

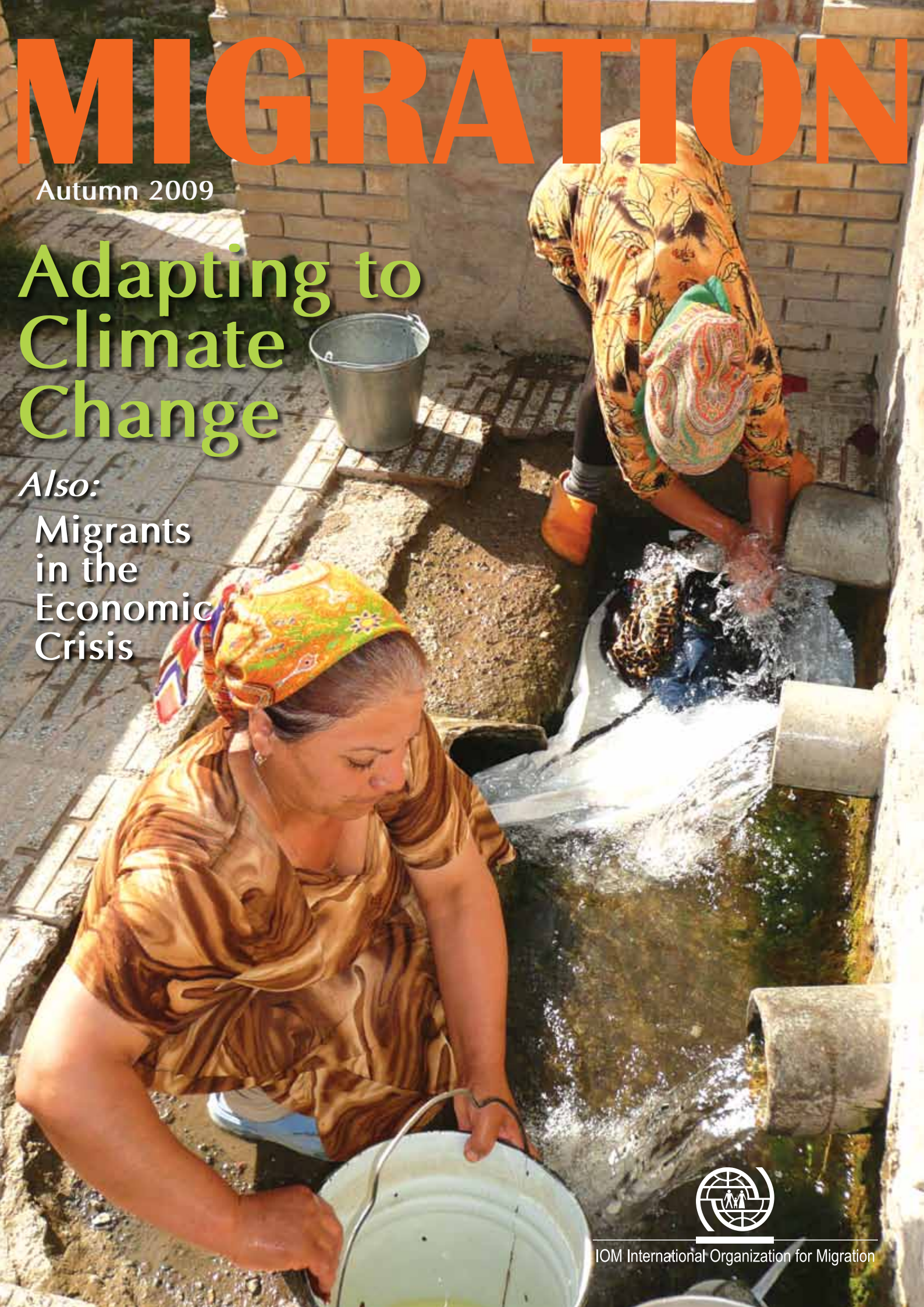
# MIGRATION

Autumn 2009

## Adapting to Climate Change

*Also:*

Migrants  
in the  
Economic  
Crisis



IOM International Organization for Migration

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## MIGRATION

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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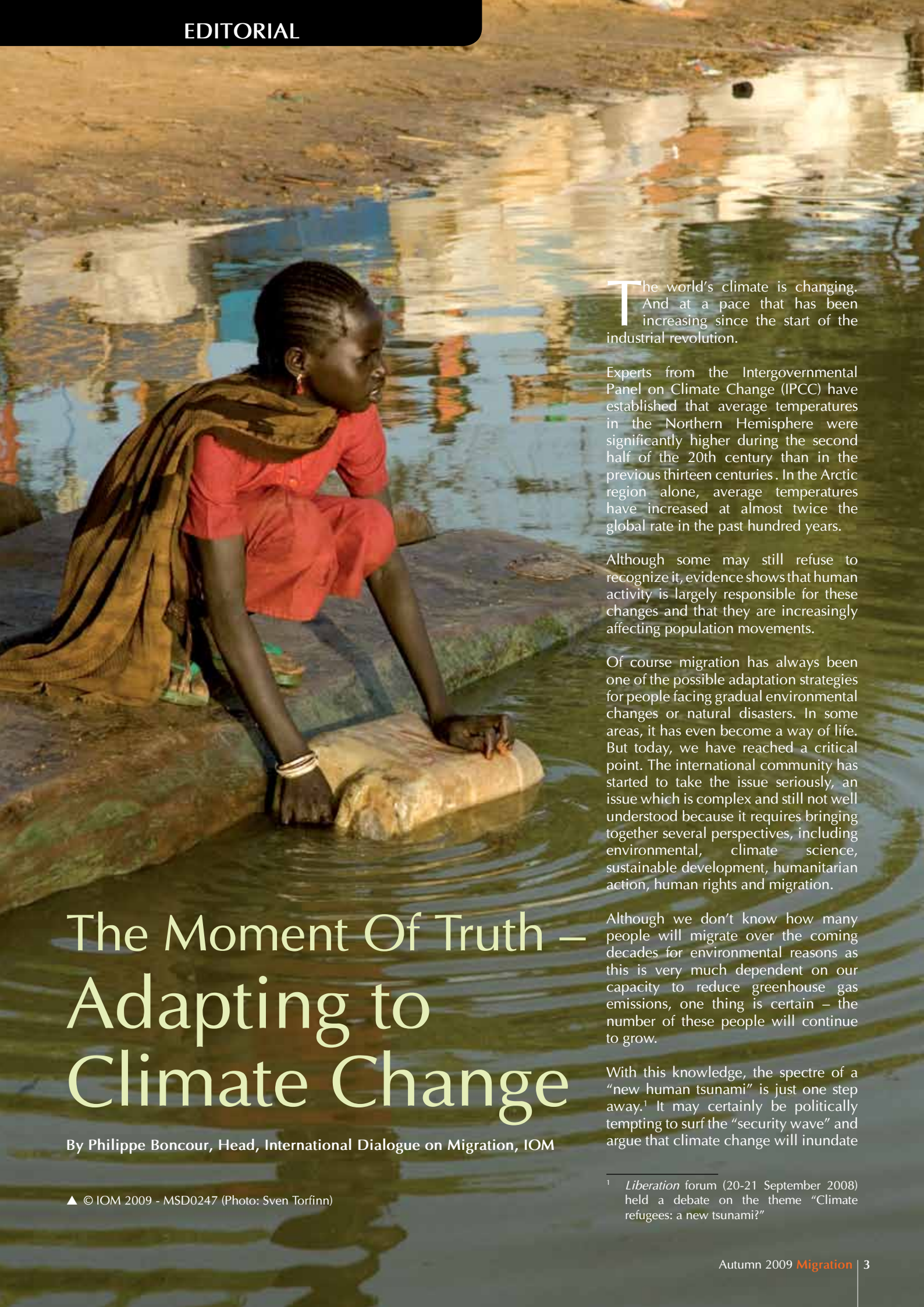


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The world's climate is changing. And at a pace that has been increasing since the start of the industrial revolution.

Experts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have established that average temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere were significantly higher during the second half of the 20th century than in the previous thirteen centuries. In the Arctic region alone, average temperatures have increased at almost twice the global rate in the past hundred years.

Although some may still refuse to recognize it, evidence shows that human activity is largely responsible for these changes and that they are increasingly affecting population movements.

Of course migration has always been one of the possible adaptation strategies for people facing gradual environmental changes or natural disasters. In some areas, it has even become a way of life. But today, we have reached a critical point. The international community has started to take the issue seriously, an issue which is complex and still not well understood because it requires bringing together several perspectives, including environmental, climate science, sustainable development, humanitarian action, human rights and migration.

Although we don't know how many people will migrate over the coming decades for environmental reasons as this is very much dependent on our capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, one thing is certain – the number of these people will continue to grow.

With this knowledge, the spectre of a "new human tsunami" is just one step away.<sup>1</sup> It may certainly be politically tempting to surf the "security wave" and argue that climate change will inundate

<sup>1</sup> *Liberation* forum (20-21 September 2008) held a debate on the theme "Climate refugees: a new tsunami?"

# The Moment Of Truth – Adapting to Climate Change

By Philippe Boncour, Head, International Dialogue on Migration, IOM

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# Natural disasters affect populations in many ways, yet it is important to remember that 98 per cent of all deaths related to natural disasters occur in developing countries.

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the shores of the developed countries with millions of people in search of less hostile environments. Such arguments could be used as a justification for even more restrictive migration policies. Given the anxiety brought about by the current economic downturn, such policies are likely to be welcomed by the public.

However, such political short-sightedness does not stand up to reality.

First of all, recent studies, albeit limited in geographical scope, confirm that most environmentally-induced migration will be internal, either towards the illusory promise of prosperity in cities or towards other rural areas still able to provide sustenance to the affected communities. Cross-border movements might be another important trend, especially in regions where the notion of a “border”, although used by States, is not well recognized by local populations.

Secondly, it is likely that international migration linked to climate change will be very limited for the simple reason that migration requires financial resources and/or community networks in the destination countries, which the poor and the “landless” do not usually have.

Finally, if the policies to combat irregular migration in all its forms are to be effective, they need to be accompanied by the opening up of regular migration channels on the conditions agreed among the relevant partners. Without such a global and concrete approach, clandestine channels and unscrupulous smuggling networks are often the only option available with the dramatic and unfortunate consequences that so often make the headlines.

A further complicating factor is the difficulty of identifying or “labeling” environmental migrants. Except in cases when natural disasters force people to move in order to survive, it is usually difficult to single out climate change or environmental degradation in a combination of socio-economic and political considerations that are behind the decision to move. This is probably why environmental migrants do not

benefit from a distinct status under international law.

Considering the utmost caution, not to say the reluctance, with which most States approach the establishment of new categories of people entitled to specific rights, this is unlikely to change in the near future. In the migratory flows that reach developed countries, environmental migrants are indistinct from economic migrants and share the same fate. Asylum claims made by some are systematically rejected.

The reason is simple. People moving for environmental reasons are not “climate refugees”, even though the media continues to use this term because of its strong emotional connotation and the compassion it generates. Words do have a meaning, and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees clearly states that the notion of persecution is central to the eligibility of people for this status. This limits the possibility of granting a refugee status in the context of environmental degradation to few very special cases. In a few countries, Temporary Protection Status (TPS) was established to assist foreign populations affected by natural disasters. Hurricane Mitch led the United States to offer temporary protection, an example followed by Sweden and Finland with different conditions of eligibility.

Natural disasters affect populations in many ways, yet it is important to remember that 98 per cent of all deaths related to natural disasters occur in developing countries. It is this image that comes to mind first – human drama, hundreds or thousands of deaths and the need for the humanitarian emergency response. In most cases, mass displacement linked to such phenomena are temporary and paradoxically, the returnees tend to rebuild their homes in the same place where they lived before the disaster struck. This despite the likelihood of something similar happening again and the advice of the humanitarian community.

It is true that the number of extreme events has doubled over the past 20 years, from 200 to more than 400 a year. Yet, climate change is also triggering

other, more subtle and gradual changes that are expected to lead to more permanent displacement over the next decades.

These changes include increased desertification, soil erosion, deforestation, rising sea levels and the salinization of water resources. In this context, the key word is, no doubt, “adaptation”. Yes adaptation at or close to the homes of affected populations if feasible, but we have to accept that migration remains today, as it has since time immemorial, a mechanism to adapt to change.

Therefore, the international community’s response must also adapt to this new paradigm. It may be easier to raise funds to respond to natural disasters because of the emergency nature of such events and because of the media coverage and the political credit such assistance can bring. However, it is much more difficult to convince donors to invest in tackling the long-term effects of climate change and to support adaptation as the effects of such investments are not evident for many years. They are less “saleable” to the public. This is particularly true in the current difficult economic climate, where voters are more concerned about keeping their jobs and maintaining their standard of living.

The moment of truth will come in Copenhagen, during the next United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties.

As well as the need to come to an agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the manner in which climate change adaptation is addressed will determine our actions on the ground for at least the next decade.

Will negotiators be willing to consider the humanitarian implications of climate change - including migration and displacement - not just as a simple corollary of climate change but as central to our ability to guarantee human security?

It’s a gamble - risky but worthwhile. **M**

Water is life. It brings prosperity, health and happiness. But in Azerbaijan, as in many parts of the world, it is in desperately short supply. The land in this country in the South Caucasus is some of the driest on earth. The rivers Kur and Araz and reservoirs cannot provide enough water to meet the needs of the entire population. But Azerbaijan has substantial, high-quality underground water reserves, which for decades were over-exploited with little concern for their sustainability. For the past decade, IOM has been working with local partners to improve the management of this resource, which holds the key to population stabilization.

**“Kahrizes are a precious gift from our grandfathers,  
Their cool and pure water bring joy to all,  
Their silver rays quench our burning thirst,  
They irrigate our fields and orchards,  
Turning deserts into life.”**

Hassan Ali Nikbin sits in his lush garden in the shade of an old apple tree, his wife Melek by his side. They met in 1970, when the talented young poet brought some of his work to a nearby publishing house, where he met an attractive young typist. “I first fell in love with his poems, then with the man,” smiles Melek.

Her husband, the son of an agronomist who worked on a Soviet kolkhoz, or collective farm, became totally deaf in 1969 following an infection that was not properly treated. “Despite my misfortune, poetry allowed me to express my love of nature and life,” says Hassan Ali. “Later, it also became a way to feed my family.”

The couple’s two daughters and one son left their home village of Turkesh in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (NAR) to look for work in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Hassan Ali and

## Azerbaijan’s Sustainable Water Solution - One Kahriz at a Time

Jean-Philippe Chauzy reports from Azerbaijan

▲ A Kankan, or traditional water engineer, is winched down a kahriz.  
© IOM 2009 - MAZ0013 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)



▲ Hassan Ali Nikbin with his wife Melek by his side. © IOM 2009 - MAZ0018 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)

Melek felt fortunate because many other young people fled poverty and unemployment in the NAR to work much further afield in neighbouring Turkey and Russia.

