

# 2011 IOM-Civil Society Organizations Consultations “60 Years Advancing Migration through Partnership”

Geneva, 11 November 2011

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## I. Introduction

On 11 November 2011, the IOM-Civil Society Organizations (CSO) consultations took place at IOM Headquarters in Geneva. The consultation brought together several humanitarian partners<sup>1</sup> and was dedicated to the broad theme of “60 Years Advancing Migration through Partnership”.<sup>2</sup> The meeting aimed to re-establish and strengthen regular dialogue with civil society organizations (CSOs) at HQ level, as well as strengthen partnerships at regional and national levels. Discussions during the consultation covered a broad range of thematic areas of IOM’s work<sup>3</sup>.

The consultations were led by the IOM Director-General, Ambassador William Swing, and attended by several senior IOM officials. In his introductory remarks, DG Swing highlighted the importance of partnerships for an organization like IOM noting that partnerships with civil society organizations are expressly mentioned in the IOM constitution. Historically, the Organization has worked closely with CSOs in addressing mass displacement post WWII, in the wake of regional and inter-state conflicts, and more recently, to cope with increasingly complex migration scenarios. Partnerships with CSOs have proven effective in addressing global challenges based on humane, orderly and equitable arrangements that balance States’ sovereignty and human rights imperatives.

## II. Resulting Recommendations for Enhancing IOM-CSO Partnerships

The following recommendations resulted from the day-long consultations as warranting attention by IOM with a view to improving IOM-CSO partnership:

1. **Improve overall communication** through agreed mechanisms, including: annual CSO consultations at the HQ and regional levels; the inclusion of civil society wherever possible in country situation briefings at IOM HQ.
2. **Ensure better communication of IOM programming** in the areas of protection of migrants and human rights.
3. **Enhance engagement** with CSO partners including by expanding the number of NGOs with IOM Observer status and exploring possibilities for enhancing Observer input into decision-making; develop an inventory of CSO-IOM collaboration worldwide; and encourage partners to participate more in IOM migration dialogue fora such as the International Dialogue on Migration (IDM).
4. **Creation of joint (pilot) initiatives** wherever possible.
5. **Establish NGO focal point(s) at regional levels** (to complement the IPD HQ entry point role) to more effectively communicate with CSO partners.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 for a listing of participating CSOs and individuals..

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 2 for the meeting agenda.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically excluded was the broader area of resettlement given that IOM had recently convened a meeting on this theme. Additionally, the ATCR meeting which IOM also participates in with civil society, focusing on resettlement, also recently took place.

### III. Thematic Presentations and Q&A

IOM DG Swing delivered a presentation in which, among others, he noted that partnership has been one of his three key priorities since his election and reiterated his commitment to strengthening engagement and collaboration with CSOs, including by encouraging them to consider becoming Observers to IOM (currently 48 CSOs have observers status).<sup>4</sup>

IOM Deputy Director General Laura Thompson addressed the question of the Organization's structure in more detail noting its tripling in size over the past 10 years and explaining the recent administrative reorganization which had been undertaken to reflect this transformation.

Several participants commented on what they perceive as a lack of dialogue and information-sharing by IOM with CSOs. This was regarded as a key obstacle to better communication, enhanced organizational transparency and the identification of areas of common interest as the basis for improved cooperation. The Principles of Partnership<sup>5</sup> developed under the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007 and agreed to by IOM and other partner organizations were specifically mentioned as a concrete tool for promoting a coherent approach to partner relations.

Participants also noted a need for clarification of IOM's mandate, role and relationship with CSOs in different situations. Overall, participants expressed a lack of understanding of IOM's strategic plans and its role in humanitarian settings. Various participants encouraged IOM to explain the assertion that IOM programmes encompass more than simply transportation and logistics needs and to further explain its role in assisted voluntary returns. Participants also expressed that partnership should be seen as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, and that in so doing, IOM might wish to take into account its projected nature.

#### a) IOM Global Role

The Director of the **International Cooperation and Partnership (ICP) Department**, the designated entry point for partnerships with Member States and civil society, delivered a brief presentation<sup>6</sup> that emphasized the value that IOM puts on partnership with CSOs in programming that seeks to facilitate humane and orderly migration. CSOs have the unique ability to intervene and advocate on migration issues where IOM responses may sometimes be more restricted. Based on the decentralized nature of IOM and its strong field-based structure, the majority of IOM-CSO partnerships will of necessity take place at the field level.

