New Child Protection Campaign

The IOM Mission in Ghana has partnered with government agencies and local communities to counter child trafficking practices for more than ten years. To further address and prevent child trafficking and protection concerns in Ghana, a pilot campaign called ‘FREE TO BE ME’ is being rolled out in local communities in the Volta region.

Funded by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the pilot phase includes the development of a toolkit and community training sessions. The intent is to sensitize communities about the vulnerability of children to various child protection violations and the harmful consequences of child labour practices. Trainings will take place in six communities in Ketu South, North and South Tongu Districts of Ghana’s Volta Region in 2013; with the IOM team working in close cooperation with national, regional and local authorities.

The ‘FREE TO BE ME’ toolkit aims to strengthen capacity among community leaders and family members to more fully address child trafficking and protection challenges and bridge the gap between legislative measures and action.

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The toolkit was developed following extensive research and testing, in partnership with UNICEF, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the sector Ministries of Health and Education, Department of Community Development, District Assemblies and the active involvement of community members, including chiefs, elders, parents, educators, and children.
The pilot project is scheduled for completion in August 2013, but IOM and its partners hope the ‘FREE TO BE ME’ toolkit implementation will be extended and expanded to encompass a nationwide grassroots campaign that promotes child protection through community capacity building.

Reflections on Study Abroad in Ghana
As an international relations graduate student at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, I was provided the amazing opportunity to participate in a study abroad programme with IOM Ghana during the summer of 2012. I had previously worked as an immigration paralegal, so the internship was a great way to build upon my expertise related to migration while experiencing a new culture first-hand.

To develop on-the-job skills necessary for a career in a non-profit, I spent a few weeks researching an issue of critical importance to Ghana. After identifying concerns related to internal migration resulting from environmental degradation in the north, I developed a project proposal and gave a mock donor presentation to IOM staff. They provided insightful critiques to ensure its viability as an actual project.

In addition to my primary work in Accra, I was able to make several field visits. As part of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programme I travelled with IOM staff to interview several migrant returnees concerning their successful reintegration. I also spent an entire week in the Immuna community with the Counter-Trafficking team aiding the local teachers with annual exam preparations. Finally, while assisting the new healthcare and micro-business programme in Tamale, I was delighted to hear local government officials requesting that the project’s documents remain gender neutral to ensure that women were represented equally.

Overall, this internship provided me unparalleled insight to the realities of working at an intergovernmental organization. It’s truly difficult to learn everything from a textbook, and I was fortunate to learn from the intelligent, passionate and innovative people that are employed at IOM Ghana.

Note: this article was contributed by Rachel Murawski

Mobile Tuberculosis Programme in Western Ghana
On 29 May 2013 IOM Ghana’s Migration Health Department launched a TB Reach project in Western Ghana. Aimed at intensifying tuberculosis (TB) detection among refugees and host communities, miners and mining communities, border communities and urban vulnerable communities, the IOM team will utilise a mobile TB diagnostic van with GeneXpert MTB/RIF machine to reach at least 317,000 individuals.

IOM will partner with Ghana’s national, regional and district TB control programmes in five locations (Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan, Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipal, Prestea-Huni Valley Municipal, Ellemelle District and Jomoro District) in the Western Region over the next 12 months.

The TB REACH project has four main activities, including: enhanced coordination and monitoring among stakeholders; community mobilization and cough screening; mobile TB screening utilising a GeneXpert machine; and capacity building of selected TB diagnostic centres.

IOM aims to achieve a three-fold increase in the number of new positive TB cases through active case detection.

New Study Released on HIV Vulnerability and Population Mobility in Ghana
IOM Ghana has released a new behavioural study entitled, HIV Vulnerability Among Female Sex Workers Along Ghana’s Tema-Paga Transport Corridor. The study, funded by UNAIDS, looks specifically at the association between mobility and the risk of HIV infection among female sex workers (FSWs) along the Tema-Paga (North-South) transport corridor in Ghana.

In Ghana there are two main categories of FSW, “roamers” who are mobile and travel to actively seek clients and “seaters” who are stationary and work out of their homes or brothels. The overall prevalence of HIV infection among FSWs in Ghana was estimated at 11.1% in 2011 with a prevalence of 6.6% among roamers and 21.4% among seaters.

Among the key findings was the high level of
consistent condom use by FSWs with clients (90.2%) but the majority (53.3%) were inconsistent condom users with non-paying partners. *Roamers* were found to have significantly more non-paying partners than *seaters*. FSWs are also on the move, with 46% of respondents having travelled for sex work in the three months prior to the interview.

The research concluded that *roamers* are more vulnerable to HIV infection than *seaters* because of their frequent movements, concurrent multiple non-paying partnerships, and not always having condoms while at work. Findings also indicate that *seaters* are older, less mobile, have more dependents and earn less income from sex work than *roamers*.

IOM and its research partners recommend revamping HIV prevention programmes to target not only FSWs in Ghana but also their non-paying partners and clients with behaviour change communications (BCC) messages and income generating activities to stop sex work. Please visit our website to access the full report www.iom.int/cms/ghanah

Preparing for a New Country: the first Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) mission in Chad

Since 2005, IOM has implemented the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) programme in Ghana. The programme provides a three-day training to migrants in advance of their resettlement to Canada. Participant’s expectations and fears are addressed and they are provided a series of workshops related to Canadian history, law, geography, culture, healthcare, etc.