“They left because of the drought - they couldn’t find work in agriculture,” says Hassan Ali. “Yet there is water in the hills, water that our forefathers managed for hundreds of years through the kahriz system. But in the name of progress, Soviet engineers decided to drill wells deep into the ground. Year after year, the water table receded and the kahrizes dried up.”

But today, thanks to the restoration of the ingenious, low-maintenance and sustainable kahriz underground water system, there is enough drinking and irrigation water for some 80 families who live and work in Turkesh.

Kahrizes were first developed in ancient Iran some 3,000 years ago to take underground water to the surface through simple gravity flow. For centuries, throughout the region, well-maintained kahrizes provided a constant year-round water supply through a network of interconnected wells and underground tunnels that collect water from the hills.

The tunnels, which can extend for kilometres, are usually 1.2 metres high and 60cm wide - just large enough to allow people inside to maintain them. In areas with soft ground, vaulted kahrizes are strengthened with stone walls.

Ten years ago, with funding from the United Nations Development Programme, IOM embarked on an ambitious programme to restore kahrizes to provide sustainable drinking

and irrigation water to isolated villages in Nakhchivan.

The village of Turkesh was the first to approach IOM to ask for help to repair two derelict kahrizes, which had previously brought water to the village. The village elders identified an old man known as Kankan Yunis as the villager best equipped to explain how it could be done.

Born in 1937, Kankan Yunis, whose real name was Yunis Ibrahimov, turned out to be one of the last surviving traditional water engineers (“kankans”) with kahriz building and maintenance skills handed down to him through generations.

“When IOM came to see me, I said I could start the following morning, even without payment,” says Kankan Yunis. “From the age of 10, I worked with my father who was a respected kankan. My father learned from his father.”

▼ 72-year-old Kankan Yunis. © IOM 2009 - MAZ0020 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)



Less than a year later, two fully restored kahrizes in Turkesh were pumping 17 litres of water per second, enough to meet the needs of the local population and provide irrigation for 24 hectares of land.

The project, which by then had received funding from the European Union (EU), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), also resulted in training for a new generation of kankans, including Yunis’ two sons - Javanshir and Jumshud.

Traditional Kankan roles are well defined. The head or Bash kankan relies on the Charkhchi kankan to operate the winch that lowers him into the well. He works with a Laghimbar kankan who digs the tunnel and the Dolkesh kankan who brings the excavated earth to the surface.

“All this knowledge disappeared during Soviet times, when the authorities decided to systematically drill deep sub-artesian wells to bring water to the surface using electric pumps,” says Arzu Musayev, IOM’s National Technical Coordinator in Nakhchivan.

Azerbaijan’s independence from Russia in 1991 led to the collapse of much of the country’s infrastructure and electricity supplies became erratic. Soon, sub-artesian wells stopped pumping and villages were left without water.

A team of Kankans restore an ancient kahriz.



▼ © IOM 2009 - MAZ0019 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)



▼ © IOM 2009 - MAZ0014 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)

Over the next several years, tens of thousands of people abandoned drought-affected villages to migrate to cities and abroad in search of work.

"Restoring water supplies was crucial to stop the exodus," says 78-year-old Hajishaban Imanov, who has always lived in the ancient merchant city of Ordubad, once famous throughout the region for its carpet weaving and silk production.

Sitting under an old mulberry tree with two of his friends, he recalls how villagers used to rely on kahrizes for their water supplies.

"The kahriz of Toyenek in Ordubad city was constructed some 200 years ago by Hussein Bey, a rich landlord and local benefactor. It was the pride of the city but it was replaced by the wells during Soviet times," he recalls.

"Families had to pay up to 25 manats (US\$30) a month to cover the cost of electricity and a lot more when a faulty pump had to be replaced," says Abdullayev Abdulla, who heads the local Water User Committee. "Over-pumping also dried up the kahrizes, parts of which collapsed."

In 2007, he and other members of the Water User Committee asked the authorities in Baku to close the sub-artesian wells and restore two derelict kahrizes with IOM's assistance.

"The renovation of the kahrizes is a success," says Imanov with conviction. "Families made a one time payment of 150 manats (US\$186) for the renovation and 2 manats (US\$2.50) per month for

maintenance costs. In exchange, they have access to as much water as they need."

"An assessment carried out in 2007 by IOM and SDC shows that kahrizes also provide better quality water at a much lower cost," says IOM's Vassiliy Yuzhanin, who heads the IOM office in Azerbaijan. "Kahrizes also contribute to empowering women, who are the main beneficiaries, by associating them in all stages of the decision making process," he adds.

With its pine tree lined streets and well kept white buildings, Naftalan exudes an almost Mediterranean air, but for the hot, dry winds that blow in summer from the parched plains which stretch as far as the eye can see to the foot of the Caucasus mountains.

Developed in 1968 as a spa for people suffering from skin diseases, rheumatism and neurological disorders, Naftalan saw its hour of glory under Soviet rule, when up to 70,000 patients visited its sanatoriums for treatment every year.

Faced with huge demand for water, the authorities decided to drill down 300 feet to pump fresh water through six sub-artesian wells. With short cropped hair and an athletic build, 47-year-old Vilayet Zamanov worked as an engineer with the town's water board before heading Naftalan's Water User Community.

"Apart from the fact that we couldn't bring enough water to the sanatoriums, erratic water supplies poisoned relations between local inhabitants and thousands of people displaced by the

1992-1993 Nagorno Karabagh conflict. One day, a group broke down the front door of my office with an axe," he says.

Standing on the site where IOM is finalizing the refurbishment of a 1,000 metre-long kahriz with funding from the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), Zamanov says regular water supplies have now restored peace and harmony to the town, which today has a population of 15,500, including some 2,000 internally displaced people and 3,500 soldiers stationed in a nearby base.

"Thanks to the kahriz, people no longer have to fight for water. The kahriz feeds into a 12,000 cubic metre basin, which will soon be refurbished with IOM's assistance to further improve the quality of the water," says Zamanov.

To date, 58 kahrizes have been renovated under the IOM programme, providing drinking water to some 5,815 families. A further 4,500 families now have access to irrigation water. Another 35 structures are currently under renovation.

As a result, productivity in Nakhchivan's agricultural sector has increased, stabilizing population movements, improving household income and providing local employment. Some 170 young kankans have received training, with more young people waiting to apply.

"We have also sent five head kankans to UNESCO's International Centre for Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures in Yazd in Iran," says IOM's Lucie Dupertuis, who heads IOM's office in Nakhchivan.

"Their knowledge will not only help refurbish ancient kahrizes and hopefully construct new ones. It will also preserve these skills to ensure water sustainability for future generations," she adds. **M**

## DID YOU KNOW?

There are some 1,450 kilometres of underground water channels in Azerbaijan, long enough to link Baku to Ankara, the capital city of Turkey.

It is estimated that a hundred years ago, there were some 1,500 Kahrizes across Azerbaijan.

▼ Hajishaban Imanov (left) and his friends argue in favour of the restoration of more kahrizes in Ordubad. © IOM 2009 - MAZ0017 (Photo: Jean-Philippe Chauzy)



When engineers tried to repair the fabled water system of Plaine du Cul de Sac, a vast farming valley near Port-au-Prince, the canals were covered in mud and debris-buried by eroding soil from deforested mountains that haunt Haiti.

Silt and sediment covered the water system by “more than three meters,” according to engineer Jude Clercidor Martinez, working on a USAID-funded project.

But a village elder remembered when the water flowed and indicated exactly where to find the buried canals.

Water had last run freely sometime in the late 1940s or early 1950s according to the elder, who reckoned time not by a calendar but by who occupied the Haitian presidency. It was a bit before the first Duvalier, the elder said, referring to the much feared “Papa Doc.”

With the elder’s advice and with US\$800,000 in USAID financing, the amount of arable land in the Plaine du Cul de Sac has grown from 1,300 hectares to 4,000 hectares in less than a year, and as many as 30,000 farmers will now have the prospect for a better life.

Erosion, mud slides, blocked canals, and flooding abound in Haiti—especially during hurricane season. Poor people burn the trees off the hillsides to create farmland or to produce charcoal to sell

to the city residents. With the roots gone, rains wash away the topsoil.

Because problems faced by farmers such as poverty and hunger impact the cities nearby, USAID’s strategy for the country is shifting, said Alex Deprez, the Agency’s acting deputy director in Haiti.

“We are moving from treating urban hotspots with projects that prioritize security and short-term job creation to creating zones of greater economic opportunity,” he said.

This means treating urban and rural areas together as development challenges.

The Plaine du Cul de Sac once was one of Haiti’s key breadbasket areas but has suffered considerably from soil degradation. Reviving agricultural production there is seen as critical to generating jobs and feeding a hungry country that was among the first to experience urban rioting during the food crisis last year.

Approximately 70 percent of Haiti’s nine million people work the soil on land that was once so productive, its sugarcane plantations stirred the ambitions of imperial powers. But today it is cheaper to import sugar than to produce it locally.

Sixteen kilometers of primary canals and 46 kilometers of secondary canals

are being refurbished in the Plaine du Cul de Sac by a USAID partnership with the International Organization of Migration and the Cooperative Housing Foundation, with the support of Saint-Ange Darius, mayor of Croix des Bouquets, a town located just outside Port-au-Prince.

Darius said the future of his town depends on those farmers:

If they do not do well, it could result in a very restive city center. The mayor, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and local users of the water resources are working together on the restoration.

Farther up from the plain, a system of sluices directs the water flow in seven directions to the canals. And farther up yet, rock gabion walls are under construction that will protect the irrigation system’s intake area at the periodically turbulent Gris River.

Similar engineering projects to control flooding and reclaim land on hillsides and in plains can be found in Gonaives, around Port-au-Prince, and elsewhere in Haiti. It is all part of a visionary scheme for the island that is working from ravine to reef to restore the productivity of Haiti’s land. **M**

*This article has been reprinted with the kind permission of the author and USAID from the July 2009 edition of USAID Frontlines*

## Haiti Restores Old Waterways For Farm Use

By John Waggoner of USAID, at Croix Des Bouquets, Haiti

Photo credits: USAID 2009



▲ Haitian boy pumping water.



▼ Haitian woman in her spinach garden.



# Water, Water, Not a Drop to Spare

## Rural-Urban Migration Highlights Tanzania's Environmental Challenges

Jemini Pandya reports from Tanzania

“When I first came here, there was only a forest with lots of wild animals, including lions,” recalls Chairman Juma Omar Shindo, one of the earliest migrants to what became one of the largest urban sprawls in Tanzania's main city, Dar es Salaam.

“All the forest belonged to missionaries then and what dwellings there were, were scattered far and wide.”

It's hard to imagine such a scene from just over 50 years ago sitting in a tiny open office on a narrow dusty street in a small corner of the ever-growing Mbagala area.

Although Chairman Juma, a street leader for the neighbourhood of Bughdada, remembers people starting to build homes from the late 1950's in locations that are now fashionable parts of Dar es Salaam, it wasn't until the 1980's that he really noticed significant migration from Tanzania's rural areas.

“Up until then, there was no infrastructure. No roads, very few schools and clinics. There was no transport so people had to walk far. It would take us two days to walk to the hospital where there was only one doctor. Water, we would buy from a pump but then we paid cents, now we pay in shillings,” he reminisces.

Decades later, there are still issues over lack of infrastructure, particularly clinics, dispensaries and schools. But although these refrains are repeated by residents across Mbagala, the most common one is for water in a city unable to meet the demands of a rapidly growing population.

◀ An aging and broken water infrastructure has meant many residents without water are dependent on entrepreneurs who sell the precious commodity by the bucket from wells they have dug. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0046 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)



Mbagala alone has an estimated population of about 200,000 though nobody really knows. Ninety per cent of its residents are migrants from other parts of the country.

The story is similar elsewhere in Dar es Salaam. It's rare to come across anyone in the city that is actually from there.

Officially, the former Tanzanian capital has a population of about 2.7 million people but it's widely estimated to be above 4 million and rising.

Mary, a social worker who came from Kilimanjaro region 10 years ago, has to get her water from a well 500 m from her home. Each bucket she carries back

costs her 30 Tanzanian shillings (US 3 cents per bucket).

"Getting water now is so much more difficult than before. Then we used to have piped water coming to the house. We used to pay 8,000 shillings a month for it. Then it stopped coming," she says. She thinks the pipe infrastructure broke down and was never repaired. Like many others, she buys her water from someone who has dug a well with no checks on the quality of the water she and others are using.

Anna, who came to Dar es Salaam nearly two years ago with her husband and children after they could no longer scrape a living growing and selling

vegetables in Tabora, western Tanzania, can at best only afford five buckets of water a day.

With a husband unable to work and in poor health and the family of five living in one tiny room with no electricity, Anna struggles to keep the family afloat. Five buckets of water at a total cost of 15 US cents a day for drinking, washing and cooking in a country where millions of people are living on less than one dollar a day is a significant amount of money.

In plush areas of the city including the diplomatic neighbourhood, where the cost of water is not so much of an issue, water has to be trucked in.

Demand for water is about 450,000 cubic metres a day, but the Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA) that supplies the city can only provide 270,000 cubic metres.

According to its Chief Operation Officer Jackson Midala, the authority had previously predicted a population growth of 3 per cent a year for the city. Instead, the current growth is 8 per cent.

It's dependent on its supplies on surface and underground sources, primarily two water treatment centres along the River Ruvu.

But the river doesn't have the amount of water it used to have and its flows are less reliable than they used to be. The rains that used to come twice a year now only appear once.

There are other knock-on effects of dropping water levels for a country dependent on hydro-electricity. River levels had dropped so low in 2007 that electricity supplies to Dar were badly hit, forcing rationing which in turn affected businesses and tax revenues for the government.

As well as the changing weather patterns, DAWASA has other challenges to deal with.

Population growth has gone hand-in-hand with large-scale unplanned construction, posing particular difficulties for the water authority in areas where there is no existing water infrastructure.

"The solution to the problem would be to build a dam on the Ruvu in order to store excess water from a good rainy

► Anna and her family are relatively recent rural-urban migrants. Life in Dar es Salaam is not as easy as she and her husband had envisaged. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0045 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)





▲ Now estimated to be over four million, the population of Dar es Salaam continues to rise, posing greater challenges on the environment and natural resources such as water. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0043 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)

season," says Midala. But a plan to build a dam at Kidunda in a game reserve had costs to both the wildlife and to people living there who would have lost their land. It didn't take off.

The authority realizes that the River Ruvu is a finite resource and doesn't want to tap underground water due to environmental implications but its options are limited. Less rainfall and growing demand for an increasingly scarce but vital resource means there is little choice.