#### b) IOM-Civil Society Cooperation

While IOM has been most visibly associated with humanitarian emergency responses recently, the Organization is also engaged in **standard setting** on a number of issues through its **Department of**

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<sup>4</sup> See Annex 3 for the DG speech.

<sup>5</sup> Principles of Partnership were endorsed by a number of international agencies including IOM at the 2007 Global Humanitarian Platform meeting, see <http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/pop.html> .

<sup>6</sup> See Annex 4 for ICP presentation and IOM organigram.

**Migration Management (DMM).** DMM programming is complex due to the wide range of topics and the range of national ministries dealt with. The Department is divided into four divisions that deal with 1) migrant assistance, 2) labour migration and human development, 3) integrated border management and 4) migration health respectively. Some areas such as Counter Trafficking and Migration Health tend to cut across standard setting/humanitarian response lines.<sup>7</sup> IOM through DMM supports Member States to create or strengthen existing mechanisms for migrant protection to deal with the challenges associated to contexts where migrants may be in danger or in vulnerable situations.

On the understanding that IOM is an inter-governmental organization responding to a wide number of Member States globally, CSO participants sought to understand how the Organization ensures that the stated priority of migrant's human rights are mainstreamed into migration management activities.

General examples of IOM programming in various thematic areas were discussed, including the training of border officials to differentiate migrant groups according to their individual circumstances and needs (for example in Libya), as well as human rights trainings for police officials and trainings carried out by the International Migration Law Division (IML). Some participants agreed that these training activities represent potential areas for further cooperation. IOM proximity to governments may provide a point of entry for organizations with a protection mandate such as the ICRC which have constraints with regard to access to border management officials.

There was overall unease expressed on the part of several CSOs regarding IOM engagement in return programmes. Specific concerns identified were the need for full disclosure about countries/regions of return, the need to ensure "voluntariness" in the return process, especially for those in detention. IOM clarified that the Organization has specific parameters and guidelines in assisting migrants from detention. Although the concept of 'free choice' and 'voluntariness' is understandably debatable, the value of the work by IOM and partners to assist humanitarian returns of migrants in detention is becoming increasingly understood by civil societies in different regions of the world – the challenges that migrants face in detention differ from country to country. CSO participants also stressed that there is a need for more careful analysis of reintegration tools for returnees to ensure durable solutions. IOM highlighted that there are different levels of monitoring and evaluation within the different assisted voluntary return programmes due to different levels of resources available from donors, however evaluation is one key priority for the Organization in this field.

The apparent lack of understanding by CSO partners of IOM's relationship with States in general was attributed to an overall gap in communication. It was recommended that IOM explore how communication could be improved, including providing the possibility for partners to provide feedback to the Organization.

### **c) IOM Communication with CSO Partners**

IOM communications stressed its efforts to always acknowledge the work of partners in its outreach to the media and public, recognizing, however, that any omissions are never intended, but more a question of the communications team not having all the information at hand during a crisis when the situation on the ground is extremely fluid.

The discussion covered a range of issues including the need to not portray Africans as hapless victims

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<sup>7</sup> For more details see DMM Presentation, attached as Annex 5

in visual communications and how to better communicate with and engage beneficiaries in humanitarian responses.

Both sides expressed concern about the manner in which migration and migrants are portrayed in general. IOM expressed its interest in developing joint initiatives to counter misperceptions of migration and migrants, feeling that such an act would be more effective in addressing many issues such as xenophobia, than working on the problem on an individual basis. IOM also emphasized that the need to respect the human rights of migrants has become a very important part of its communications work.

Concern was expressed by some participants for what was seen as overly positive portrayals by IOM of the situation on the ground during humanitarian responses. It was noted, however, that this is not only an IOM issue but a common occurrence in humanitarian crises where organizations feel they have to show donors the efficacy and speed of their humanitarian response in order to fundraise and how funds are being used.

