OUR OBJECTIVE

“TO ENHANCE THE HUMANE AND ORDERLY MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO MIGRANTS IN NEED.”

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION – Tanzania’s Mixed Migration Unit

People all over the world are on the move. It is estimated that there are around 215 million international migrants in the world today. With an increasing number of people on the move for a multitude of reasons, a worrisome number find themselves in precarious situations in need of assistance and protection. However, when migration is humane and orderly, it can be beneficial to the migrants and society.

IOM Tanzania’s Mixed Migration Unit works on issues that are connected to mixed migration flows throughout the region. Mixed Migration flows are complex population movements including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, smuggled migrants, unaccompanied minors and other migrants.

Each year thousands of people, mostly from the horn of Africa, sell off everything they own and embark on an arduous journey in search of a better life. Their foremost desired destination is South Africa, but they must traverse over 5,000 kilometers of some of the most difficult terrain using boats, buses, cars and their own feet. Many of these migrants use smuggling groups to facilitate this journey. Estimates from a recent report entitled “In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity” have put the number of irregular migrants that arrive illegally through the use of smugglers to South Africa at between 17,000 - 20,000 annually. In addition, thousands of irregular migrants end up stranded during their journey and are deported, detained in prisons, or sometimes die. Many times, irregular migrants are arrested by authorities in transit countries and placed in prison as these countries lack the necessary funds and capacity to assist in returning them to their home countries.

While this affects the entire East African region, Tanzania’s geographic location makes it a very key transit corridor with irregular migrants headed for Tanzania’s southern borders to Malawi, Mozambique or Zambia en route to South Africa and beyond. Tanzania has witnessed an increasing flow of irregular migrants, including asylum seekers and displaced persons from the Horn and Eastern Africa (mainly Somalia and Ethiopia) given the critical situation in those countries. This increased flow causes major difficulties for the government of Tanzania in managing migration.

At the same time, Tanzania along with the East African Region is in the process of a major transformation. The recent implementation of the East African Community (EAC) - Common Market Protocol requires substantial change to facilitate the proposed free movement of labour, capital, goods and services within the EAC. Furthermore, Tanzania is in the unique position of also being a member of the South African Development Community (SADC) which will provide even further opportunities and challenges for the country to open to free movement.

To address the issues mentioned above, amongst others, the IOM Mixed Migration Unit runs projects that fall into three categories: supporting the government of Tanzania with equipment and infrastructure; the voluntary return and reintegration of irregular migrants; and workshops and training events for government officials. These activities all currently fall under the Refugee Programme Working Group of the United Nations Development Assistance Plan (UNDAP 2011-2015).
Project Components

Component 1: Supporting the Government of Tanzania with Equipment and Infrastructure

The Tanzanian Immigration Department has significant capacity difficulties in dealing with the high influx of irregular migrants. Many of the 79 different border posts lack adequate holding and processing facilities, vehicles and boats, police stations and immigration offices. All of these are needed to improve the working capacity of police and immigration as well as to protect irregular migrants. There have been many cases in the past few years of migrants suffocating in overloaded vehicles or drowning in boats that capsized. For this reason, IOM Tanzania has been running projects that support the Tanzanian Immigration Department. For example, with generous funding from the Japanese government, IOM Tanzania was able to build better border management and police facilities and provide cars and boats to police and immigration offices in strategic regions affected by high inflows of migrants. Also, as part of these projects, IOM has forged partnerships and provided furniture, refrigerators, computers with printers, water tanks, solar panels and other items to five shelters in different regions to host migrant children, as alternatives to prisons for the apprehended children found amongst irregular migrant groups by authorities.

Component 2: Assisted Voluntary Return and Re-integration

Tanzanian authorities, due to the country’s location as a transit country on the southern corridor, apprehend and detain thousands of irregular migrants each year. Due to the lack of alternatives, these migrants are placed in prisons together with local criminals throughout the different regions of the country, many times in already overcrowded prisons. Since the Tanzanian government and the migrants’ home country government have limited financial means to repatriate such large numbers of migrants, the migrants often end up staying in prison for months or even years. For this reason, IOM Tanzania, along with its partners, provides humanitarian assistance for assisted voluntary return of irregular migrants. Since 2009, IOM Tanzania has assisted 2,169 Ethiopian Migrants with funding from the Japanese and United States governments. These migrants were released from prison and able to return home to their families.

Component 3: Workshops and Trainings

A very pivotal part of IOM Tanzania’s work is capacity building with government officials through trainings and workshops. IOM Tanzania - Mixed Migration Unit has trained over 200 government officials in the last three years. These workshops are about fostering better understanding on issues of mixed migration and addressing knowledge gaps on a variety of different migration issues. They can cover the Mixed Migration Process (smuggling, asylum seekers, children), the current Tanzanian Immigration Legislation (1995) and other pertinent national acts and international obligations, the recent EAC Common Market protocol, the introduction of a One Stop Border Post (OSBP), and many others. IOM also prepares and disseminates training material such as a basic information pack on the EAC common market protocol or a procedural manual on border management for immigration officials.