Work is about to get underway to drill 20 deep wells that can produce 260,000 cubic metres a day while the lower Ruvu treatment plan will shortly be expanded to increase output by nearly 90,000 cubic metres a day. The Norwegian Embassy is also funding a US\$6 million research project on the sustainability of tapping a deep water

aquifer that could help meet some of the city's water needs.

Although Dar es Salaam is home to 10 per cent of the country's population, other parts of Tanzania are also being hit by the uncertain access to water with implications for further out-migration from rural areas.

In towns like Arusha in the north which has also seen an explosion in population growth unaccompanied by proper town planning and resource management, farmers and agricultural workers are already at the sharp end of climate change and environmental degradation.

The snows of Africa's tallest mountain, Mount Kilimanjaro, have long been an iconic image of East Africa. But now, even on a clear day, it's hard to see much snow. In the past century,

Kilimanjaro has lost 82 per cent of its ice. Scientists fear that by 2020, it will have all melted.

Its fertile lower slopes and surrounding lands are famous for its banana and coffee plantations. But locals say these crops are no longer doing so well. The weather has changed though soil erosion and lack of irrigation systems also play their part.

A local priest and lifelong resident of Moshi, the main town in Kilimanjaro region, says people are not able to earn as much as they used to and livelihoods could disappear. The easy option is to leave for the cities in search of work. Droughts, crop failures and environmental degradation have already led to some farmers from Tanzania's more arid areas to leave their land in search of the city's bright lights. Only to find that water is as much an issue there as it was back home. **M**



▲ The disappearing snow cap of Mount Kilimanjaro is clear to see. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0062 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)

They say, in Bangladesh, that climate change has a taste and it tastes of salt. At the south of the country, salinity is emerging as a major issue which has already wiped out vast stretches of arable lands, claimed the livelihoods of many local inhabitants and displaced them from the place they once called home.

The saline water has intruded into the mainland of Bangladesh's southern belt as a consequence of cyclones and rising sea levels. But in the north of the country millions of people are also threatened by river bank erosion (RBE), severe droughts and heavy flooding. An estimated one million people are affected by RBE every year.<sup>1</sup>

A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report claims that a one meter rise in sea level will inundate some 13 per cent of land mass in the southern belt, displacing some 15-20 million people by 2050. At the same time, the World Bank estimates that by then half of all Bangladeshis will live in urban centers. These findings suggest a possible correlation between climate change and the rapid growth of urbanization in Bangladesh.

<sup>1</sup> Equity and Justice Working Group, Impact of Climate Change in Bangladesh, Campaign Brief 5, November 2007

For Bangladesh, the current growth rate of urban population is 4.8 per cent per year. Major metropolitan areas saw population expand from 1.6 million in 1974 to 20.15 million in 1991. By 2001 this had risen to 23.1 million and by 2006 to 35 million.<sup>2</sup>

Urban population may reach about 68 million, or 37 per cent of the total population, by 2015.<sup>3</sup> The informal settlements that have mushroomed in every corner of the capital, Dhaka, over the past years suggest that the national population is expected to be predominantly urban centric in roughly three decades from now.

Urbanization in Bangladesh has been rapid and unplanned. Events like floods and droughts in many parts of the country often force people to

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Urban Studies, *Squatters in Bangladesh Cities: A Survey of Urban Squatters in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna-1974* (Dhaka: CUS, 1976) and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Bangladesh National Population Census Report - 1974* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1977); *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Urban Area Report* (Dhaka: Ministry of Planning, 1997); *Population Census 2001, National Report (Provisional)*

<sup>3</sup> Demographic transition: the Third World scenario, edited by Aijazuddin Ahmad, Daniel Noin, H.N. Sharma. Jaipur, India, Rawat Publications, 1997.

move and find new jobs, which has also contributed to the rapid growth of urban populations.

These trends pose a number of questions. Does Bangladesh have any resettlement strategies to cope with such urban growth? Will a country like Bangladesh be able to accommodate such huge numbers of uprooted people in future? Are there policies in place to address such unplanned movements of people? Or is the situation heading towards a silent crisis?

Needless to say, a comprehensive account of such urban migration trends requires more mapping and assessment to understand where these people are coming from, under what circumstances, by what means, and more importantly where they are heading.

The most cost effective solution may be to intervene in the first instance in the migration source areas. This would require recognition of the climate change-migration/displacement nexus and imply its inclusion in policy discourse.

Without the concerted efforts of key stakeholders, the slum population and urban poor are likely to increase at an alarming rate, creating more pressure on the common pool of resources and available social services.

## Climate Change and Displacement in Bangladesh -

# A Silent Crisis?

By Rabab Fatima and Adnan Ahmed Sirajee,  
IOM Bangladesh

► Millions of people in northern Bangladesh are threatened by river bank erosion and severe droughts. © (Photo: Abir Abdullah)



► With floods a constant reality, Bangladeshis have learnt how to adapt their daily lives to the most trying circumstances. © (Photo: Abir Abdullah)

An unpublished research<sup>4</sup> paper on RBE commissioned by IOM shows that post displacement, migrants are often subjected to marginalization, social exclusion and discrimination. They frequently suffer from a lack of health care and education services, restricted access to land and water, and social alienation in cooperative societies.

The outcome of such rapid and unregulated internal displacement/migration could potentially be serious in terms of social tension and conflict.

If we recognize Bangladesh's rapid and unplanned urbanization as an early warning of a more serious human security situation in the near future, it would be prudent to take concerted action without further delay.

But the issue has yet to seriously enter into the country's policy discourse and is still subject to speculation. Some experts suggest that the threat of conflict as a direct consequence of climate change is overblown.

Nevertheless South Asia, with its porous borders, is a region where tensions generated by climate-induced displacement could have serious cross-border implications.

In Bangladesh, migration is often perceived as a failure of adaptation, and as such is not seen as a major threat to stability. But managing migration as an adaptation measure can reduce overall vulnerability, particularly in coastal and RBE-prone communities.

In this context migration must be voluntary rather than forced. IOM's study on RBE mentioned earlier focuses on law, human rights and environmental displacement in two RBE-prone districts.

The study shows how inadequate policies and poor governance set the scene for occupational dislocation, illegal land grabbing, wage exploitation and denial of land rights, which eventually led to forced migration.

Due to poor governance and a lack of accountability of the local authorities, together with land records that failed to identify the victims, a government initiative to allocate special land privileges to the affected population remains ineffective.

This suggests that managing displacement is also closely linked to policy making and governance. IOM in Bangladesh is working to build the capacity of local government to better manage internal displacement, and is advocating policies that would make the decision to migrate a choice rather than a compulsion.

This type of advocacy does not need to be confined to RBE. Global experience suggests that investing in early warning and evacuation systems to prepare people for cyclone storms and floods has saved millions of lives.

Bangladesh, a country widely recognized as one of the most vulnerable to cyclone storms and constant flooding, is a case in point. Since 2000 the coun-

try has experienced more than 70 major natural disasters.<sup>5</sup>

One-fifth of the country is flooded every year, and in some years, up to two-thirds of the land mass has been inundated.<sup>6</sup> Weather-related disasters due to climate change have caused outbreaks of disease, including a diarrhea outbreak that killed 20 per cent of children under 5 years of age in 2000.<sup>7</sup> The findings of a survey conducted by IOM in 2007 following Cyclone Sidr showed a similar pattern.

In the absence of a systematic process to distinguish economic from climate-induced migrants, the apparent nexus between climate change and migration is still often treated as coincidental.

More research is needed to show whether a strong link exists between climate change and environmental factors and migration. Greater recognition of this nexus at the policy and expert level is also needed.

IOM is engaged in generating awareness of the issue to advance the existing knowledge base on climate-induced migrants. We believe that immediate action is called for to address this emerging problem. If not, the day may not be far away when this potential crisis breaks its silence. **M**

<sup>4</sup> Life on a Swing : Human Rights of Erosion-induced Displacees, 2008

<sup>5</sup> CRED database, (2009).

<sup>6</sup> Agarwala, S., et al. (2003) "Development and climate change in Bangladesh: Focus on coast flooding and sundarbans." OECD.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization Statistical Information System, (2009).

The economic crisis has spread throughout the world and Moldova has not been exempt. According to a recent IOM study in the Eastern European country, two out of every ten rural households previously receiving remittances from abroad were no longer getting them.

That is a significant amount when one considers that a third of Moldovan households receive remittances from family members working overseas. These are used mainly to pay for basic household consumption, consumer durables, education, housing and debt repayment. For half of these households, the money accounts for more than 50 per cent of their family budget while for a quarter, remittances are virtually the only income.

For a country with high levels of emigration and a high dependency on remittances, the global economic crisis affecting many of the destination countries of Moldovan migrants is bad news.

Bravicea is a small village situated in a picturesque location surrounded by lush green vegetation and hidden behind gentle rolling hills 60 kms away from the Moldovan capital, Chisinau. At first sight, life here seems to be calm and happy.

Yet every other family living in Bravicea has a migration story to tell. Children are running aimlessly in the streets and to the question: "Where are your parents?", most of them casually answer: "Abroad." Left behind as a consequence of emigration, many of these children are brought up by grandparents, some are left with neighbours or, in the worst case scenario, are sent to residential institutions.

Marin, an unemployed 21-year-old man, without higher education qualifications, has already travelled several times to work in the construction sector in Russia, the main destination country for Moldovan migrants. Working and living in Russia alongside a group of 15 of his compatriots, Marin was satisfied as they were treated well and paid on time. A few months ago he was told by his employer not to come back as the economic crisis had literally stopped the construction sector in its tracks.

According to the IOM study, the number of Moldovans working abroad fell from 430,000 in July 2008 to 353,000 in March 2009. As yet, however, there

# Moldovans Feel the Pinch of the Economic Crisis

By Tatiana Jordan and  
Blaec Kalweit, IOM Moldova

is no evidence of the economic crisis forcing a mass return of Moldovan migrants home. Many Moldovan migrants are seasonal workers and the flow of migrants going in and out of the country can partially explain the drop in numbers. Figures of those leaving are likely to increase again as more than half of the Moldovans interviewed for the study said they had only returned temporarily and were planning to leave again in the coming months.

Yet the number of those who have returned for good has grown although many of them said it had been for family reasons. The number of "new" migrants, i.e. people intending to leave the country for the first time, is also stabilizing in a country where migration has taken its toll.

Evidently, the return of Moldova's migrants isn't the tell-tale sign one would think of a country being touched by the economic crisis abroad. Remittances are. Marin's eldest sister Liliana left home three years ago as an irregular migrant to Italy. Working as a carer for elderly people, Liliana had consistently sent home money from her earnings. Now, with a family of her own, Liliana is sending less and less money to her family, explaining that the worsening economic situation has constrained her ability to send back remittances.

It's an anecdote that bears out the findings of the IOM report. Twenty per cent of Moldovan households that had previously benefited from remittances, no longer receive any money from a relative working in another country.

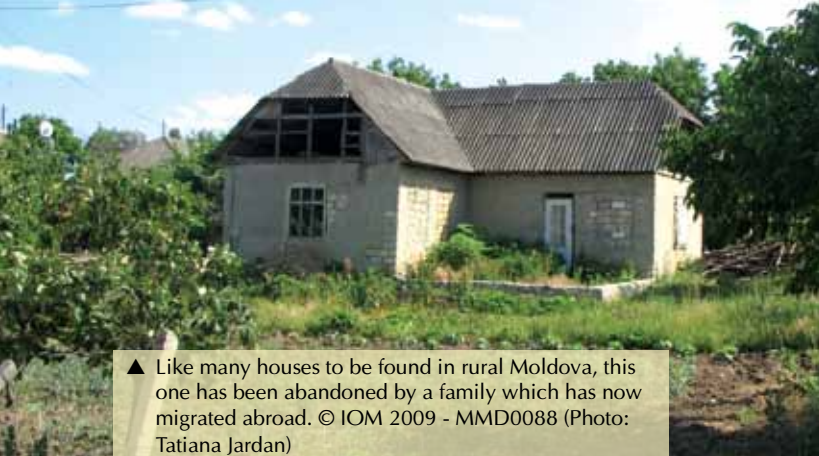
Forty-five per cent of the households now receive less or even much less compared to last year. The National Bank of Moldova confirms this trend, stating that remittances to Moldova dropped by 42 per cent in the first four months of 2009 in comparison to the same period in 2008.

"I would gladly go back to work in Moscow to help out my parents if I were offered a job," says Marin.

Instead, Marin, along with other returnees, now has to compete for a job at home. In rural areas, where opportunities are scarce, the chances are that the returnees will fare better than those who never left home given their greater work experience. Unemployed Moldovan youth with little to no work experience could sink even deeper into poverty as a result.

"The top priority is to identify the most vulnerable and protect them," states Martin Wyss, IOM's Chief of Mission in Moldova. Less money in the state coffers could see cuts in social services and human development programmes but a short-term policy response could be to avoid cutting targeted social assistance programmes, thus making sure that the most vulnerable and marginalized do not fall further into rural poverty and social exclusion.

However, irregular and seasonal migrants are also vulnerable while abroad as they are often not in a position to argue against poor working conditions, long hours and low salaries.



▲ Like many houses to be found in rural Moldova, this one has been abandoned by a family which has now migrated abroad. © IOM 2009 - MMD0088 (Photo: Tatiana Jardan)



▲ Children left behind as a consequence of migration often have to fend for themselves. © IOM 2009 - MMD0087 (Photo: Tatiana Jardan)

“A low salary in Moscow is still higher than what I can earn in Moldova,” Marin nevertheless explains. And of course, avoiding unemployment in Moldova is paramount.

The story of 61-year-old Nicolae’s family is a perfect illustration of the above. Nicolae has been left to take care of his three grandchildren by his two daughters, both abroad. His eldest daughter, working in Greece, is now thinking of calling her daughter over to join her. Meanwhile, Nicolae’s youngest daughter, who has been working in Moscow for the past few months, has yet to be paid. Her employers say the delay is due to financial difficulties because of the economic crisis. But it has left his daughter in a very difficult state, left hanging between the promises of money, or returning home to see her children.

Bravicea is just one of hundreds of villages in Moldova with such stories. Only time will tell how the situation will evolve for both Moldovan migrants and their families back home but now is a good time to act to lessen the worst effects of the crisis.

“We felt that it was important not to wait until things were too late. IOM is working with the government and partner organizations to continue assessing the impact of the crisis and to do what is possible to lessen the pain of the crisis on both the families at home and on the Moldovan migrants abroad,” says Wyss.

One action, together with the Moldovan Ministry of Economy and Trade, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) has been to initiate a programme making the most of the remittances coming in. Instead of using remittances for consumer durables and other household expenses, the aim is to get migrants to invest in developing businesses and livelihoods.