## **Case Studies -- Partnership in Humanitarian Response Situations**

Three case studies of collaboration in the field served to illustrate the challenges and opportunities of IOM-CSO partnerships. The examples included: 1) the Praesidium Project, a longstanding joint CSO IOM collaboration - for enhancing reception capacities of migration flows in Italy; 2) the emerging area of assistance to migrants in humanitarian crises illustrated through the example of ex-Libya migrants in Chad; and partnerships through the Camp Coordination, Camp Management and Shelter Clusters.

### **d) Praesidium Project**

Discussion of the Praesidium Project revealed close CSO IOM coordination (IOM, Save the Children, MSF) with a multi-sectoral approach involving joint advocacy and multi-layered reception and referral systems for mixed migratory flows. Participants recognized the value of complementary efforts by agencies with differing mandates but also emphasized the need for clearly defining the different organization mandates and the role of IOM in such situations *vis à vis* government relations. Transparency was again noted as key to ensuring that partners fully understand where and how each agency is able to intervene. This is particularly important in the case of public advocacy for the rights of migrants.

### **e) Evacuation in Humanitarian Crisis**

In Chad, IOM partnered with a range of national and international partners (including MSF Holland and France) to assist Chadian migrants fleeing the crisis in Libya to return home in safety. This included registration of returnees, emergency transport assistance from Libya to Chad and onward to final in-country destinations, establishment of transit centres including health and protection monitoring, and provision of food and non food items.

In the case of emergency evacuation in humanitarian crises, participants raised the question of IOM priorities in terms of engagement in the various stages of such an operation. The issue of IOM's entry and exit points and how/ these are conveyed to implementing partners providing services was raised. Discussions showed that IOM's operational capacity to intervene quickly (and often before UN agencies) is appreciated by CSO partners. However participants voiced concern that IOM does not seem to have any mechanisms in place to reflect on lessons learned and does not communicate operational benchmarks to its partners. Doing so would reassure NGOs that IOM is not merely responding to States' requests and could

be useful for the development of standard operating procedures for future operations that take into consideration IOM-CSO complementarities.

#### **f) IOM Cluster Lead and CSO Coordination**

Over the past five years, IOM has increasingly become involved in humanitarian responses and in strengthening the capacity of governments in post-crisis situations, including as the Global Cluster lead agency in Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) for natural disasters, CCCM lead agency in 5 countries and Shelter Cluster lead agency in 7 countries. In this function, IOM often serves as an interface for CSOs, facilitating CSO access to funding mechanisms (CERF) and representing a range of organizations with diverse backgrounds in discussions with governments and humanitarian stakeholders. The IOM model provides for advocacy from early days of the response in ensuring that whenever necessary CCCM and Shelter sectors are considered in initial appeals open to cluster partners. In some cases, such as in Haiti, IOM may operate as a first port of entry and initiate implementation while partners get better established, to gradually hand over to partners from civil society.

Key concerns among participants included ensuring IOM engagement in inter-cluster information sharing mechanisms (particularly given the emphasis by IOM on further building “protection” into programme areas) and CSO access to the cluster system and related resources. Multiple and important cluster operations could benefit from larger IOM HQ structure. The commitment of IOM to the response in Haiti led to recently taken up the Shelter Cluster lead in the country, at the request of the Humanitarian Community, adequate resource mobilization for the endeavour will be challenging. Migration health and psychosocial services were also mentioned as examples of cross-cutting functions which need to be closely coordinated amongst organizations, including with CSO partners who were identified as key to the continuity of service in fluid situations.

#### **Closing Remarks – IOM Director General**

In his closing remarks, IOM Director General Swing noted several priorities identified for further discussion and for follow up by IOM, including the overall recommendation for improved communication by IOM with CSO partners. Priority thematic areas for further discussion included: clarification of IOM’s protection role and renewed emphasis on human rights in programming; balancing obligations to migrants and States alike; developing IOM tools and identifying good practices for engagement of civil society; IOM programme assessment and planning strategy, i.e. building on lessons learned; and consultations in the area of Assisted Voluntary Return. Lastly the Director General welcomed participants’ feedback and suggestions regarding improving the format and process for partner consultations.

You are invited to submit any feedback on the IOM CSO consultation process to: [ipd@iom.int](mailto:ipd@iom.int)