IOM MAURITANIA

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The Migration Dialogue For West Africa (MIDWA)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in collaboration with the Government of Mauritania and the International Organization for Migration hosted the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA), Oct. 6-8 in Nouakchott to accelerate regional integration and address both migration challenges and opportunities. “This three-day conference, held annually since 2000, encourages ECOWAS Member States to develop common solutions for regional migration issues that affect all members,” explained IOM Chief of Mission Anke Strauss. “Some solutions may not be possible to achieve solely at the national level, but together, ECOWAS Member States can work to address common challenges in migration.”

This year’s conference, held as part of Free Movement and Migration in West Africa (FMM) project, funded by the European Union and the ECOWAS and implemented by IOM in partnership with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), features consultations and briefings with regional and international migration experts, government ministers from ECOWAS Member States, and members of civil society and community leaders. “We are particularly pleased that the conference was held in Nouakchott, as Mauritania is not a member state of ECOWAS, but part of the FMM project and has many common interests with the ECOWAS countries”, Strauss added.

The MIDWA Experts Meeting, 6-7 October 2015, gathered high-level technical experts from ECOWAS Member States, Mauritania, the European Union, the Swiss Government, IOM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), UNODC, UNHCR, OHCHR and other UN and international agencies.

The conference, “Irregular Migration: Challenges and Solutions”, met to achieve three objectives:

1. To assess the current status of the existing irregular migration routes between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean;
2. To analyze existing policy and legal frameworks of ECOWAS Member States governing migration issues relevant to the on-going migration crisis; and
3. To share best practices and discuss proposed policy and operational solutions addressing irregular migration.

MIDWA participants also discussed ways to strengthen border management; addressed the drivers of irregular migration, particularly socio-economic and development factors and political stability; discussed the protection of migrants’ rights and methods to enhance support to regional counter-smuggling efforts. Delegates also sought to improve intra- and inter-regional cooperation. Following the Experts Meeting, a Ministerial meeting was held, 8 October chaired by the Minister of Interior of Mauritania. At the meeting ministerial delegations discussed policy recommendations formulated by the MIDWA Experts Meeting and prepared for the Valletta Summit on Migration, 11-12 November.

“Both the experts and ministerial meetings produced useful recommendations towards tackling irregular migration from West Africa and promoting development and regular migration opportunities in the region,” explained Geertrui Lanneau, IOM’s Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa (FMM West Africa) programme manager.

With more than 533,000 migrants entering Europe and nearly 3,500 deaths since January 2015, migration is at the forefront of international attention. The European Union and other international organizations are struggling to address the issue of migration while also seeking effective ways to stem the wave of human suffering. ECOWAS Member States play an important role in addressing this critical issue.

“Managing the challenges of irregular migration in the region requires diverse interventions, including addressing the humanitarian needs of migrants, tackling migrant and smuggling networks, and adjusting structures for sustainable development. Such interventions require coordination between origin, transit, and destination countries at regional and global levels,” said IOM Senior Regional Advisor for Africa, Charles Kwenin.

“The countries that make up ECOWAS are at the crossroads of the continent. Their long, porous borders have become the preferred route for smugglers and traffickers moving their illicit human cargo within ECOWAS countries and northward toward Europe,” Kwenin said. “ECOWAS Member States need to work together to develop regional solutions to these international issues.” Previous MIDWA conferences have led to the successful adoption of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols and ECOWAS Common Approach to Migration. But, even with these proven past successes, more work is needed to stem the flow of irregular migration.
IOM Combats Food Insecurity in Southeast Mauritania

Life is not easy for residents living near the Malian border in southeast Mauritania. Blowing sands, extreme temperatures and increasingly scarce resources make everyday life a struggle to survive. The harsh climate and lack of resources, coupled with the inflow of thousands of refugees escaping armed conflict in neighbouring Mali, has further exacerbated an already desperate situation.

The M’bera refugee camp, in southeast Mauritania, provides refuge to more than 50,000 Malians fleeing conflict in their country. This inflow has nearly doubled the population of the Bassiknou Department, putting considerable additional pressure on the already fragile environment. There is intense competition for firewood, water and pasture between the host communities and the refugees. It has also considerably increased the cost of basic items, as demand outstrips supply. Moreover, the refugees did not come alone, but brought hundreds of thousands of cattle, camels and goats, which also need to be fed and watered. This competition over scarce

To address this situation, IOM has launched a project to empower the self-reliance in communities hosting Malian refugees in southeast Mauritania.

The five-month, EUR 284,000 project funded by the Italian government, aims to capacitate host communities living around the M’bera refugee camp, to reduce the risk of conflicts and emigration from rural areas. The project is a preparatory action of the soon-to-be launched Regional Development Protection Programme (RDPP NA) for North Africa, led by Italy and a 14-EU Member State Consortium, and funded by the European Commission.