“Such an approach is one of the best ways to bring those made vulnerable by the crisis out of economic and social exclusion,” concludes Wyss. **M**



▶ Many Moldovan villages are populated with elderly people taking care of their grandchildren. © IOM 2009 - MMD0086 (Photo: Tatiana Jardan)



▲ Unemployed migrants receive donated food at a Farmer's Market in Maryland. © IOM 2009 - MUS0083 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

## Honduran Migrants and their Families Weather the Global Economic Crisis

Niurka Piñeiro reports from Honduras

Every person interviewed in Honduras, with family members in the United States, confirmed they were receiving less money or no money at all from their loved ones abroad. With gross national income per capita of US\$1,635, Honduras is one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. In 2008, it was reported that more than 83 per cent of Honduran migrants sent remittances home to their families. A drop in remittances could wreak havoc in the fragile economy of tens of thousands of families dependent on this lifeline.

Invariably, when economic times are rough, anti-immigrant sentiment is at its highest. And the United States, hosting an estimated 11 million irregular migrants, is no exception.

A story published by MSNBC.com and the Elkhart (Indiana) Truth on 29 June, prompted more than 1,300 responses in 24 hours. The story titled "Immigrants Fighting Hard to Stay in the U.S." quoted migrants who had lost their jobs and were trying to survive without access to unemployment benefits, but at the same time loath to return to their countries of origin. The story led to a torrent of comments vehemently opposed to illegal immigration and calling for all illegal migrants to "go home".

Media stories the world over are reporting that due to the global financial crisis many migrants are losing their jobs and some are opting to return to their countries of origin.

But so far there have been no mass returns; migrants are returning, but in dribs and drabs.



Rosa Nelly Santos and Edita Maldonado run COFAMIPRO, the Committee of Family Members of Migrants in the northern Honduran town of El Progreso. Their job is to help family members trace their loved ones who have gone missing during their journey north to the United States. They also have family members abroad, so they know first-hand the effects of the global economic downturn.

Edita has three children in the U.S. who tell her there is no work; their combined remittances are now sporadic and amount to between US\$50-\$100 a month.

But Rosa Nelly says confidently, "The economic crisis is not going to stop Hondurans from going to the U.S. And do you know why? Because the *maquilas* (assembly plants) are closing, which is the only thing keeping our youth from migrating north. And many other businesses, like supermarkets, are cutting their staff."

Patricia Canales of the Honduran Ministry of Labour speaks with the facts and figures laid out in front of her. She says more than 37 per cent of the working-age population, or one million persons, are either unemployed or underemployed.

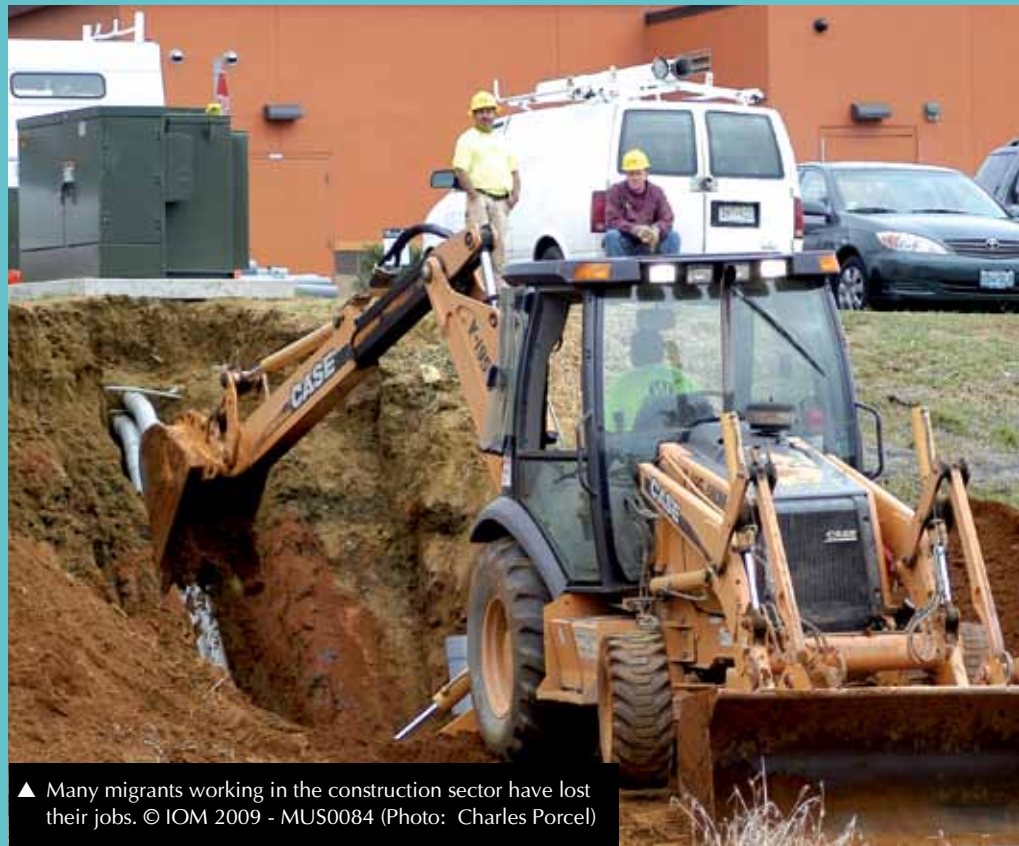
"I can confirm that our economic indicators, especially remittances, are showing signs of contraction." And to drive the point home, Canales reiterates, "This means that Hondurans in the U.S. are sending less money home to their families."

Remittances to Honduras have increased each year for the past 15 years, from US\$654.2 million in 2000 to US\$3.2 billion in 2008.

But weekly economic indicators published by the Central Bank of Honduras in mid June, confirmed that in the first five months of 2009, remittances had indeed decreased by 5.7 per cent when compared with the same period in 2008.

This translates to a drop of US\$64.4 million entering the country to help families meet their basic needs.

According to the Inter-American Development Bank, the fourth quarter



▲ Many migrants working in the construction sector have lost their jobs. © IOM 2009 - MUS0084 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

of 2008 saw the first drop in remittances to Latin America in nearly a decade.

The Inter-American Dialogue, a U.S.-based center for policy analysis, is estimating a seven per cent decline in remittances to the region in 2009. They attribute the sharp decline to job losses, slower earnings, and deportations of migrants.

Canales, of the Ministry of Labour, says, "We know that Honduran migrants may be feeling stressed and confused about whether they should return home now. But I'm sure they are comparing the ability of the U.S. economy to bounce back, versus that of a small country like Honduras. They will quickly come to the conclusion that the U.S. economy will bounce back a lot faster."

In May 2009, the U.S. Department of Labour reported the number of unemployed increased by 787,000 to 14.5 million, and the unemployment rose to 9.4; 12.7 per cent for Hispanics.

Gladys Bustillo is a 34-year-old, mother of two whose husband is in the U.S and is no longer able to send remittances. For three years he sent home US\$700 each month, but construction work has dried up, and he is down to five days of work per month.

▼ Gladys Bustillo is finding it hard to make ends meet without remittances from her husband who was laid off from his construction job in the U.S. © IOM 2009 - MUS0085 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



"My husband says the situation in the U.S. is bad, but that he is going to wait a while to see if things improve. But I have to pay the mortgage and feed my children. I would leave for Canada today because I want my children to have an education and a better future," asserts Gladys.

Gladys was laid off in January 2009 and she is desperate. She is going to apply to an IOM-sponsored Labour Migration Programme to Canada, and if selected, will leave her children with her mother and sister.

Francisco Wilfredo Alvarado, Director General of the Immigration Service, says, "We are seeing some Hondurans, who were in the U.S. and had lost their jobs, returning home. They tell us they gave themselves up to the authorities so they could be deported because they did not have money for the plane ticket."

Alvarado wants to put in place an information campaign to inform all Hondurans returning home about the risks of irregular migration and the fact that there are fewer jobs in the U.S., so they should think twice before getting into debt and risking their lives.

"I want all returnees, whether deported or those who are voluntarily returning, to put their new skills to work for Honduras. My Department is working with other agencies compiling a database of the returnees' skills," Alvarado explains. "Unfortunately there is a tendency for people to think the deportees went to another country to commit crimes," he adds.

Sister Valdete Wilemann, a Brazilian Catholic nun who for the past five years has run the Centre for Assistance to Returned Migrants in Tegucigalpa, says the migrants return home empty-handed and are unable to find jobs, mainly because there are no jobs, but also because employers are afraid to hire deportees.

"We have to raise awareness amongst employers. These men are not criminals. For the most part they are deported because they entered the U.S. illegally. Of the 4,000 we have assisted in the past month at this center, only one per cent had been incarcerated for drug-related crimes, domestic violence and other offenses," explains Sister Valdete.

In 2008, the two welcome centres in the cities of Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula assisted 30,018 Hondurans who were deported by air from the U.S.

Seventy-six-year-old Amparo Maradiago stands outside the centre in Tegucigalpa massaging her ailing heart, as she waits for her son who is arriving on the deportation flight from U.S. She has not seen her youngest son in 13 years.

"I am a little sad but also a little happy. My boy is 29 years old and he is coming home today. We drove six hours from Olancho to be here to welcome him," sighs Maradiago.

He was the only one of her seven children who decided to migrate to the U.S. Thanks to his monthly remittances she says she was able to have three proper meals each day. So is she sorry she will no longer have his remittances?

"No, because his strong arms are coming back to work the land with his brothers. He may make less money here, but this is his country and he will live in peace and in total freedom," Maradiago adds.

But surveys show that most migrants try to migrate to the U.S. within three months from the time they are returned.

Rosa Nelly of COFAMIPRO observes, "Sure the economic situation in the U.S. is critical, and they can continue their deportations, but many have already gone back. If you go to the bus terminal in San Pedro Sula you will see all of the buses packed with young people going north."

Twenty-six-year-old Valeska Flores lost her home last year after heavy rains washed away the settlement where she lived with her husband and four children.

Now cramped into a rented room that they can ill afford, she says she is one of the lucky ones because her husband has a job. Her mother and father are in the U.S. but both were recently laid off.

"My mother was working in a factory, but was let go last December. Since then she has not sent us any money. She used to send us between US\$100 and US\$125 every three weeks or so," Valeska shows her empty hands to emphasize that now they have nothing. **M**

*\* Unofficial estimates indicate there could be up to one million Hondurans currently in the U.S. The U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey reported 430,504 Hondurans living in the United States.*

► Migrants working as gardeners, housekeepers and in restaurants have also been hard hit by the economic downturn. © IOM 2009 - MUS0082 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



# The Remittance Boomerang:

Are Mexican migrants in the United States receiving money from their relatives to tide them over until bountiful times return?

By Professor Abel Gómez-Gutiérrez, Universidad Autonoma de Nayarit, Mexico

**“Sell two or three cows, and try to sell the piece of land up the hill. Please rent my house and go live a la casa grande with our madre,”** instructs Marcelino Casas, a Mexican migrant living in the U.S.



▲ Cattle owned by Mexican migrants living in the U.S.  
© IOM 2009 - MMX0008 (Photo: Abel Gomez-Gutierrez)



▲ A liquor store in Mexico owned by Mexican migrants. © IOM 2009 - MMX0009 (Photo: Kathya Quiroz)

This and similar telephone conversations are taking place between Mexican migrants in the United States and their relatives in Mexico.

During the bounty years in the U.S., some migrants earned enough to open up savings accounts in Mexican banks, buy land, and build houses. Others started small businesses in their hometowns in partnership with brothers and sisters in Mexico, including: cattle breeding, agriculture, video rentals, Internet cafés, clothing, jewelry, grocery and liquor stores, and money lending.

While others made just enough money to survive in the U.S. and to rigorously send remittances to their families back home.

#### Remittances to Mexico

Between 1997 and 2007, remittances from the U.S. to Mexican families soared from US\$6.8 billion to US\$24 billion. This last sum exceeds the value of all agricultural exports, is on a par to

tourism revenues, and in some years, far exceeded oil exports and foreign direct investment.

The number of Mexican families depending on remittances from the U.S. reached 2.7 million in 2008; with an average of US\$600 received each month. The majority of the recipients use the money to pay for basic needs: housing, food, utilities, health, education and clothing.

#### A Crimp in the Flow

The U.S. recession sent its first message over the border at the end of July 2007, when more than 100 construction companies and contractors cut the number of hours of most of their workers. Many irregular Mexican migrants were employed in the construction industry, so they were the first to lose their jobs without the lifeline of unemployment insurance.

Remittances from the U.S. to Mexico decreased by about 8 per cent in the last semester of 2008. The downward trend

continued in the first semester of 2009, registering a 12 per cent decline.

News of the financial crisis and the inevitable recession spread all over the world.

The reply of the U.S. consumer was to cut down on entertainment and other services; and with another large portion of Mexican migrants –regular and irregular, working in the service industry, another wave of job losses or reduced hours hit the workers.

The lucky ones are the estimated six million regular Mexican migrants who are covered by unemployment insurance. But how are the estimated seven million undocumented Mexican migrants coping? How are they paying their mortgages or rent, their credit cards and cars, not only in the U.S. but also in Mexico?

#### Remittance Boomerang

In the ten years that I have studied migration all over the world, and



particularly in Mexico, this is the first time I have seen reverse remittances. It is happening, but in very restrained and different ways. The financial structure to send money to the U.S. from Mexico is not well established. To send money to the U.S., the sender must buy US Dollars and then pay a fee to wire the funds, and for most Mexicans this is considered a very sophisticated transaction.

Migrants are not sending the same amount of money to their relatives in Mexico, but this does not mean that they are getting a lot of money sent back to them in the U.S.

### A Mexican Family in Sacramento, California

An undocumented couple, who has lived in the U.S. for the past 15 years and have two U.S.-born children, work in restaurants: she as a waitress and he as a cook. Before the financial crisis, they both had two jobs: he held two full time jobs for more than six years, and she worked three days a week in one restaurant and three days in another

one. They have worked hard and saved so that one day they could return to Mexico, as they planned from the very beginning.

In the past 15 years, their hard work allowed them to build a house, which is rented, and to invest in a grocery store in Jalisco. They also bought some cows. All of their assets in Mexico are managed by a brother and his wife. The rental income and the earnings from the grocery store are deposited in their Mexican bank account. They have always sent remittances to both of their mothers, but now that they are earning less and cannot send remittances, the money that was deposited in the bank is going in equal parts to their respective mothers.

### A Single Male Migrant in Oregon

Florentino Casas is an undocumented single man with no children. He lives on a small cattle ranch in the State of Oregon where he works 14-hour days. His boss provides housing and food, so he sends most of his earnings to his mother in Mexico. His dream is to own a similar ranch in Mexico.

Although Florentino was not affected by the financial crisis, he was seriously affected by a calf's kick straight to his testicles.

He spent five days in hospital and was told to stay home for two weeks. That meant three weeks without pay and without remittances to his mother, who is highly dependent on the money. He also has to think of the 40 cows that he owns in Mexico that must be fed and of the salaries for the young farm hands who work on his land in Mexico.

