

IOM Armenia

Projects: Movement, Emergency and Post-crisis Migration Management

Facilitated Movements and Resettlement

Transporting persons in need of assistance is key to IOM's overall mission of meeting global migration challenges. IOM organizes the safe movement of persons for temporary and permanent resettlement or return to their countries of origin. IOM is also able to provide medical screening, migration documentation assistance and cultural orientation prior to departure. IOM operates the Migrant Management and Operational Services Application (MIMOSA) software, which strengthens IOM's capacity to track and manage operational activities and including statistical information.

Activities include the movement of:

- Refugees resettling in new countries
- Returning qualified nationals
- Scholarship holders and
- War victims requiring medical evacuation.

Specific advantages of IOM services are:

- Professional services in assisting refugees and migrants to complete applications for migration.
- Considerably discounted airfares (IOM has negotiated concession fares with a wide variety of airline partners).
- Increased luggage allowance.
- Departure, transit and arrival assistance.

IOM assists with the resettlement of persons accepted under regular immigration programmes through the processing of relevant documentation, performing medical screening and arranging safe, reliable and economical transportation. Language training and cultural orientation are also offered at the request of some receiving countries to facilitate the integration of migrants into their new host societies.

At the request of Governments, and working in close cooperation with organizations such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and joint voluntary agencies, IOM facilitates the processing and proper documenting of refugees and migrants selected by various countries for resettlement.

Emergency and Post-emergency Operations

IOM provides transportation and emergency humanitarian assistance to persons requiring evacuation from emergency situations as well as post-emergency movement assistance. While evacuation assistance, including assistance to countries of temporary protection, may involve international movement, post-emergency movement assistance generally relates to domestic movements of internally displaced persons, demobilized soldiers and persons affected by natural disasters. Assistance is also provided for post-emergency reconstruction initiatives.

Donors

- Government of Canada
- Government of the United States of America
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Projects

- **Services to the Residents of Armenia Applying for Canadian Temporary Resident Visas and Immigration to Canada under “Skilled Worker Category,” as well as Visas for Work Permit**

The Canadian Government has signed an agreement with IOM for pre-consular services for Armenian citizens and residents applying to the Canadian Embassy in Moscow for non-immigrant visas, under the Canadian Government programme for legal immigration for qualified skilled workers. The applicants can receive assistance with temporary resident visa, work permit and immigration packet preparation (including consultation, translations, filling in the applications, verification, and full check of the kit); delivery of Temporary Resident, Student and Worker visa applications and fees; counselling of immigration applicants and delivery of immigration applications and fees under the skilled worker category; delivery of documents relating to Immigrant Visa applications and providing an acknowledgement of receipt by the Embassy to the applicant; delivery and return of passports, and assistance with making the appointment with the Embassy. The agreement does not cover traditional IOM medical and travel services for immigrants and refugees. The decisions on visas and permits are made by the Canadian Embassy. Use of IOM's pre-consular services is optional – residents of Armenia are free to apply in person themselves at the Canadian Embassy in Moscow or to use other authorized third parties to make the application on their behalf. In 2008 alone IOM has assisted a total of 773 cases/applications from Armenia.

- **Assisted Voluntary Return Programme**

Many people migrate to other countries looking for employment and a better life, hoping to integrate in the host society. Unfortunately, only few irregular migrants succeed in regularizing their status in order to legally live and work in the destination country.

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) is one of many migration management services IOM offers to migrants and governments. IOM's AVR programmes aim at providing orderly, humane and cost-effective return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. AVR avoids the stigma of deportation and legal exclusion from future entry in the country of destination. AVR is a dignified, safe, and cost-effective return option in which voluntariness is an important prerequisite. Voluntariness means that the return is based on a decision freely taken by the individual. A voluntary decision embraces two elements: freedom of choice, which is defined by the absence of any physical, psychological or material pressure; and an informed decision, which requires having enough accurate and objective information available in order to make the right decision. IOM is **not** involved in forced returns.

