IOM’s Constitution states under its Preamble and Article 1.1 “purposes and functions”, that the Organization shall concern itself with persons in need of migration assistance.

The term “migration” encompasses all forms of migration including: permanent migration, temporary migration, return migration and emergency migration. It refers to the movement of a person from one country to another, within a region, or even within one’s own country, be it as a migrant, an economic migrant, a refugee, a displaced person, or a national returning to one’s own country, who without international assistance could not otherwise move safely and in a dignified manner.

IOM’s mission is to ensure, throughout the world, the safe, orderly and dignified migration of persons who are in need of international migration assistance.
IOM’s increasing involvement in assistance to internally displaced persons in the 1980’s and 90’s has led to a series of internal policy papers calling upon the organization to develop its IDP activities. This process was formalized in 2002 with the IOM policy paper on “Internally displaced persons: IOM Policy and Activities”.

IOM’s activities are aimed at assisting and protecting those who are displaced. Such interventions have improved the lives of IDPs, returnees, host and return communities and significantly contributed towards developing stability within regions. The issue of Internal Displacement is multifaceted and many organizations work on different aspects of it. Since no single organization is exclusively mandated with the protection, assistance and recovery needs of IDPs, IASC endorsed the concept of the “Collaborative Response” in which a range of UN and non-UN agencies work together in a collaborative way on the basis of their individual mandate and expertise. Since 2005, IOM has been involved in the Cluster Approach taking a leading role in Camp Co-ordination and Camp Management in Natural Disasters as well as being key partners in Emergency Shelter, Logistics, Health, Protection and Early Recovery.

IOM activities pertaining to IDPs may be divided in 6 major areas: Emergency Assistance; In-Displacement Activities; Return; Livelihood Development and Reintegration; Capacity Building and Political Rights of IDPs.

The successful return and reintegration into civilian life of ex-combatants is an essential part of the transition from conflict to stability and peace.

While IOM is not engaged in disarmament per se, it does participate in Demobilization and Reintegration activities, which unfold after the signature of a Peace Agreement. IOM also intervenes in case of defence conversion of military forces like in the South-eastern European countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia) applying the same reintegration approach to assist the redundant military personnel.

IOM activities on the Reintegration of Former Combatants are designed under the umbrella of the Information, Counselling and Referral Service (ICRS) mechanism; a methodology developed to provide access to solutions to reintegration obstacles through improved access to timely, accurate and unbiased information, technical assistance, as well as capacity building, counselling, training, job screening and referrals to employment. This methodology is also applicable to IDPs and Community Stabilization Programmes.

Providing assistance in the response phase of a natural disaster has become another IOM key strength over the last decade. In addition to managing major movements of people following natural disasters, IOM has developed expertise in the pre-emergency phase, when a country’s vulnerability can be lowered through the implementation of effective prevention and preparedness measures. Further, in the post emergency phase IOM’s programmes bridge the gap between relief and development by the empowerment of the communities to assist in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of affected communities.

Through a wide variety of emergency response initiatives, IOM responded to recent natural disasters, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami (Indonesia, Sri Lanka December 2004), the South Asia Earthquake (Pakistan, Sri Lanka October 2005) and the renewed outbreak of violence in East Timor (June 2006).

CS is a comprehensive approach to mitigate the factors that cause tension and displacement, focusing on providing human security, thus ensuring that basic needs beyond emergency relief are addressed. This includes working on the re-establishment of traditional community capacities as a characteristic of a functioning and stable society.

CS activities put into place a functioning mechanism that support the empowerment of local structures to deliver multi-sectoral services to the unemployed, returnees and disadvantaged communities ravaged by a conflict or natural disaster, while facilitates the reintegration of vulnerable population.

Logistical support is essential to all IOM programmes; it is crucial to the effectiveness and speed of response for major humanitarian programs, such as movements of people, distribution of food and non-food items, infrastructure rehabilitation, construction, shelter, health, water-sanitation, etc.

Logistics support covers from the supply and stock management, to transport/dispatch related matters, customs clearances, insurances, vehicles registration, inventory/assets management tasks including rental properties and maintenance. It also seeks to identify mission’s major logistical/procurement needs providing relevant services and constructive recommendations through analysis and proper planning mechanisms.

Both procurement and transport are key elements to any emergency programme. They also help to analyze and track the goods through the supply chain as well as the cost-effective and timely support provided.