Additionally, IOM Ghana has oversight responsibility for the implementation of the COA programme in West Africa and part of the Central African sub-region.

To date, 1,709 refugees in West and Central Africa have been trained as part of the COA programme. In March 2013, IOM Ghana organized the first COA mission to Chad, the team comprised of a trainer, doctor and nurse. Altogether, three orientation sessions were conducted for 78 refugees who have been approved for resettlement to Canada. In recent times, Chad has experienced an influx of refugees fleeing persecution and civil unrests in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. Even though refugees endure poor living conditions in Chad, their host country, they often find it a safe haven compared to their countries of origin.

During the initial session participants expressed their expectations and fears about moving to Canada. Most anticipated having a safe place to live, their children attending school, and the ability to find a job. They also expressed a fear of the cold having only lived in a tropical climate.

One refugee expressed, “We are grateful for all of the things we have learnt about Canada. Thanks a lot.” They are now one step closer to reaching their dreams of a new life in Canada.

From Refugee to Resettlement to Peace Corps Volunteer: Nhial’s Story

Nhial Malia was resettled by IOM from a refugee camp in western Ethiopia to Houston, Texas when he was 11 years old. He is now 26, a US citizen, holds a BA in Biology and minor in Philosophy from Bethany College, Kansas and serves as a water and sanitation volunteer with the Peace Corps in Ghana. The following is an excerpt from *Nhial’s Story*.

**Life as a Refugee:** Imagine this scenario, it is 1988 and violent conflict has escalated between North and South Sudan. A young woman with seven children is forced to flee her home and all her possessions. Her husband is missing and presumed dead and she is taken in by her husband’s brother and escapes with his family from their home in Bentiu, Unity State, South Sudan. She walks with her children, some of them babies, for more than six months across hundreds of miles from her home near the northern border of South Sudan to Itang Refugee Camp near Gambella, Ethiopia. […]

The young woman is Nhial Malia’s mother, Mary Nyayok Hoth. Nhial says he was only two years old when she set off on the longest trek of her life to protect the lives of her children. The family arrived at Itang refugee camp in September 1988 and remained
until May 1991. The change of government in Ethiopia and outbreak of civil war forced the family to return to South Sudan, despite the continued volatile situation. Conflict flared up again in South Sudan and by 1992 the Malia family was on the move, back to Itang refugee camp in Ethiopia. However, they were soon relocated to a second camp called Fugnido, also in the Gambella region.

The move to the second camp would prove devastating to Nhial’s family and illustrates the dangers faced by refugees and displaced persons. By the time they reached their new location Nhial had lost five of his siblings and became in an instant the oldest child (he had been the sixth child of seven). [...] Continue reading Nhial’s Story at http://www.iom.int/cms/fs.

A Closer Look at Disaster Preparedness in the Brong Ahafo and Northern Regions of Ghana

The massive return of migrants caught in foreign crises with no other alternatives but to return home brings untold hardship to hosting households and communities.

As part of the reintegration project Emergency Reintegration Assistance for Ghanaian Migrants Affected by the 2011 Libyan Crisis funded by the Japanese Government, IOM commissioned a study of communities in the Brong Ahafo and Northern Regions of Ghana impacted by the massive return of migrants. More than 18,000 Ghanaians were evacuated from Libya and neighbouring countries with assistance from IOM and the Government of Ghana in 2011.

The researchers concluded that migrant sending households and communities are not prepared and do not have the resilience to face future massive returns of migrants. The lack of preparedness and resilience stems from the difficulties faced in handling vulnerabilities such as the sudden return of migrants, fires, floods, storms, urban sprawl; seasonal shortages of food and cash; and diseases.

Recommendations for future sustainable livelihood interventions in migrant sending communities include: vocational training; innovative lending products; improved farming techniques; health, nutrition and sanitation campaigns; disaster preparedness and management training, among others. To read the research in full please visit our website www.iom.int/cms/ghana.

Rescued Ghanaian Seamen Return Home

Four Ghanaian seamen, part of a crew of 24 from Ghana, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan and Yemen were taken hostage by Somali pirates on 29 March 2010 and endured nearly three years of unimaginable conditions until their rescue by Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) on 23 December 2012. They shared their experiences with IOM Ghana staff upon their return home.

According to the Ghanaian seamen, their vessel the MV Iceberg 1, was en route to the United Arab Emirates when it was captured off the coast of Yemen. The crew says that pirates sprayed gunfire and intimidated the seamen upon boarding the vessel and informed them they were headed to Somalia.

With little knowledge of the vessel the pirates soon damaged the engines, and the anchor was broken by monsoon winds. The vessel drifted for months before striking rocks. While the ship was adrift and thereafter, the crew were subjected to appalling treatment, including days without food or water, continuous beatings, among others. Read the full interview at http://www.iom.int/cms/fs.

Note: The seamen would be grateful for any employment opportunities in Ghana to support themselves and their families.