The project aims to support host communities by improving agriculture and livestock capacity and developing appropriate responses, including the creation of peaceful and constructive dialogues with refugee populations, to assist large refugee populations who find themselves in conflict with local communities over scarce natural resources.
IOM organized a workshop on financial management and marketing of surplus products for 36 illiterate women

IOM, in a project funded by the Government of Italy, is helping female cooperatives to strengthen their business, marketing, and finance skills. The programme, implemented in partnership with the Mauritanian NGO Mutuelle Féminine de Solidarité d’Entraide d’Epargne et de Crédit, taught more than 30 women basic techniques for planning income generating activities, accounting and account management, pricing strategies, marketing, and investment. The five-day workshops were held in the villages of Hassi Jaavra, Seredouba and Dewenkara, in the Bassiknou Department of southeast Mauritania. These villages serve as host communities for the M’bera Refugee Camp, which has supported more than 50,000 Malian refugees since conflict broke out in 2012.

The workshops are part of a larger, Italian Government-funded project that includes development of rural farms, irrigation projects, and other community stabilization initiatives to help residents of communities surrounding the refugee camp.

Activities

- **September**: Identification of the villages of intervention.
- **September**: Identification of technical needs for irrigation, land and water.
- **October**: Training on financial management for 35 illiterate women.
- **November**: Distribution of 170 agricultural kits in 3 villages.
- **November**: Construction of a veterinary park for the host population and vaccination of 6000 heads of cattle.
- **November**: Training on compost making and agriculture in three villages.

With the financial support of the Government of Italy

(Duration: August 2015 - December 2015)
To help refugees and refugee hosting communities living in the Bassikounou Department of Hodh ech Chargui region in southeast Mauritania, IOM Mauritania, with funding from the U. S. State Department’s Office of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), is implementing a $700,000 USD, 12-month community stabilization project in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The project seeks to increase livelihood opportunities for Malian refugees and their host communities by establishing an integrated farm and a modern slaughterhouse, which will prevent the spread of illnesses and will contribute to maintain a healthy environment in the camp.

The “Integrated Farm”, which functions along the principles of a sustainable environmental cycle, supports the communities by providing a steady supply of diversified food sources, including fish, poultry and vegetables. For example, runoff from the fishpond is used to irrigate plants in the garden. Crops from the garden can be used to help feed the chickens. And, waste from chicken and other livestock can be composted to serve as fertilizer for the garden. Expanding the capacity of the Integrated Farms not only ensures food security to build resilience to harsh environmental conditions, but also potentially provides a source for future revenue, especially for vulnerable women.

Another key aspect of the IOM/PRM project is the inclusion of activities to strengthen community dialogue. Disagreements over pasture land for livestock and water access are frequent. To promote dialogue among residents and refugees, and in particular, residents who have had their refugee status removed but who still remain in the area, OHCHR has set up 7 mixed committees as to allow representatives of both communities to meet every three months and discuss issues concerning their community life, including how to use natural resources in a sustainable manner.
Integrated Farms

Unlike humanitarian projects, which focus on direct food distribution, integrated farms provide a sustainable solution to food insecurity and offer a way for beneficiaries to become independent of external aid. Integrated farms also help diversify the diet of beneficiaries by adding additional proteins, vitamins and minerals from a variety of different sources. And, for successful farms, it offers communities a way to generate income independently, and in a sustainable manner, building self-reliance and resilience.

The integrated farm concept features three main activities: Poultry farming, aquaculture and gardening. The main advantage of integrated farms is that it combines these three activities into a single interdependent system. This allows the community to produce food while reusing resources over several cycles in a sustainable system with very few external inputs.

In Mauritania, IOM is implementing several integrated farms in response to the extremely difficult living conditions and scarcity of resources facing the people of south-eastern Mauritania. With the arrival of more than 50,000 Malian refugees escaping violent conflict in their country and the creation of M’bera refugee camp in 2012, competition over already scarce natural resources has increased. IOM’s integrated farms provide a way for local residents to improve their livelihood, while providing a long-term solution to food insecurity.
Diasporas’ engagement with their countries of origin is not new. Long before the international community took notice, emigrants and their descendants have taken part in development efforts at home, working with both the public and the private sphere. Now, more than ever before, governments at both ends of the migration cycle recognize the value of these spontaneous engagements and are seeking ways to cooperate with them. Indeed, through their human and financial capital contributions, diaspora members can be important agents of economic and cultural development of their home country.

In 2014, Mauritania was listed as 161 of 187 in the UN’s Human Development Index, with a gross national product of less than US$ 3,000 per capita. Therefore, it’s in the Government of Mauritania’s best interest to mobilize its diaspora for the development of its country.

Given the lack of detailed data on this subject, special expertise from the IOM was requested by the Government in order to acquire detailed, quantifiable and secure data of the Mauritanian diaspora, in order to better understand its demography, its profile and its willingness to be engaged in Mauritanian national development. Mauritania is particularly interested for the diaspora to share its knowhow and skills acquired abroad.

The project, funded by the IOM Development Fund, has as primary objective to collect detailed data on the Mauritania diaspora and the establishment of a unique computer-based registration tool and database to better analyse Mauritanian Diaspora’s characteristics.