And so Florentino calls home to sort out money matters in Mexico: "Sell two or three cows, and try to sell the piece of land up the hill. Also, please rent my house and go live *a la casa grande* with our *madre*," instructs Florentino.

His investments in Mexico are allowing him a short respite until he is able to return to work.

### A Mexican Family in Santa Ana, California

A couple, who reside legally in the U.S. with their two young children, work, own their home and cars and have acquired credit cards. They also own a house in Mexico. The rental income from the house in Mexico is deposited

into a bank account which was set up to be used for yearly Christmas vacations to Mexico. But the man was laid off in June 2008, and although he received unemployment insurance for six months, the amount was not enough to pay all of the bills. So he decided to return to Mexico temporarily and got a job as a truck driver. He shared a house in order to send most of his salary to his wife in the U.S. to pay the bills, but they also had to dip into their Mexican savings. His wife continued working in the U.S. and with her salary and the money received from her husband's unemployment insurance and his temporary job in Mexico, they managed to meet all of their obligations. And although they were not able to take their yearly vacation to Mexico in December 2008, they are holding on to their house in the U.S. and are thinking of selling their home in Mexico.

The third example constitutes the one single case that I have come across where reverse remittances are helping migrants in the U.S.

But for the most part, reverse remittances from Mexico to the U.S. constitute money that was saved, invested or lent by Mexican migrants living in the U.S.

**Migrants are not sending the same amount of money to their relatives in Mexico, but this does not mean that they are getting a lot of money sent back to them in the U.S.**

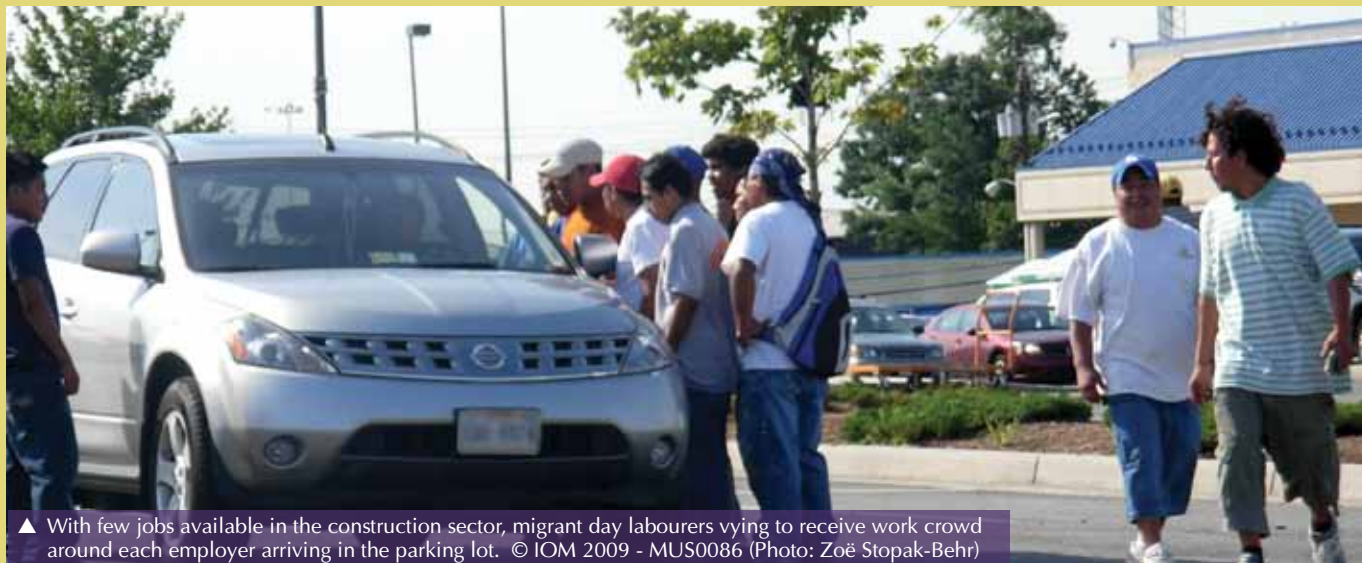
We have heard a couple of anecdotes of Mexican families working or selling their properties to send money to their relatives in the U.S., in order to help them weather the unemployment storm. If these cases are true, they are isolated and very unique.

Our research shows that it is the migrants' money that is being sent back to them in the U.S. to tide them over until bountiful times return. **M**

*Abel Gómez-Gutiérrez is a professor at Universidad Autónoma de Nayarit, México, and a specialist in Mexican transnationalism. He can be reached at: [abelgomezgtz@yahoo.com](mailto:abelgomezgtz@yahoo.com)*

# Wage Theft and Homelessness: The Plight of Day Labourers in the U. S. Capital

By Zoë Stopak-Behr, IOM Washington, D.C.



▲ With few jobs available in the construction sector, migrant day labourers vying to receive work crowd around each employer arriving in the parking lot. © IOM 2009 - MUS0086 (Photo: Zoë Stopak-Behr)

“When I came here two years ago, I worked seven-days-a-week in construction. Now I am looking for a job everywhere!” exclaims Carlos, a 24-year-old day labourer from Guatemala.

The other day labourers or *jornaleros*, gathered outside the Home Depot, echo Carlos’ sentiment. The Home Depot in Northeast Washington, D.C. is the only location of the home improvement retailer in the U.S. capital.

It is already ten o’clock in the morning and the parking lot is still crowded with dozens of Central American men, the majority under the age of 35, hoping to find a few hours of work today.

As other day labour sites in the city have pushed workers out to make room for rising gentrification, this parking lot has become the epicenter of D.C. day labour.

With the onset of the economic crisis in the United States, the number of day labourers arriving to the parking lot each day has risen, while the number of jobs and the amount of wages available has diminished significantly.

Pedro Cruz, a labour organizer for the D.C. coalition, Jobs with Justice, asserts that this population was among the first to feel the effects of the economic crisis.

“Beginning in January 2008, steady jobs in the construction sector were cut

in half, driving more and more workers toward the uncertain pursuit of day labour,” explains Cruz.

Now these workers, both skilled and unskilled, find themselves taking any job offered and accepting lower compensation.

“Over the past few weeks I have found small jobs in construction, taking out garbage, cutting wood and painting,” adds Carlos from Guatemala.

“Because of the economy, the majority of employers only pay US\$8 per hour. Before, I made US\$15 per hour in construction, and that was good.”

In addition to lower wages, the issue of stolen wages has become endemic. According to Cruz, “Employers take advantage of the workers’ fear of deportation and threaten to turn them over to the immigration authorities. In recent weeks three workers I know were robbed of over US\$5,000!” He adds, “The workers don’t realize they have rights!”

Another escalating problem is chronic homelessness, as the unemployed migrants are increasingly unable to pay their rent. In the midst of the economic crisis, many homeless day labourers have become victims of what Cruz describes as “painful irony”: many eviction companies hire day labourers to carry out eviction orders throughout the city, a high-risk job that pays very poorly.

As Cruz describes, “The irony is that the people they evict end up in the same homeless shelters as the workers. There have been many cases of evictees beating up the day labourer, who they see as the face of their eviction.”

Lack of employment opportunities, stolen wages and deplorable living conditions have caused many of these migrants to consider returning home.

“It is hard here, it really is,” says Carlos. “Right now it is just as hard to find work in the U.S. as in Guatemala. I will go home if the economy does not improve soon.” **M**



▲ “I cannot save money to send home. Now I have little and it is very hard,” says a 22 year-old migrant from Guatemala. © IOM 2009 - MUS0087 (Photo: Zoë Stopak-Behr)

▼ Javier from Mexico says, "We prefer to stay in our country, but there is no work. Politicians make many promises when they want to get elected, then they forget about the poor who voted for them." © IOM 2009 - MUS0088 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

**T**here are some 2.5 million farm workers in the U.S. If estimates that 45 per cent are unauthorized migrants are correct, that would equal almost one million irregular migrants working on U.S. farms. And yet only an average of 75,000 seasonal migrant agricultural workers travel to the United States each year under the H-2A visa programme, which has no limit on the number of visas that can be issued. The State of North Carolina has the largest number of H-2A workers with 10,000 in 2009. A visit to North Carolina's tobacco country confirms that working and living conditions are basically the same for the H-2A workers and for those who are in the country illegally and perform the same backbreaking work.

A left turn onto a dirt road in rural North Carolina leads to lush tobacco fields as far as the eye can see. With no house or other structure in site, it does not look like the camp that a group of Mexican migrant workers call home seven months of the year. But the happy and contagious Mexican Norteña music leads the way to a long one story structure divided into small rooms.

The 30 Mexican men who live in this camp are in a flurry of activity. After a grueling day under the hot August sun they are busy showering, cooking, eating, packing tomorrow's lunch, and watching a little television before getting some sleep to be able to face another day in the fields.

Two men sitting under a tree go inside and emerge a few minutes later with Cornelio Gonzalez, a 27 year-old intelligent, focused and articulate member of the group who is happy to share his story.

"I've been coming to this farm for four years. I have a wife and a three year old daughter, so I need the money," explains Cornelio. But he quickly adds: "I love my family, I miss them very much, and I'm tired; I don't think I'll come back next year. Seven months without my family is too long."

## Regular or Irregular: Little Difference for North Carolina's Migrant Agricultural Workers

Niurka Pineiro reports from North Carolina



▲ Farmworker harvesting tobacco leaves in Central North Carolina. Photo by Jessamyn Bowling, 2006 Student Action with Farmworkers Into the Fields.



▲ Mary Lee Hall of Legal Aid North Carolina explains that the small containers are for berries and the bucket is for sturdier and larger fruits and vegetables. Each 5/8 bushel bucket (about 35 litres) earns the men 35 U.S. Cents. Some manage to fill 200 buckets in one day for a total of US\$70. © IOM 2009 - MUS0091 (Photo: Charles Porcel)



▲ All Mexican migrants in this camp in North Carolina say they miss their families and home cooking. They were not prepared to face a full day of work and an evening of cooking and washing. © IOM 2009 - MUS0090 (Photo: Charles Porcel)

Mary Lee Hall, Managing Attorney of the Farm Worker Unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina, says she hears this from many of the migrant workers. "There are needs and there are wants. Many times they say they don't want to come back to the U.S., and it may be true, but the reality is that they need to earn this money."

More than 150,000 migrants work in North Carolina's fields. The tobacco industry has traditionally been one of the most important industries in North Carolina and a backbone of the state's agricultural heritage. The State ranks number one in tobacco production in the country. In 2007, North Carolina tobacco farmers raised 170,000 acres with an approximate income of US\$587 million.

Thousands of those migrant men and women also work planting and harvesting fruits and vegetables, on Christmas tree farms and in nurseries.

The H2 programme, which governs all temporary foreign workers, was created by the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act split the H2 programmes into H-2A for seasonal agricultural workers and H-2B for unskilled seasonal non-agricultural workers.

To participate in the H2 visa programme, migrants apply at a U.S. Consulate in their country and employers apply to the U.S. Department of Labor for accreditation.

Cornelio explains that each year he pays US\$200 for the visa and the bus trip

from his home to the city of Monterrey. The rest of the trip is reimbursed by the employer, after the individual reaches the halfway mark of his contract, as well as the return trip seven months later.

"We don't pay rent, water or electricity, which is a good thing," says Cornelio. "But we earn just US\$8.05 per hour, and the work is very hard. Some days it is so hot that the boss tells us we have to stop working, and when that happens we don't earn any more that day."

But Hall says the wage differential keeps the men coming back. What they earn in one hour in North Carolina, is equivalent to one day's work in Mexico.

"The men are on a treadmill. As the children grow, the needs grow; so they can't stop. First they have to go to primary school, then secondary school and eventually to university, so they have to keep coming back; the need is there," says Hall, who has dedicated her career to providing legal services to migrants workers.

"This type of work is entry-level, so people move out and up. But there is an endless supply of workers, so wages never improve," explains Hall, who says the economic crisis has brought many migrants who lost their jobs in cities to the job of last resort, agriculture.

According to a recent report by the Pew Hispanic Center, despite the economic downturn and high unemployment amongst Hispanic migrants, the number of Mexican migrants returning to their country has stayed level.

Javier, from Michoacan, Mexico says the bad economy drove him north from

the Florida orange groves. The living conditions at the tobacco farm where he works are borderline unacceptable. But he says in Florida they are no better and they are obliged to pay rent of US\$20-25 per week.

He is the only one willing to speak because he says he has a Green Card and all of his house mates are irregular migrants. Javier is 53 years old, and although his face is lined and cured by years of sun, he looks younger than his years and sports a perfect white smile.

Javier is an old hand at this game and says that job hunting for irregular migrants is based on the "friend network". "A fellow migrant says there is work in North Carolina and you make your way north," explains Javier. "I was in Florida working the orange harvest, that's where I start out each year, the work was slow so someone told me to come to North Carolina for the tobacco harvest."

"I've been coming to the U.S. every year for the past 18 years. I can't stop, I need money to raise my five children and give them the opportunities I did not have. As long as I can walk and work, I'll keep coming back," he says with a resolute smile.

Cornelio, who is very wise for his 27 years, says he has built his house and saved some money so he is not planning to return next year, and adds: "I have met men who have been coming to the U.S. every season for the past 10 to 15 years and have nothing to show for it. Some are worse off. In order to survive the sadness and nostalgia of family and country they spend their money on alcohol and women." **M**



Boats still bob up and down aplenty in the sea but in full daylight, there is no sign of the human cargo that arrives most nights from the Kenyan coastal city of Mombasa.

An ancient slave port and once the German administrative capital of Tanganyika, Bagamoyo has a sleepy old world charm to it. In the late afternoon sun on its long sandy beach where fishermen are trying to sell their meagre catches, and school children eagerly surround a lone tourist, it's hard to imagine that the town's sordid history has come to life with a modern twist.

"The sea route between Kenya and Tanzania has always been used for trade in coconuts, and other small businesses. But now, the trade is mainly in people," says Method Kagoma, investigation officer with the Tanzanian Immigration Service in Bagamoyo.

The difference is that now, the trade is not in slaves but in getting irregular migrants driven by political instability, insecurity and poverty in the Horn of Africa to the bustling economy of South Africa with Tanzania right at the heart of the human smuggling route. Bagamoyo is a main landing point for the smugglers

bringing mainly Ethiopian and Somali irregular migrants by sea.

With 3,861 kilometres of borders with eight countries and a long stretch of coast that faces east across the Indian Ocean, Tanzania has its work cut out trying to secure its porous frontiers from the constant breaches of the growing and increasingly organized human smuggling networks.

"Every month we catch migrants. But more escape our clutches than are caught, though we cannot be sure how many," Method explains. The chances are it's much more.

