

FOCUSon MIGRATION

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STRANDED SRI LANKAN MIGRANTS IN WEST AFRICA RETURN HOME WITH IOM SUPPORT

Since 2012, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has provided Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) assistance to 533 Sri Lankan nationals stranded in West Africa, including 17 located in Ghana. In late 2011, a group of 209 Sri Lankan migrants in Togo were referred to IOM for assistance by Togolese authorities, but it soon became apparent that many more migrants were stranded in the region. The majority are lured from Sri Lanka with false promises of easy travel to Western countries by illicit agents demanding fees ranging from USD 600 to USD 7500 per person. However, once they arrived in West Africa most were left empty-handed, often in very poor and dire conditions.

As a result of being stranded in a foreign country, many of the migrants requested IOM AVRR assistance. The assistance provided consists of counselling and interpretation in their native language; emergency assistance in the form of shelter, food, and access to medical care; flight arrangements to Colombo, Sri Lanka and onward transportation to home areas; IOM

orientation and safe migration awareness sessions; and reintegration support including business development or vocational training, and the establishment of small businesses. The reintegration programme enables migrants to generate income to support themselves and their families and ensures a sustainable return to Sri Lanka.



IOM AVRR assistance has allowed Mr. Faslulhaq to start a successful poultry business. Photo: IOM 2012

The AVRR programme also provides capacity-building support to West African governments. In October 2012, IOM held a two-day International Migration Law training for senior government officials from Benin, Togo, and Burkina Faso. The regional project is implemented by IOM missions in 18 countries under the overall supervision of IOM Ghana.

IOM SUPPORTS BRITISH COUNCIL MANAGED SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS

Before the start of the 2012 – 2013 academic year, IOM facilitated the travel of 83 students from various Sub-Saharan Africa countries, including Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Gabon, who have been granted a British Council managed scholarship to study in the United Kingdom, France and Ireland.

The students are part of the Tullow Oil Group Scholarship Scheme enrolling in Master's programmes relating to the oil and gas industry as well as auxiliary sectors in their countries. The majority of scholarship recipients are

attending universities across the UK.

IOM provides movement and operational support services to a variety of migrants, including immigrant visa holders, refugees selected for resettlement to a third country, and labour migrants. These services may include travel arrangements, fit-to-travel health assessments and cultural orientation trainings.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for education and cultural relations and has over 40 years' experience in scholarship management in the Sub Saharan Africa region. British Council fully sponsors the travel arrangements for the students participating in this scholarship programme.

TUBERCULOSIS SCREENING FOR UK VISA APPLICANTS

Pulmonary Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the most infectious diseases in the context of migration. TB is caused by bacteria-*Mycobacterium tuberculosis* that is inhaled in aerosolized respiratory secretions from a contagious person coughing, sneezing, talking or singing. Globally in 2011, there were an estimated 8.7 million new cases of TB (13% co-infected with HIV) and 1.4 million deaths from TB (WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2012). The incidence of TB in Ghana is estimated at 79 per 100,000 population (range 69-89 per 100,000 population).



IOM health staff member, Dr. Abena Asante, checks an xRay for TB. Photo: IOM 2012

for socio-economic and leisure purposes. In 2007, IOM was mandated to conduct pre-departure TB screening on behalf of the UK for visa applicants planning to stay for six months or longer in the country. In 2007, IOM established the UK Tuberculosis Detection Program (UKTDP) in Ghana.

A total of 3,965 UK visa applicants were examined in 2011 with a monthly average of 330 examinations. Of the total examined 1965 (49.6%) were female and 2000 (50.4%) were male applicants. Similar to previous years, seasonal variations were observed with a high of 669 visa applicants in August and a low of 214 visa applicants in April 2012. According to the identification documents presented, the applicants represented 26 nationalities; however, 3590 (90.5%) were Ghanaian nationals.

Of the total applicants registered, 3954 (99.7%) completed chest x-rays and 11 (0.3%) who were pregnant opted for a sputum examination. Among the applicants who did a chest x-ray, 219 (5.5%) had abnormal findings suggestive of inactive TB and 29 (0.7%) had findings suggestive of active TB. Forty-one applicants (1.03% of the total examined) were investigated for TB. Three applicants were diagnosed with TB and referred for treatment giving an incidence of 75.7/100,000 population of the screened visa applicants. This is comparative to the WHO TB incidence for Ghana.

Increasing numbers of people now travel internationally

THE DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT PROJECT: BUILDING A STRONGER GHANA

Recognizing that the departure or out-migration of skilled professionals has impacted Ghana's socioeconomic development, IOM Ghana has supported the Government of Ghana to develop the Diaspora Engagement Project (DEP). The project aims to stem the effects of this "brain drain" by facilitating skills transfer from the Ghanaian diaspora in key areas such as health and education. The project, which began in 2011, included a colloquium of the DEP which took place in Accra from 22 to 24 August 2012. The colloquium brought together representatives of the IOM, Government of Ghana (GoG) and some 15 diaspora groups to discuss linking the Ghanaian diaspora

to the future development of Ghana.

The DEP has also resulted in the creation of a website <http://www.ghanaiandiaspora.com/> aimed at engaging Ghanaians abroad. Updated by the GoG's Diaspora Support Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, the website provides members of the diaspora with news, employment opportunities in Ghana, information on becoming re-established in Ghana. It is envisioned that this website will serve as a platform for facilitating the engagement of the country's emigrants in sustainable development by the GoG.