Since its inception, IOM has been involved in the **voluntary repatriation** of refugees, mainly in support of the repatriation activities of the UNHCR. Such returns are achieved in accordance with protection concerns and procedures, which take into account the specific status of returnees. Transport, sometimes combined with reintegration assistance or airfreight, is provided to refugees on their voluntary repatriation to their home country.

Since 1994 IOM missions in West and Central European states have assisted more than 5,000 migrants who returned to Armenia. Typically, potential returnees are referred to IOM by authorities of the host country, such as the immigration service, local asylum centres, or NGOs. The assistance provided to returnees ranges from return assistance which includes pre-departure information and counselling and the organization of voluntary return, to schemes that include help with long-term reintegration and economic viability of the migrants once they are back in their countries of origin.

In recent years IOM Armenia assisted 118 cases of voluntary return. IOM Armenia provides financial assistance to returnees for medical treatment and other rehabilitation activities (**rehabilitation assistance**), as well as reintegration grants allocated by the governments of the countries from where the migrant returns to start up their businesses or pursue studies, as per individual needs (**reintegration assistance**).

- **Integrated Approach regarding Information on Return and Reintegration in Countries of Origin**

The project aims at contributing to the joint efforts in the enlarged EU in facilitating

sustainable return of irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers through an integrated approach to voluntary returns with a particular emphasis on information on the country of origin related to return and reintegration. Building on the Information on Return & Reintegration In the Countries of Origin (IRRI CO) project, and complementary to efforts and initiatives at the national level, the project will continue to provide a multilateral platform in facilitating effective provisions of return information as gathered in origin countries in support of voluntary return and reintegration assistance. It will also facilitate a well-structured exchange of best practices in the use of such information in return counselling. The concrete results of the project will include a practitioner's manual on voluntary return counselling and service provisions with specific emphasis on information on countries of origin; the establishment of a website to allow the exchange of information and networking that can be extended after the closure of the project, providing a valuable input for future national programmes and other efforts in the 27 EU Member States.

The project's innovative approach intends to bring together the expertise among an increased number of participating EU Member States and will offer the possibility to present the approach to the 27 EU Member States (public authorities, NGOs and IOM missions) and in selected countries of origin in order to reinforce and to build capacities in facilitating voluntary and sustainable return of migrants in general and return-related, country of origin information in particular. This will be achieved through development of the methodology and exchange of good practices in return counselling vis a vis provision of information on the situation in the country of origin as related to return and reintegration, as well as enhancement of cooperation to build synergies among partners involved in assisting migrants across the EU Member States.

Furthermore, the project aims at creating a mechanism to provide adequate, neutral and timely information relevant to return in support of voluntary return and reintegration of migrants. Gathering of information will be conducted in countries of origin identified by participating countries. Such information will be collected and stored under the expanding existing database that would be accessible to all missions via a web-based approach increasing the efficiency of this information service.

- **United States Refugee Programme**

Through its United States Refugee Programme funded by the US Government, IOM facilitates processing of applications for permission to resettle in the United States as refugees. Between in 2001-2007, the programme assisted persons selected by the US Embassy in Moscow to emigrate to the US. The applicants included mainly nationals of the former Soviet Union applying under the "Lautenberg" refugee programme (Jews, Evangelical Christians, Ukrainian Catholics, members of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, amongst others.) as well as UNHCR referrals (i.e., foreign nationals determined by the local UNHCR office to be refugees in need of third-country resettlement). Applicants falling under specific categories identified by the US Congress as potential targets of persecution, and having close relatives (spouses, parents, children, siblings, grandparents, and grandchildren) legal US residents were granted scheduling priority. Assistance included counselling, medical screening, transportation, medical escorts, and administration of the loan fund (refugees resettled in the US were granted a travel loan).

Since 2002 IOM has assisted 213 refugees to resettle in the US, 7 to resettle in Canada, 27 were resettled in European Union Members States, and 223 cases of family reunification (450 beneficiaries) were assisted to travel to the US. Currently IOM Armenia is facilitating the resettlement process on a case-by-case basis.