▼ Boats dot the coastline of the infamous ancient slave port of Bagamoyo.  
© IOM 2009 - MTZ0052  
(Photo: Jemini Pandya)

# Raised Hopes to End Human Smuggling in East Africa

Jemini Pandya reports from Tanzania



▼ Bagamoyo immigration officer Method Kagoma says the trade along the Kenyan and Tanzanian sea route is now mainly a trade in human beings. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0056(Photo: Jemini Pandya)

Over the years, Method and his colleagues have learnt of the many landing points used by smugglers away from the more open site of Bagamoyo beach. They also know some of the large bushes carpeting the landscape where smugglers abandon the migrants with promises that others will soon come along to take them on the next stage of their journey to South Africa.

“My first catch was of 42 Somalis hiding in this bush,” Method recalls as he carefully makes his way through a thorny thicket. “I had been tipped off. Without this kind of help, it would be impossible for us to catch migrants as we’d have to look under every bush. It is hunger that drives them out of here in search of food and sometimes when that happens, we get a call.”

Although the immigration office in Bagamoyo, a rented, small one-storey building on the outskirts of the town, has a staff of 12 officials, there is little else in terms of resources. Constant power cuts means the few computers they have are often unusable. But it is the lack of transport, according to Method, that is the biggest obstacle to their work.

The office in Bagamoyo was opened in the 1970’s, but it was only in November 2008 that it got its first dedicated vehicle. A newly repainted 20-year-old Land Rover that has to be pushed to get it started. It’s an improvement on having to borrow a car from the district head office at Kibalia following a tip-off - a request not always granted. Even when it was, success was not guaranteed. Waiting for a car to arrive from Kibalia - usually during the night time on difficult roads - meant smugglers were usually far away by the time the borrowed vehicle had reached Bagamoyo.

The lack of road infrastructure and the rugged terrain also means a vehicle isn’t necessarily the most useful form of transport. Motorbikes are. The office at Bagamoyo has one, but it doesn’t work.

It’s frustrating, but perhaps more galling for the immigration officers is realizing that the smugglers are all too fully aware of their scant resources and limitations.

“Sometimes we get calls from people, with no identified number or from a number which is used just once, to tip



▲ Immigration officers at Bagamoyo are thankful to have a vehicle even if starting the engine isn’t always easy. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0049 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)

us off on where a group of migrants can be found. When we are seen leaving the building - because we are being observed - the smugglers use a different route," Method says.

From Bagamoyo, the journey for the migrants is inland, heading south towards the Mbeya region on the Tanzanian border with Zambia and Malawi. A key goal is to reach a refugee camp in Malawi from where the migrants find it easier to get into South Africa and for some to continue onward to Europe and North America.

The story in Bagamoyo is repeated elsewhere in Tanzania. On its western borders, there have been refugees and irregular migrants crossing from Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo for several decades. To the north, the country with which it has its longest border, Kenya, is the other entry source for irregular migrants not just from Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, but increasingly also from Eritrea.

At Holili, one of the nine border posts along the 769 km Tanzanian-Kenyan border, transport also is the major issue for immigration officials.

They have one car but only 1,500 litres of diesel a year to run it. There are no motorbikes either. Border patrols are consequently infrequent.

Like other countries, it's impossible for the Tanzanian authorities to have a clear idea of how many people are transiting through their country irregularly. But they do know it is a major issue that needs urgent address. It is also a phenomenon highlighted by a 2009 IOM study on human smuggling from the Horn of Africa to South Africa, "In Pursuit of the Southern Dream: Victims of Necessity", which estimates that up to 20,000 Ethiopian and Somali male migrants are smuggled each year into South Africa, not including those that don't make it.

The filling up of Tanzanian jails in recent years by apprehended irregular migrants has put significant pressure on the prison authorities who have no extra budget to feed and accommodate them.

Apprehended migrants have to pay a fine of about 100,000 Tanzanian shillings each (US\$80) or spend a year in jail. Those that can pay their fine and ticket home are deported. Those that cannot stay in jail. Even after their sentence is up, prison remains their home as Tanzania doesn't have detention centres for migrants nor the financial resources for a mass deportation programme.

In January 2008, there were 1,289 migrants of 12 different nationalities in Tanzanian jails. By August 2008, the numbers had increased to 1,640



▼ The Tanzanian-Kenyan border post at Holili is one of the quieter crossings points along the 769 km border between the two countries. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0054 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)

irregular migrants from the Horn of Africa alone.

These kinds of numbers led the Tanzanian government to set up a task force in 2007 made up of the Refugee, Immigration and Prison Department, IOM, UNHCR, the ICRC and the Tanzanian Red Cross to tackle the issue. But there is also a clear desire to introduce policies that will strengthen the management and security of Tanzania's borders with its eight neighbours. This recognizes that Tanzania cannot work in isolation if it is to successfully meet its objectives.

▼ The Tanzanian-Kenyan border post at Holili is one of the quieter crossings points along the 769km border between the two. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0050 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)



▼ African governments, not least Tanzania, have high hopes for the African Capacity Building Centre based in Moshi. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0059 (Photo: Jemini Pandya)



▲ A Tanzanian immigration officer among many already benefitting from the training facilities at the African Capacity Building Centre. © IOM 2009 - MTZ0048 (Photo: Sean Burke)

The setting up of the Tanzanian Regional Immigration Training Academy (TRITA) in the northern town of Moshi in the Kilimanjaro region was a crucial step forward and its value to African immigration and border management needs evident from the start to countries across the continent.

As a result, it has now developed into the African Capacity Building Centre (ACBC), a joint effort of TRITA, IOM and its African Member States. The centre has modern facilities that include a documents forensics laboratory, a library with computers and internet facilities and a conference room.

In addition to Tanzanian immigration officials being on-site, there is also a full-time IOM training specialist, Sean Burke, to provide residential courses on core competencies for African migration and border management officials and those in regular contact with migrants.

“Training can encompass the full migration spectrum from policy, labour migration to compliance and security issues. Training is also possible on-site in other countries and isn’t necessarily tied to Moshi,” Burke explains.

A second IOM staff based at the ACBC will soon be available to carry out assessments for governments on their

border and migration management strengths and weaknesses

For Francis Alimasi Kibula, regional immigration officer for the Kilimanjaro region, immigration and border management training such as that on offer at the ACBC is a major factor in solving the irregular migration problem in Tanzania.

While acknowledging that the distances between each post along this northern border are too great for effective patrolling, that infrastructure, including roads, make it difficult to get quickly from one place to another as well as the transport issue so painfully evident at Bagamoyo and Holili, it is the lack of immigration and border training across the board that underpins all other problems in their daily work, he says.

“Our number one priority is training. Border guards need to know more than human smugglers and migrants. We need more training on communication skills so that we get the information we need from people that we approach and on investigation techniques. We also need more specialized training for both immigration officers and border guards because at the moment, training is basic,” he stresses. “But there are not enough funds for such training,” he adds.

Even on issues that don’t at first appear to be training related, Kibula is convinced it is the answer.

Corruption among immigration and border officials across the migration route from the Horn to South Africa had been highlighted by the IOM study. Tanzania is not exempt from the problem. Low salaries are blamed by immigration officers. An immigration assistant has a starting salary of 100,000 shillings (\$US 80) with a person staying in a grade for anywhere between two to five years and possibly longer.

“Corruption is an issue,” acknowledges Kibula. “But with training on customer care, improvements in salaries and with joint patrols with police, immigration, customs and sometimes intelligence officers, it will be easier to prevent,” he concludes confidently.

Expectations are clearly high.

“The migration needs and service demands are so great that the real challenge for the ACBC is to be able to live up to these growing expectations among African governments,” Burke says. “But they are now clearly engaged and strengthening their ability to deal with the constantly changing migration phenomenon. That in itself is a giant step forward.” **M**

# Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal Opt for New Lives Abroad

Chris Lom reports from Damak, Nepal

A stream of bicycles emerges through the early morning mist from Beldangi refugee camp. The bicyclists, mostly young men, pedal the eight kilometers to nearby Damak each morning to find work.

Situated in a flood plain at the foot of the Himalayas in the easternmost corner of Nepal bordering India, Damak has become a minor boom town in the past two years as a global operation to resettle up to 107,000 Bhutanese refugees from seven neighboring refugee camps gears up.

After initial resistance to the resettlement plan, the ethnic Nepali refugees, who were forced to flee their country in the late 1980s and early 1990s, have embraced the programme and are now leaving en masse.

“Over 20,000 people have left since the start of the programme and that has created momentum. We now expect to move about 18,000 people a year over the next three years,” says David Derthick, a veteran of IOM resettlement programmes in East Africa and Head of the IOM Damak Sub-Office.

▲ Refugees cycle from the camps to Damak to find work.  
© IOM 2009 - MNP0058 (Photo: Kari Collins)

For nearly 20 years the refugees, who come from the south of Bhutan and are known as Lhotsampas or People of the South, clung to the belief that one day they would be able to go home.

But after 15 rounds of bilateral negotiations between the Bhutanese and Nepali governments, none have been readmitted to Bhutan, which in the 1980s introduced “Bhutanization” laws designed to unify the country under the majority Druk culture, religion and language.

The policy imposed Druk dress code and customs on the Lhotsampas, prohibited the use of Nepali language in schools and effectively disenfranchised many of them, depriving them of their citizenship and civil rights.

When the Lhotsampas organized mass demonstrations against the policy in 1990, violent clashes with the Bhutanese police and army ensued, followed by a wave of arrests and expulsions.

“People are often not very forthcoming when we ask them to explain exactly what happened to them and why they can’t go back, but the United States decision to offer 60,000 of them resettlement as a group was based on the fact that they have a well-founded fear of persecution in Bhutan,” says IOM’s Shannon Smith, who manages the U.S. government’s Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) for refugee resettlement in Damak.

She says that the U.S. has accepted 99 per cent of Lhotsampa applicants, taking 17,609 or over 85 per cent of the 20,000 refugees who had left the camps by mid-July 2009. The majority resettled in Texas, New York, Georgia, Arizona, Pennsylvania and California.

Other countries offering resettlement to the Lhotsampas included Australia, which by mid-July had taken 855, Canada, 663, Norway 299, New Zealand 294, Denmark 172 and the Netherlands 126.

Of the over 90,000 refugees still in the camps, some 78,000 have now expressed an interest in resettlement, marking a remarkable change of heart in the refugee population and leadership, which once viewed third-country resettlement with suspicion and hostility.



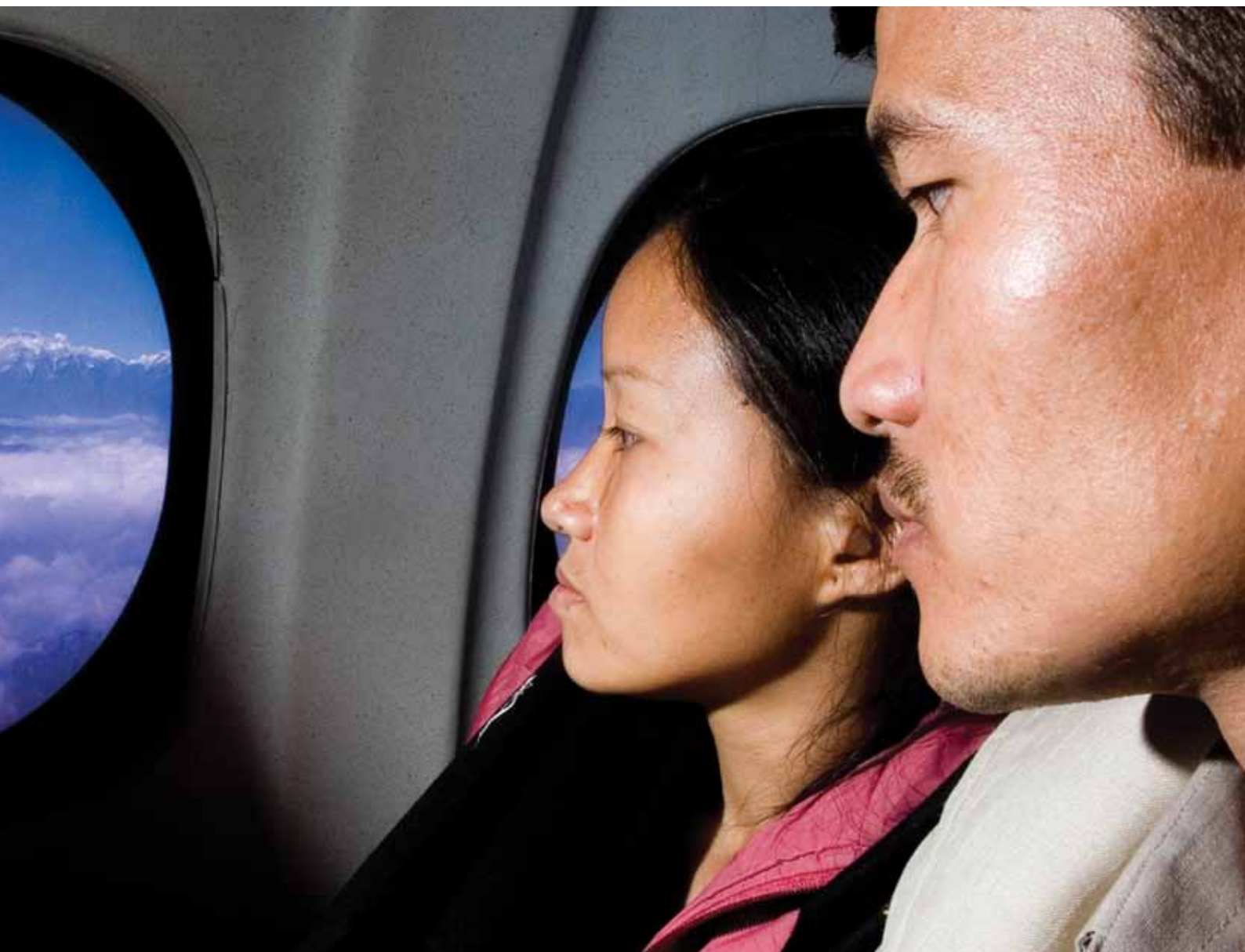
► An IOM OPE staffer conducts preliminary interviews before the refugees meet with US immigration officers. © IOM 2009 - MNP0099 (Photo: Kari Collins)



► An IOM radiologist checks refugee chest X-rays for TB at Damak’s Life Line Hospital. © IOM 2009 - MNP0119 (Photo: Kari Collins)



► Resettlement is rarely an easy choice, particularly for the elderly. © IOM 2009 - MNP0073 (Photo: Kari Collins)



▲ Refugees leaving Damak catch a glimpse of Mt. Everest on the flight to Kathmandu. © IOM 2009 - MNP0140 (Photo: Kari Collins)

In late 2007 and early 2008 refugees approaching UNHCR to sign initial “Declarations of Interest” in resettlement faced threats and intimidation. Two IOM buses picking up refugees in the camp were stoned and a grenade was thrown into the IOM compound in Damak.

“When we sent buses to pick people up for interviews or medicals, they didn’t like to be seen getting onto them. They preferred to bicycle into town and would then sneak back into the camps after dark,” says IOM Operations Coordinator Gabriel Okutoi.

