

IOM's COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO COUNTER MIGRANT SMUGGLING



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

WHY IS IOM INVOLVED IN COUNTER MIGRANT SMUGGLING?

The large-scale smuggling of migrants across international borders has become a global challenge to migration governance and the well-being of migrants. Many migrants resort to using migrant smugglers when they do not have the option to travel in a regular manner. Consequently, migrant smugglers have become an integral part of the irregular migration journey and criminal networks have profited significantly from the situation. Once paid, smugglers often have little or no regard for the well-being of migrants, who are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. All too often, migrants pay with their lives, suffocating in containers, perishing in deserts or drowning at sea.

As the United Nations migration agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) advocates and actively supports a holistic migration policy approach - one that recognizes migration as a “mega-trend” of this century. From that perspective migration is not only inevitable, but also necessary and desirable if well-managed through sensible, humane and responsible policies. IOM has a long history of working with States and partners to combat migrant smuggling, and ensures that its activities are aligned with, build on and directly complement other national, regional and international initiatives. IOM's broad migration management mandate, which includes facilitating migration, regulating migration, and addressing forced migration, places the Organization in a unique position to offer a comprehensive approach to counter migrant smuggling.

IOM'S COUNTER MIGRANT SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES

IOM's comprehensive approach to counter migrant smuggling is based on direct assistance to migrants and building capacities within States. This approach addresses the multiple dimensions of migrant smuggling by conceptualizing IOM's work around the following **four pillars**:

1

PROVIDE PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE TO SMUGGLED MIGRANTS

2

ADDRESS THE CAUSES OF MIGRANT SMUGGLING

3

ENHANCE STATES' CAPACITY TO DISRUPT THE ACTIVITIES OF MIGRANT SMUGGLERS

4

PROMOTE RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION ON MIGRANT SMUGGLING



MIGRANT SMUGGLING DEFINITION

"The procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident".

Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

The underlying principle guiding IOM's intervention in efforts to counter migrant smuggling is the protection of migrants' human rights. Bearing in mind that some migrants approach migrant smugglers to escape conflict or natural disasters, effective access to asylum and protection must be safeguarded while countering migrant smuggling.

- IOM assists States to provide humane, dignified and well-organized **reception, registration and identity management services**.
- IOM promotes and assists with the development of **alternatives to detention**. The Organization contributes to improving conditions and providing services required to ensure that immigration detention conditions are humane, in accordance with international law and best practices.
- IOM helps ensure that **voluntary return and reintegration** of migrants take place in an orderly, humane and cost-effective manner through its Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes.
- IOM cooperates with States on **Humanitarian Border Management** (HBM) activities in order to improve preparedness and responses to protect those who cross borders in emergencies, as well as to ensure that the security of the border is maintained.

In most cases, the decision to migrate irregularly is not driven by a single motivating factor, but rather by various factors that cut across social, economic, environmental, political and security-related aspects. Migration management policies should include measures for opening regular channels for migration, community stabilization, development programmes, conflict prevention, transition, recovery, resilience building activities and disaster risk prevention. IOM supports Member States in all these areas.

- IOM assists States in **facilitating regular travel and migration schemes**. Regular channels include opportunities for family reunification; openings for labour migration; access to asylum or international protection through resettlement schemes; humanitarian admission schemes for refugees and other alternative pathways; and community-based and academic scholarships.
- IOM cooperates with States in managing regular migration channels through well-administered **visa and entry schemes**.
- IOM assists States in organizing targeted **public education and information campaigns** to discourage people from turning to migrant smugglers.

A crucial aspect of a successful approach to counter migrant smuggling and protect migrants is direct intervention in and disruption of migrant smuggling operations. This requires coordination with legislative bodies, border control measures and concerted actions of law enforcement agencies.

- IOM supports State efforts to **enhance or develop procedures and processes** that enable law enforcement agencies and criminal justice authorities to **more effectively target migrant smugglers** and develop the skills and procedures required to conduct prosecutions.
- IOM assists States in ensuring that the judiciary has the requisite national **legislation** in place and is party to all relevant international instruments to criminalize and prosecute migrant smugglers.
- IOM provides assistance to build **appropriate capacity and organizational structures** to prevent and interdict migrant smuggling, geared towards the use of an intelligence-led approach.
- IOM supports governments to put in place **effective Border Management Information Systems** as a valuable tool to fight smuggling, both through the gathering of intelligence against organized criminal gangs and the formulation of risk profiles that can assist in identifying perpetrators and those being smuggled at an early stage in the process.

4

PROMOTE RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION
ON MIGRANT SMUGGLING

To develop more effective and sustainable responses to migrant smuggling, targeted research should be undertaken. Research is central to the development of global, regional and national policies that will more effectively respond to the considerable increase in irregular migration supported by migrant smuggling. Such research should focus on modus operandi, routes, economic models of smuggling networks, on links between trafficking in persons and other crimes, on financial transfers and on the factors that shape the smuggling industry, including its driving forces.

- IOM **conducts research, collects data and shares information** on irregular migration and migration smuggling practices to assist States with developing evidence-based policies. This research and data complements existing information and intelligence on migrant smuggling held by governments, as well as research focused on smuggling as a transnational crime. In addition, IOM's research helps raise public awareness of the consequences of migrant smuggling.

IOM works together with governments, international partners and civil society organizations to effectively counter migrant smuggling by providing practical assistance, offering expert advice and policy recommendations, and strengthening the knowledge base on migrant smuggling.





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