affairs fall. Mr. Guterres also toured refugee camps in Northern Kenya. WRD is marked on 20th June to recognize and celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout the world. This year’s theme was “To Feel at Home.”

IOM in Kenya joined the refugee community and other stakeholders working with refugees in commemorating the day by sponsoring performances by refugee groups entertaining the guests and also having an exhibition stand where staff exhibited and gave presentations of services IOM offers to refugees.

At the IOM Transit Centre in Nairobi, refugees marked the day with cultural songs, dances and traditional cuisines. These activities made the refugees feel as if they were back in their homes.

“For a while I felt as if I was back home. Life as a refugee is not easy but there is no use living in the past. As a matter of fact, I am looking forward to my new home in Australia,” said Fartoun Ahmed who together with her husband and seven children have been accepted for resettlement in Australia.

In addition to song and dance, the children at the Transit Centre had a lot of fun playing various games and having their faces painted.

IOM and WHO Launch First Somali Community-Based HIV Surveillance

Building upon its groundbreaking Somali HIV hot-spot mapping research, IOM has started the first bio-behavioural HIV surveillance survey in Somaliland, in collaboration with WHO. The surveillance will explore key findings of the earlier research, with a focus on most-at-risk populations (MARPS). The project is funded by UNICEF, UNAIDS and the Global Funds. IOM is partnering with among other organizations, Somaliland National AIDS Commission (SOLNAC) to implement the project.

The HIV hot-spot mapping was the first Somali research study to identify and engage transactional sex workers and their clients, including truck drivers, uniformed services, seafarers and militia. Key findings indicated poor knowledge of how HIV is transmitted and prevented, low condom use and multiple, concurrent sexual partners.

HIV surveillance is widely regarded as the cornerstone of an evidence-informed AIDS response. According to Adrienne Testa, IOM’s head of office in Hargeisa, the ‘bio’ component establishes who is HIV-infected, which is then linked to ‘behavioural’ indicators of risk practices.

The findings will guide the Somali HIV response to develop and inform programmes for MARPs, including sex workers, truck drivers, uniformed services and other vulnerable groups. Baseline prevalence of risk behaviours and HIV infection will also be established. The community-based surveillance among MARPs will complement WHO HIV surveillance among those who attend antenatal clinic in Somaliland.

Data collection starts in August 2008 and aims at establishing HIV and STI prevalence, as well as HIV and STI risk perceptions, condom usage patterns, barriers to condom usage, gender-based violence and integrated health service needs.

IOM Kenya marks the World Refugee Day

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres this year joined refugees in Kenya in celebrations to mark the World Refugee Day (WRD) that were held at the University of Nairobi grounds. He was accompanied by Hon. Otieno Kajwang, the Kenyan Minister for Immigration and Registration of Persons, the ministry under which refugee affairs fall. Mr. Guterres also toured refugee camps in Northern Kenya. WRD is marked on 20th June to recognize and celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout the world. This year’s theme was “To Feel at Home.”

IOM in Kenya joined the refugee community and other stakeholders working with refugees in commemorating the day by sponsoring performances by refugee groups entertaining the guests and also having an exhibition stand where staff exhibited and gave presentations of services IOM offers to refugees.

At the IOM Transit Centre in Nairobi, refugees marked the day with cultural songs, dances and traditional cuisines. These activities made the refugees feel as if they were back in their homes.

“For a while I felt as if I was back home. Life as a refugee is not easy but there is no use living in the past. As a matter of fact, I am looking forward to my new home in Australia,” said Fartoun Ahmed who together with her husband and seven children have been accepted for resettlement in Australia.

In addition to song and dance, the children at the Transit Centre had a lot of fun playing various games and having their faces painted.