IOM’s Damak processing centre and the private Life Line hospital used for the pre-departure medical screening required by most resettlement countries, remained effectively out of reach for many refugees afraid of retaliation by anti-resettlement groups.

But following Nepali government action, the establishment of Nepali Armed Police Force (APF) posts in each of the camps and the deployment of APF escorts for IOM buses traveling to and from the camps and to local airports, organized opposition to the resettlement programme began to evaporate.

While the majority of the Lhotsampas now seem likely to apply for resettlement and the U.S. and other resettlement countries seem likely to take them, many of the refugees still view trading the open and well-run Nepali refugee camps for new lives abroad with some trepidation.

Raju, who has spent most of his life in Sanischare camp, where the Nepali government, UNHCR, the UN World

Food Programme, the Lutheran World Federation, Caritas and the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) provide protection, food, basic education and health services, will shortly join family members in Texas with his wife and baby.

“My English is poor and it may not be easy to find a job, because of the economy. But I must do this for the future of my family, for my kid,” he says.

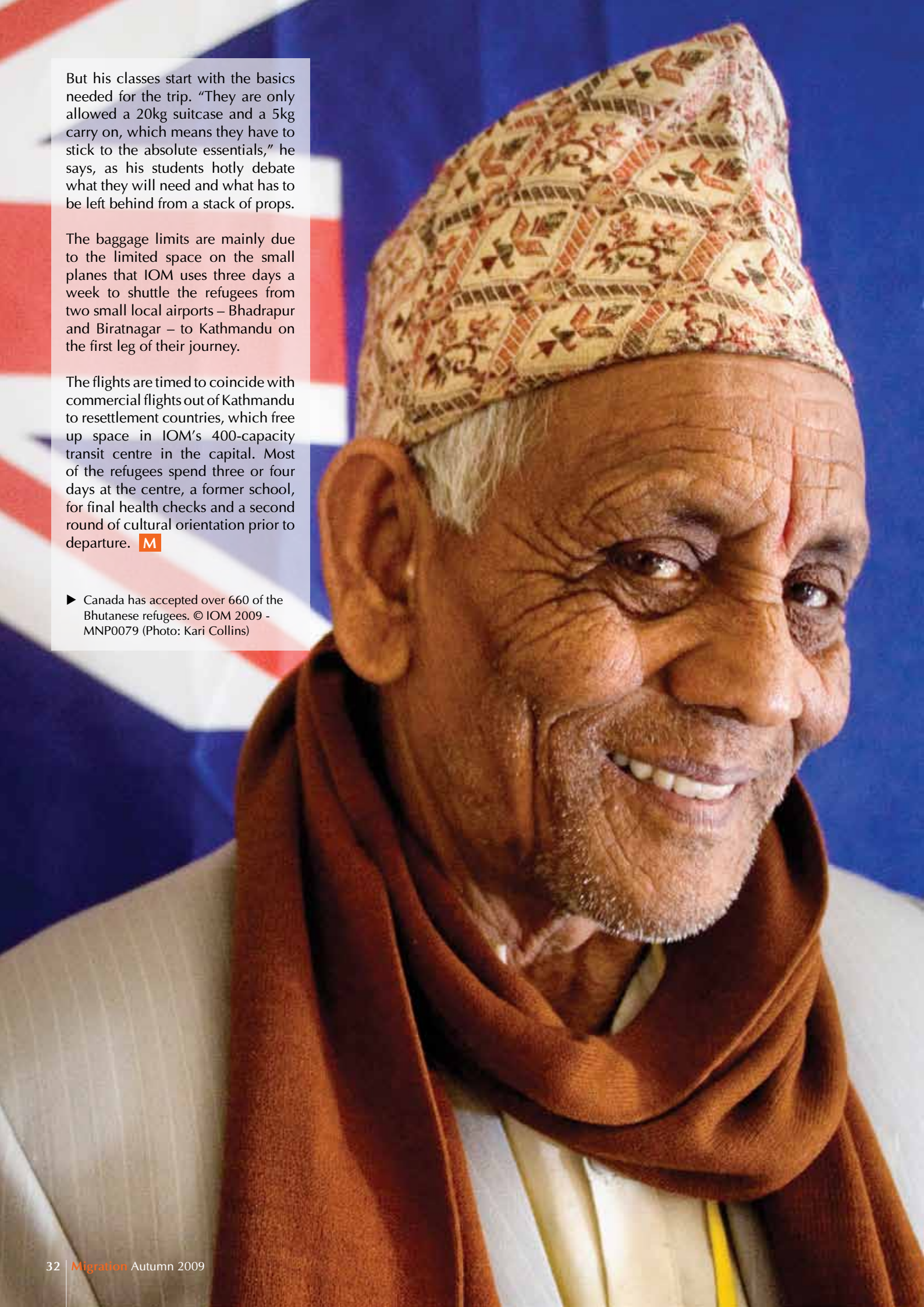
IOM cultural orientation trainer Yogesh Gewali, who teaches a three-day course in Sanischare and other camps to prepare the refugees for their new lives, says that jobs, housing, education, social services, health care and integration are all key issues that his students want to discuss.

But his classes start with the basics needed for the trip. “They are only allowed a 20kg suitcase and a 5kg carry on, which means they have to stick to the absolute essentials,” he says, as his students hotly debate what they will need and what has to be left behind from a stack of props.

The baggage limits are mainly due to the limited space on the small planes that IOM uses three days a week to shuttle the refugees from two small local airports – Bhadrapur and Biratnagar – to Kathmandu on the first leg of their journey.

The flights are timed to coincide with commercial flights out of Kathmandu to resettlement countries, which free up space in IOM’s 400-capacity transit centre in the capital. Most of the refugees spend three or four days at the centre, a former school, for final health checks and a second round of cultural orientation prior to departure. **M**

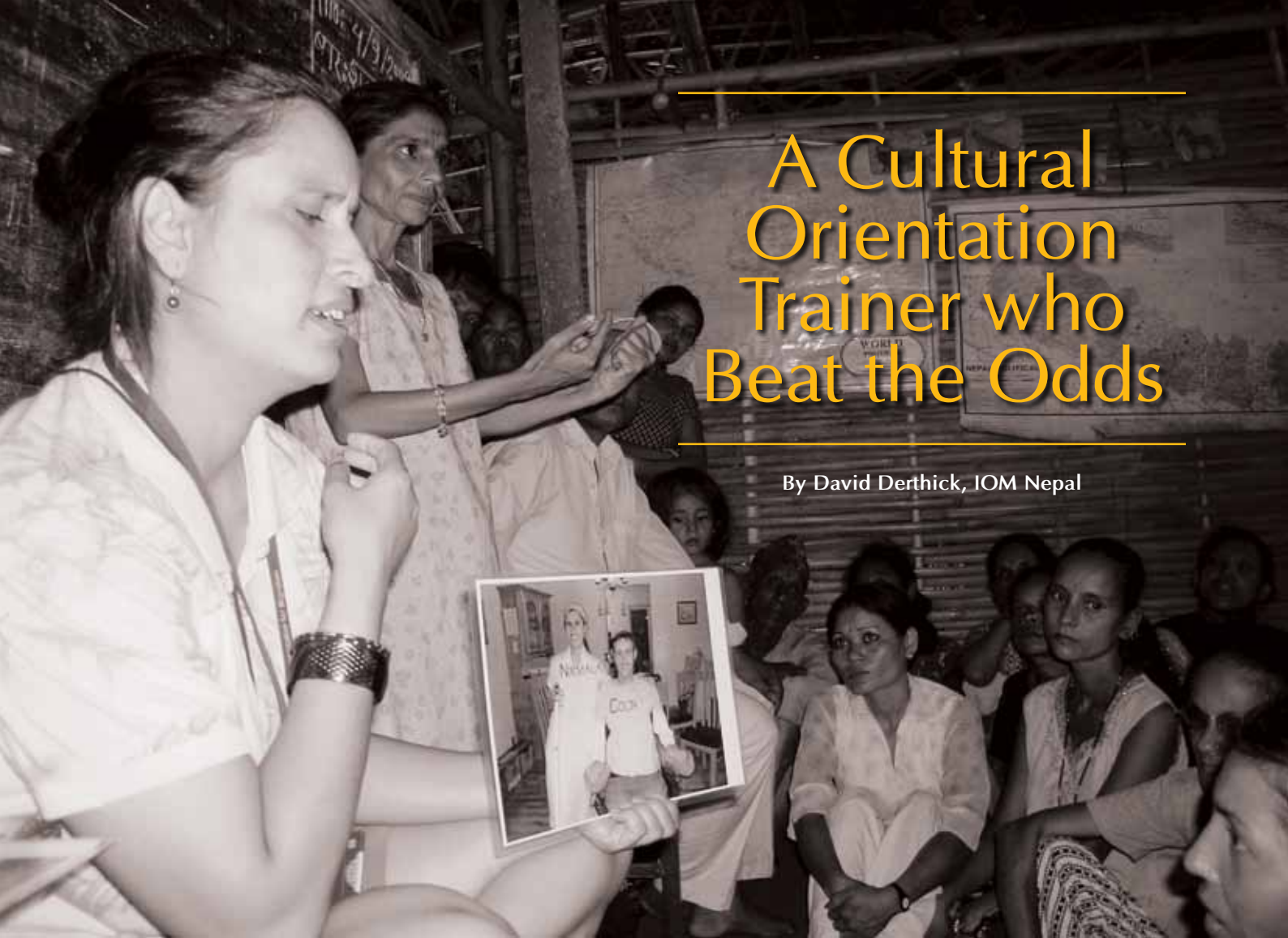
► Canada has accepted over 660 of the Bhutanese refugees. © IOM 2009 - MNP0079 (Photo: Kari Collins)





# A Cultural Orientation Trainer who Beat the Odds

By David Derthick, IOM Nepal



**N**irmala Gyawali, a confident, articulate 26-year-old Nepali woman, teaches Bhutanese refugees accepted for resettlement about life in the USA. She tells them about her experiences studying at Colorado State University and tries to answer their questions about jobs, schools, housing, their legal rights and other concerns.

At the end of each of her three-day courses, her students leave with not just a certificate, but also with a greater sense of self-confidence.

Nirmala, who has been blind from birth, gives them a message of hope as they prepare for life in a new country. "If a person is given an opportunity, and works hard, nothing is impossible," she says.

Born in the western Nepali village of Charpala – with no electricity and a two-day walk from the nearest road – Nirmala shared her disability with elder sister Sita, brother Balaram and father Tikaram, who lost his vision after her birth.

The family suffered social isolation and ridicule and before he died, Nirmala's father asked his brother-in-law, who was a university student in Kathmandu, to take care of his children.

In Kathmandu, the uncle, with help from Nepal's Special Education Council, managed to get the children admitted to the only school in the country dedicated to the instruction of the visually impaired.

At the same time, Nirmala met Olga Murray, founder of the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF), whom she describes as "my surrogate mother."

With help from her sister Sita and supported by the NYOF, Nirmala learned braille in record time and was "mainstreamed" into the Nepali school system. She later won a Fulbright undergraduate scholarship at Colorado State University, where she earned a degree in sociology.

Nirmala is blunt about her debt to Murray and the NYOF. "Without them, I would be a beggar on the streets of

Kathmandu or hidden away within the four walls of my home back in Charpala," she says.

The journey through high school and university as the only visually impaired student was tough, but was never about her own self-confidence or capacity. It was mainly about having to convince others that she could be as productive and self-reliant as her fellow students, she says.

Nirmala's achievements were not just confined to the classroom. As a 21-year-old, she became the first athlete from Nepal to compete in the Para-Olympics – in Athens in 2004.

She also features in a Nepali school textbook designed to encourage acceptance of people with disabilities as "Nirmala: The Wonder Kid" and has won several honors and awards.

In March 2008 Nirmala applied for a job with IOM as a Cultural Orientation Trainer for Bhutanese refugees accepted for resettlement in the USA. Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) Manager Shannon Smith, who interviewed her, hired her on the spot. **M**

# The Somali Integration Conundrum

By Constance M. Sandal

*When many people hear the word "Somali", they think of pirates in small vessels attacking ships off the coast of Somalia. In Norway, people tend to relate Somalis to high unemployment, crime and low levels of integration. The difference is striking.*

For the second year in a row, Somalia topped the list of failed states compiled by *Foreign Policy* and the Fund for Peace.

Somalia has been through its share of hardship, including a civil war that tore the country apart in the 1990s and resulted in the independence of Somaliland.

The war left the country destroyed and with no functioning central government. Traditional law dominates in some areas, while warlords are prominent in other regions. There is little or no policing, no universities and no schools, leaving people to rely on their networks of family and friends. As a result, many Somalis received little or no education.

Fleeing for their lives, many Somalis sought refuge in the area where their clan originated; hundreds of thousands of others fled to neighbouring countries

► The Lamungus, a family of Somali-Bantu refugees recently resettled from Kenya to the USA, discover downtown Phoenix. (Photo: Christophe Calais, 2003)



or to more distant places, including Europe and the United States.

Somalis accounted for 14.5 per cent of the 48,217 refugees admitted to the United States in 2007. Many of the Somalis in the U.S. have settled in the Minneapolis-St Paul area, which has developed its own Somali community, where residents speak, trade and go about life the Somali way.

Ibrahim Mohamed has lived in the U.S. for several years. "Integration to me is a double-edged sword; many of us who are culturally assimilated have become successful and can identify with the host society. But there is a toxic culture amongst the host society that we'd like to avoid. But once one is assimilated, it is easy for one to fall into the traps that we'd like our children to avoid," he says.

Researcher Cindy Horst has taken an in-depth look at the Somali community in Minnesota, the largest Somali community in the United States with 11,164 Somali residents, most of whom arrived during the 1990s.

"The number of Somalis residing in the United States is only an approximate number due to the number of categories Somalis are registered under," explains Horst.

"They settled in different parts of the U.S. with prominent Somali populations, such as Minneapolis-St Paul, Columbus and San Diego. Official U. S. Census estimates are low due to under-reporting to the State. But actual numbers are believed to range from 11,000 to over 40,000," adds Horst.

### Minnesota, an integration ideal for Norway

Horst says that in Minnesota she found a Somali population working in a variety of occupations and focused on sending remittances to relatives in Somalia.

Horst's research revealed that many Somalis work long hours, and have two, even three jobs, to send money back to Somalia. The amounts vary from US\$100 to US\$1,000 a month, not necessarily correlating with the income of the sender.

"In the Minneapolis-St Paul area Somalis are integrated and a high percentage is employed. Some work in meat plants, in

factories, as security guards, doctors and janitors, others as teachers, professors, social workers and taxi drivers. Some speak English well, while others struggle and have to accept jobs which do not require English language skills and education. Some are single mothers living on social welfare," explains Horst.