MIDA HEALTH CONCEPT PRAISED

When considering the migration and development nexus, there are three main ways in which migration impacts development, these are; transfer of population and workforce; transfer of know-how and knowledge; and transfer of financial assets.

Determining what would be equitable and development-friendly outcomes from migration, is far from easy. Migration produces costs and benefits. IOM's goal in migration and development projects is to harness the development potential of migration for individual migrants and societies.

The Netherlands Embassy in Ghana has been involved in, and is the main sponsor of, the MIDA Ghana Health project since its start in 2005. In a recent interview with Mr. Lander van Ommen, the Embassy's Health and Gender Adviser, he is quoted as saying, "The Embassy of the Kingdom of The Netherlands in Accra plays an important financial role, as the Dutch government is responsible for a major part of the project's funding. Additionally, we have been providing technical support and have used our network to promote MIDA's visibility with parties such as Ghanaian government officials and health services."

Mr. Van Ommen praises the idea behind the project, which he says could, ease the flow of medical workers to Europe and the US from Ghana and promote a "brain gain" of Ghanaians returning to the country. In this

respect, Mr. Van Ommen urged the Ghanaian government to "make a stronger moral appeal to those involved in the diaspora to stimulate their involvement. Their country needs these men and women."

Although the MIDA Ghana Health project ends in December 2012, the project has served to place circular migration (migrants temporarily returning to their home country, making their knowledge and network available) higher on the national agenda. In a concluding statement Mr. Lander van Ommen suggests that "in a way, [MIDA] has played an important part in opening up the discussion that is needed to improve the health sector's situation."



A Ghanaian health professional returns to Ghana to teach at South Kumasi Hospital. Photo: IOM 2012

IMPLEMENTATION OF MAINSTREAMING MIGRATION INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Ghana has been experiencing increased rates of internal, external and irregular migration, but there is no national migration policy to provide a framework to promote the benefits of migration and address the challenges. IOM is currently supporting the Government of Ghana to develop a national migration policy under the European Commission-United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMIDI) funded project, *Implementation of Mainstreaming Migration into the National Development Strategy in Ghana*. The overall goal of the project is to draft a comprehensive and coherent

national migration policy for Ghana with the intention of integrating it into the government's development framework. Since its start in September 2011, and in close collaboration with Migration Unit of the Ministry of the Interior, the Inter Ministerial Sub-committee on Migration (IMSCM) and Migration Policy Sub-committee, the project has undergone a series of reviews and consultative meetings both at the national and regional levels. Based on the comments and recommendations received during these meetings, a draft policy is nearly finalised and will be ready shortly for validation by relevant stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICES ON COLLECTING AND SHARING LABOUR MIGRATION DATA FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS (LMISs)

IOM Ghana is implementing the project, *Best Practices on Collecting and Sharing Labour Migration Data for the Improvement of the Labour Market Information Systems (LMISs)*. Funded by the European Commission, the project seeks to strengthen the capacities of target countries to

collect and share labour migration data and feed this information into their respective national LMIS and labour migration policies. The national training workshop with the theme *Promoting Efficient Labour Migration Data Collection and Sharing Mechanisms* was held in Dodowa

and Accra from 8-12 October, 2012, and brought together staff of all 10 regional labour department offices, including staff from labour department headquarters, civil society organisations, and governmental ministries.

The objective of the workshop was to share experiences, challenges and good practices on efficient and reliable

data collection and data sharing mechanisms for labour migration and labour market. A draft strategic plan for the Labour Department and the identification of key steps and information needs for the creation of a labour migration database are two key pilot initiatives being implemented under the IOM-led project in Ghana.

REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE FOR GHANAIAN MIGRANTS AFFECTED BY THE 2011 LIBYAN CRISIS

Over 18,000 Ghanaian migrants were evacuated from Libya during the country's crisis in 2011. The majority were single men in their twenties who were previously earning an income and sending remittances home. With funding from the Government of Japan, IOM has been implementing a project aimed at the reintegration of Ghanaian migrants. Following the opening of a sub-office in Tamale in June 2012, the project activities focused on the economic reintegration of beneficiaries, and the registration of 4,000 former migrants and their dependents to the National Health Insurance System (NHIS).

IOM, in coordination with PENTAX Management Consulting Services Lmted., is provided training in group formation and management as well as in expanding business development skills. In addition, beneficiaries will receive basic start-up kits (tools) to implement their individual income-generating activities.

Registration of returnees and their families into the NHIS is another important component of the project. Returnees from Libya, their dependents and selected community members will benefit from this fast-track registration and health insurance coverage for one year.



Ghanaian migrants return home to Salaga District, from Libya, and receive IOM reintegration assistance. Photo: IOM 2012

The NHIS registration is also paired with the identification and referral to Ghana Health Service (GHS) of any Ghanaian migrants showing signs of psychological stress, trauma or depression related to their experiences in Libya or the challenges faced upon their return. Mental health treatment and psycho-social support are now available for affected returnees in the Northern region, in cooperation with GHS and civil society organisations. Reintegration assistance is being provided in close cooperation with Ghanaian governmental agencies.

DONOR SUPPORT:



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation internationale pour les migrations
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THE IOM MISSION

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As the leading international organization for migration, IOM acts with partners in the international community to:

- Assist in meeting the growing operational challenges of migration management;
- Advance understanding of migration issues;
- Encourage social and economic development.