**Defining DIASPORA**

“Individuals and members of networks, associations and communities who have left their country of origin, but maintain like with their homelands.” (IOM, Glossary on Migration, 2011)
Mauritania lies at the crossroads of the African continent. Its long and porous borders have long been the preferred route for all types of illicit movements, from the trafficking of drugs and arms, to the smuggling of migrants. These traditional smuggling routes are used by human traffickers moving innocent victims to serve as domestic servants, forced labourers, or “temporary wives”, within Mauritania, North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. While the Government of Mauritania adopted anti-trafficking legislation in 2003, vulnerable populations remain at risk. Therefore, the six-month project implemented by IOM and funded by the Government of Germany is assisting the government to increase awareness of vulnerable communities of the risks and recruitment tactics of traffickers and to reinforce the capacity of security and judiciary forces to effectively recognize, interdict and prosecute human trafficking.

IOM around the world has been working to counter trafficking in persons since 1994. Ever since, IOM has assisted approximately 70,000 victims. IOM’s primary aim is to prevent human trafficking and to protect victims while offering options for safe and sustainable return and reintegration in their home countries. Learn more about IOM X campaign: [https://www.iom.int/iom-x](https://www.iom.int/iom-x)

**Defining Trafficking in Persons**

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, use of force or other means of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the receiving or giving of payment... to a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” (Article 3 of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplanting the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; Art 1 of the Mauritanian Law No 025/2003 on Trafficking in Persons)

With the financial support of the Government of Germany

(Permission: November 2015 - April 2016)
IOM contributes to reinforce National Border Management Capacities

As part of the EU’s technical assistance to Mauritania for the implementation of the National Migration Strategy, IOM in direct collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and Decentralization and the Mauritanian Gendarmerie has been implementing a project aimed at enhancing national border management capacity in order to protect and assist citizens and travellers from various cross-border threats.

ACTIVITIES

October: In close coordination with UNHCR, IOM organized a workshop on protection and international refugee law for 30 border officials currently working at the International Airport of Nouakchott.

October: IOM organised a training for the gendarmerie and the police on border management and migration in Nouadhibou. Read More

October: IOM initiated a series of assessment missions to monitor and evaluate the current condition and capacity of Mauritanian border posts.

Security is a right for all

With the financial support of the European Union

Duration: December 2013 - December 2015
IOM Mauritania Participates in the “I am a migrant” Campaign

IOM, in partnership with the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), has launched an international campaign to increase the knowledge and awareness of migrant issues worldwide. The global campaign seeks to challenge prevailing unfavourable media and public perception of migration by creating one of the greatest audio archives on migration in the world.

The “I Am a Migrant” campaign “is about humanizing migrants’ stories of migration and providing a platform to present their narratives in their own words.”

“The idea is to give migrants a voice, to let people hear their personal stories, and to humanize their plight. With one in seven people migrating across the world, it is important to show that behind every migrant, there is a story worth hearing.

IOM Nouakchott is supporting this global awareness campaign by collecting the personal stories of migrants in Mauritania. So far, our teams have collected stories throughout Mauritania from migrants originating from The Democratic Republic of Congo, Morocco, and Mali.

The “I Am a Migrant” campaign aims at “changing the lens through which people view migrants and migration.”

Learn more about migrants, and read their personal stories on the “I Am a Migrant” webpage: http://iamamigrant.org.

"I want my sister to learn English and my children to get a good education. If it works, I will have succeeded. That's Majid's life. I want nothing for myself. I do this for my children and for my country."  

Majid

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Seydu, Malian migrant residing in Bassiknou

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Seydu

Majid, Moroccan migrant residing in Nouakchott

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One of the key outcomes of the 70th United Nations General Assembly was the announcement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. If the Millennium Development Goals did not explicitly link migration and development, after more than three years of inter-governmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, migration has been incorporated into the global development policy, which recognizes the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth.

IOM Director General, William Lacy Swing, applauded the UN’s efforts “to address the causes and consequences of migration in a way that promotes dignified, orderly, and safe migration for the benefit of all” and said “This could not have come at a more opportune time, given the unprecedented hostility towards migrants witnessed around the globe and the complex challenges that this presents. Migrants’ inclusion in the outcome document fills a gaping chasm as the MDGs failed even to mention them.”

While migration cuts across several aspects of the post-2015 development agenda, it is specifically mentioned in four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most salient reference to migration appears in SDG 10 “Reduce inequality within and among countries”. Particularly, in SDG 10.7 and 10.c target on “facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”

The other important targets related to migration call for eradicating forced labour and human trafficking; securing a safe working environment, including for migrant workers; reducing the cost of migrant remittances; and significantly reducing the number of people affected by disasters.

IOM is committed to assisting governments in meeting these ambitious commitments and as such is developing a Migration Governance Index (MGI) that will help build the capacity of governments to create successful migration policy frameworks and strategies.

“IOM looks forward to working with its key partners around the world to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the future we want for all,” said Ambassador Swing.