The Somali populations in both the U.S. and Norway have many things in common, with remittances and reliance on clan or group figuring prominently.

But where their U.S. counterparts are well integrated and employed, the Somali population in Norway, a Scandinavian welfare country known for its oil riches and salmon, only 28 per cent of the 16,000 Somali residents are currently employed. The rest are living on state sponsored social welfare programmes and have been branded by some media and politicians as a group that is "hard to integrate".

According to researcher Katherine Fangen, this makes integration more strenuous, giving the Somali population an unwarranted bad reputation.

"Many Norwegian-Somalis have little or no education and face challenges when entering the education system. Norwegian children receive help with homework from parents, but Somali-Norwegian parents often lack the education and knowledge to give guidance," says Fangen. "Somalis that pursue a degree face challenges and may experience sending out hundreds of applications and getting no call backs."

Somali interest groups have pointed to the U.S. and especially to the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, for the answers to what has become the integration conundrum. Just last year, Somalis from the U.S. flew to Norway to take part in research and to give their input on the staggering differences in integration and employment.

American Somalis who visited Norway pointed to the similarities between Norway and Minnesota when comparing GDP, population and living standards. But the striking differences in integration were apparent and the visitors stated that the multi ethnic culture of the U.S. could be a cause. Others claimed that Somali men could be hesitant to accept low paying and low status jobs that

were commonly associated with minorities in Somalia; jobs that Somali men in Somalia would under no circumstances accept.

### Explanations of the integration riddle?

Possible answers to this conundrum have been many. Some researchers have linked the discrepancies to the difference in history and how Norway has been a highly homogenous country, whilst the United States has been a multicultural melting pot. But others have questioned this theory saying that prior to the immigration increase of recent years, Norway has in fact had immigration flows, although not to the extent of the U.S.

The reasons for the dissimilar levels of integration may lie with the differing immigration policies and state benefits available, or with the composition of the Somali population. In Norway, the Somali population consists of refugees that fled a civil war.

Over half of the Norwegian Somali population has only lived in Norway for five years and is 20 years old and younger. According to official census numbers, 77 per cent of Somali Norwegians entered the country as refugees.

Somalis in the U.S. are multifaceted and their reasons for living in the U.S. are different. Some fled due to war, others went there as researchers, students and workers.

There are additional striking differences, one being how the Somalis in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area have created their own community. In Norway, in and around the capitol Oslo, there are similar Somali communities although smaller, but these are regarded by some as a result of the country's failed integration policies.

The numbers of Norwegian Somalis are soaring with an annual increase of several thousand. The future is not, however, necessarily gloomy for the Somalis of Norway, with over half of the Norwegian Somali population having lived there for less than 10 years; an improvement in integration may be on the horizon. **M**

*Constanse M. Sandal is the author of a thesis on integration of Somalis in Norway and the United States.*

As Sri Lanka's 26-year conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or Tamil Tigers neared its bloody finale on the beaches of Mullaitivu in late April and early May 2009, a tide of displaced people flooded from the rebel-held area into government-controlled Vavuniya district, triggering a potential humanitarian crisis.

"In the last two weeks of April an estimated 100,000 displaced people arrived in Vavuniya. The speed and sheer numbers took everyone in the international community by surprise. There were just far more people than anyone expected. We needed more shelter, more sanitation, more food, more health care – everything," said IOM Sri Lanka Emergency Coordinator Giovanni Cassani.

Vavuniya had already been identified as the site of a major camp for internally displaced people (IDPs) from the Vanni – the northern part of Sri Lanka previously controlled by the LTTE. Preparations had included a plan to clear up to 2,000 acres of jungle southwest of Vavuniya town in an area known as Menik Farms.

But the massive influx of people forced the government, international agencies and NGOs into a race to expand the

area earmarked for the IDPs, clear more jungle, build roads, dig drainage ditches and latrines, as well as providing emergency shelter, food and water for the new arrivals. The government also embarked on an ambitious plan to install electricity on the site to provide lighting.

IOM Vavuniya Head of Office Michele Cecere witnessed the first of the arrivals at the the Omanthai government checkpoint north of Vavuniya town, where the IDPs were screened by the security forces before they were allowed to enter the camp.

"In a single weekend we distributed 20,000 bottles of drinking water to people waiting to be screened. Far more was needed, so we then installed fourteen 1,000-litre water tanks at the site and worked with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and a local NGO to set up a field kitchen to feed people," he said.

As the IDPs streamed into Vavuniya, Cecere's 30 staff and over 100 locally hired labourers were also working against the clock to erect over 2,000 emergency shelters from plastic sheet stretched over wooden frames and 1,500 tents donated by partner agencies at the Menik Farms site. Newly arrived

IDPs flocked to take possession of the shelters and IOM subsequently delivered another 4,600 tents.

Chris Hoffman, an IOM emergency response specialist drafted into Vavuniya from IOM Nepal to design and build ten primary health care centres (PHCC) in the camp, and a veteran of African emergencies, was astonished at the speed with which it took shape.

"The military coordination and the amount of heavy equipment meant that as the bulldozers were clearing the jungle, we were just a few hundred yards behind, directing the graders levelling our (PHCC) sites and pegging out the ground hours before starting construction," he said.

The health centres, jointly funded by USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), were commissioned in response to a request from the Ministry of Health to reduce pressure on a handful of over-stretched government referral clinics in the camp.

Staffed by government doctors, nurses and midwives, their objective was to provide diagnosis, emergency care, health education and referrals for the

# Sri Lanka's 26-Year Conflict Ends, Triggers Massive Displacement to Camps

Chris Lom reports from Vavuniya, Sri Lanka

▼ In late April and early May IOM and partner agencies raced to provide shelter for the IDPs. © IOM 2009 - MLK0196

▼ © IOM 2009 - MLK0235





▲ Water was tankered into the camp until pipes could be connected to cisterns. © IOM 2009 - MLK0216 (Photo: Chris Lom)



▲ © IOM 2009 - MLK0191

IDPs, many of whom were sick, injured and malnourished after multiple displacements and years of poor living conditions during the war, according to IOM Medical Coordinator Dr Sajith Gunaratne.

“IOM agreed to build, equip, supply, support and monitor the centres over six months. Each centre provides primary health care for 10,000 IDPs, offering curative and preventive services. They have also been used for a DFID-funded UNICEF vaccination campaign,” says Dr Gunaratne.

But by August the number of IDPs in Menik Farms had swelled to some 226,000 people in 28,500 shelters, making the camp perhaps the largest IDP site in the world. Another 34,000 people were sheltering in nearby camps located in schools and other public buildings in and around Vavuniya town.

The vast numbers, and the uncertain duration of their stay in the camps, given the massive humanitarian de-mining operation needed before it is

safe for many of them to return home, mean that provision of adequate services remains a huge challenge for the government, the military and aid agencies working on the site.

Efforts to provide enough shelter, clean water, healthcare and sanitation, which to date includes over 1,000 emergency and trench toilets constructed by IOM, still fall far short of what is needed, particularly with the onset of monsoon rains, according to camp management experts.

In July Sri Lanka’s Disaster Management Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe told the country’s parliament that conditions on the site “can and must be improved” and that the government and its local and international partners were working hard to achieve this.

The government also announced plans in July to move over 60 per cent of the 280,000 IDPs in the 30 camps in the Vanni back to their original homes by the end of the year, under its so called “180-day resettlement programme”.

At the time of writing, details and a schedule for the program have yet to be announced, but are thought to be contingent on both de-mining and the weather. Conditions in the hastily erected camps are expected to deteriorate sharply after September with the onset of heavy monsoon rains.

Sri Lanka has been an IOM member state since 1990 and IOM has had a major presence in the country, including six sub-offices in the north and east, since the December 2004 tsunami. In addition to emergency response and reconstruction projects, IOM’s activities in Sri Lanka include technical cooperation in migration management, capacity building, counter trafficking, and return and reintegration.

IOM relief operations for IDPs in the Vanni region have received funding from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Australia, Japan, Sweden and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). **M**

▼ Many of the incoming IDPs were sick and malnourished after years on the move. © IOM 2009 - MLK0219 (Photo: Chris Lom)

▼ Sanitation represented a huge challenge on the newly cleared jungle site. © IOM 2009 - MLK0230 (Photo: Chris Lom)





# Displaced Timorese Families Return Home

By Ryan Gentile, IOM Timor-Leste

▲ Life in Metinaro was basic, but kept the IDPs safe from communal violence. © IOM 2009 - MTP0138 (Photo: Jimmy Campos)

The road between Metinaro and Dili offers some of the most breathtaking views in Timor-Leste. At various points it drops off into white sand beaches and turquoise waters. Above it are the reddish-brown hills which capture the harsh reality of the dry season. In the rainy season, the hills are a deep green, covered in lush vegetation.

Metinaro, which straddles the main road 31km east of Dili, is the last and largest of 65 makeshift displacement camps that sprang up in 2006, when a breakdown of law and order, civil unrest and mass violence forced some 150,000 people to flee their homes.

Three years later, in June 2009, the Timor's Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS), assisted by IOM, began to help the first of Metinaro camp residents to return home, symbolizing the beginning of the end of the displacement crisis.

Antonia Freitas, a mother of six, spoke about the night she left her home on 30

▼ IOM helped to establish Metinaro camp in 2006 and supported it through the next three years. © IOM 2009 - MTP0144 (Photo: Jimmy Campos)



June 2006. She and her younger children found safety in a church outside Dili and waited for her other children to join them. From there they traveled to the safety of Metinaro, located close to one of Timor's main military compounds.

While life was hard in Metinaro, the family felt safe and their basic needs were provided for by the government, IOM and NGOs. But like most of the internally displaced people (IDPs) in the camp, all the family really wanted was to go home.

But going home to hostile neighbours, burnt houses and occupied land was not a simple process. The government's Hamutuk Hari'i Futuru National Recovery Strategy (literally "Building the Future Together") was set up to bring about the reconciliation needed to allow families to return.

As part of the strategy, IOM worked with UNDP-backed MSS dialogue teams to consult with each family in Metinaro to identify their concerns, with a view to facilitating dialogue between them and their former communities.

Differing concerns and different situations in each village meant that this process of consultation and mediation was extremely delicate and time-consuming. Not all of the communities were keen to accept the returning IDPs and ongoing dialogue will be essential to ensure a smooth transition. Some families will never be able to return and will need alternative resettlement solutions.

Antonia, who has returned to her community of Bedois from Metinaro, described the difficulty of coming face to face every day with the people who destroyed her home. "It's good to forgive," she said, smiling sadly.

But her family still faces difficulties with their neighbours over access to water. Her younger children were harassed when they went to fetch water from the communal well and now she won't let them go. "It's better for me to feel pain than my children," she says.

Schooling is no better. A teacher herself, Antonia says that she and a friend have started a school to serve the 165 children from Metinaro who were not accepted back into the community's over-crowded schools.

The government, IOM and other agencies are still monitoring and providing assistance to over nine hundred families from Metinaro in areas of Dili with large numbers of returnees.

An IOM project funded by the European Community Stability Instrument (ECSI) is also trying to ease the strain imposed on communities by the sudden influx of families by working with community leaders to improve infrastructure, including access to water and sanitation, education and transportation.

"It's hard to forget about the past, but we don't want to run anymore," says Antonia, with tears in her eyes. "Everything will be better if our leaders cooperate with each other. Otherwise, things will get worse." **M**

Smiling as he shows me around his bustling, handmade furniture factory, Eduardo Belo Soares was known in his former life as *Lahakfodak Gattot* or “the one who is not afraid of Gattot” - the then feared chief of military intelligence in Indonesian East Timor.

The former guerrilla fighter was a member of the Falintil armed resistance movement that fought the Indonesian army of occupation from the tiny nation’s mountainous interior from 1975 to 1999. Today, against the odds, he is a successful local entrepreneur in the capital Dili.

For Soares, like many of the 2,000 former guerrillas who were demobilized following the dissolution of Falintil and the creation of the Timor-Leste Defence Force (FDTL) in 2001, the transition from life as a resistance fighter to life as a civilian in an independent Timor-Leste was not an easy one.

IOM’s Falintil Reinsertion Assistance Project (FRAP), funded by USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the World Bank, created the bridge between life in the mountains and life in a Timor-Leste of impoverished villages and towns largely destroyed by retreating Indonesian-backed militias.

The FRAP provided US\$100 a month for the first five months after demobilization to help the former guerrillas and their families meet basic needs. It then provided up to US\$550 worth of material support for agriculture, fishing or setting up a small business.

Many of the demobilized Falintil opted to return to their villages and become farmers, using their cash from the FRAP to buy livestock, tools and seeds. But Soares, a civil engineer by training, decided to start a small furniture business and bought a lathe.

In the early days, clients and work were hard to come by. Dili was in ruins, virtually everything was imported from Australia or Indonesia, and local producers could not cope with the demands of wholesale reconstruction, he says.

But Soares had several advantages. His handmade furniture was cheaper, the quality higher and he could construct it much faster than his primarily-Australian competition.

His breakthrough came when the Bishop of Baucau, Timor-Leste’s second city, commissioned him to build a new stair rail for his house.

He was paid US\$2,000 for the job and with the money bought hand tools to increase his production capacity. Shortly afterwards, he was awarded a contract to assist in the reconstruction of government buildings and his business started to flourish.

But in April 2006 disaster struck. The civil unrest which swept across Timor-Leste, forcing most of the population of Dili into displacement camps around the city, closed him down. His factory was looted and largely destroyed and he was unable to reopen it for nearly two years.

In 2008 Soares reopened the business and is now one of Dili’s best known and respected furniture makers, producing high quality, handmade furniture and employing over 400 workers.

He also owns several other businesses, including a residential and commercial security company. **M**



▲ Soares’ business has created over 400 jobs for Timorese craftsmen. © IOM 2009 - MTP0182 (Photo: Bradley Mellicker)

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▲ The factory caters to both local and foreign customers. © IOM 2009 - MTP0183 (Photo: Bradley Mellicker)

# Former Resistance Fighter Turns Successful Entrepreneur

By Bradley Mellicker, IOM Timor-Leste

▶ Eduardo Belo Soares shows off his handmade furniture products. © IOM 2009 - MTP0181 (Photo: Bradley Mellicker)

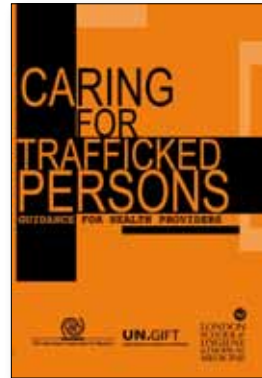




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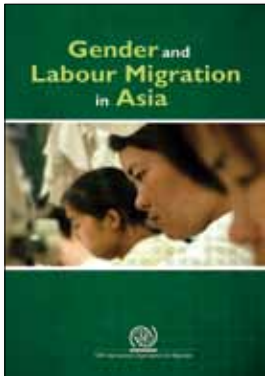
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