

# IOM Sri Lanka

## Newsletter



IOM International Organization for Migration

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### A National Centre for Migration Statistics opens in Colombo

The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) in Sri Lanka with technical assistance from IOM set up a National Centre for Migration Statistics (NCMS) in Colombo recently. The centre, which is housed at the department, serves as a central body where statistical data related to migration will be collected from various stakeholders both national and international. The data will be analyzed and findings made available for stakeholder agencies, policy-makers, academics and other interested groups through the department website and through a new DCS-IOM annual report on migration.



The recently opened National Centre for Migration Statistics



Invitees at the opening of the NCMS

“The department expects the centre to collect data in all aspects of labour migration, tourism, immigration enforcement, return and reintegration, brain drain and brain gain”, says Ms. S. Vidyaratne, Director General of the DCS.

The need for such a centre with credible and comprehensive migration data and statistics arises at a time when there is growing interest

in the different forms of movement of people - regular and irregular, voluntary and forced and the impact of this movement on social, economic and political sectors of all countries.

“International cooperation on migration-related issues has in-

creased and so has the need for timely and comparable migration data” explains Ms. Vidyaratne.

IOM also provided furniture and IT equipment and renovated the building which houses the unit. The centre which started operations in January 2008, is funded by the European Commission and the Government of Australia.

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# U.S. teams with IOM and the Sri Lankan Government to help combat human trafficking

Two new programmes to combat human trafficking funded by the United States and implemented by IOM were launched in October 2007. The programmes help law enforcement officials to identify instances of trafficking in persons, increase the rate of prosecution of those responsible for the practice in Sri Lanka and provide reintegration assistance to trafficking victims.

The \$500,000 initiative, co-funded by the U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), will also improve methods of data collection and dissemination to track trafficking cases, and enhance coordination among government and nongovernmental organizations.

“Before Sri Lanka can make significant progress in identifying those responsible and hold them accountable for trafficking practices, it must have a clearer understanding of how and where these practices are taking place,” U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake said at the launch. “A better trained network of law enforcement professionals can establish legal grounds under which in-



U.S. Ambassador Robert Blake (second right) announces a new \$500,000 U.S. initiative to combat human trafficking in Sri Lanka in partnership with IOM. Joining the ambassador at the briefing was USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn (left), IOM Chief of Mission Mohammed Abdiker (second left), and Sri Lanka Bureau of Protection of Women and Children A.R. Waidyalankara (right). Photo: USAID/Zack Taylor

stigators of trafficking can be identified and prosecuted under the law. This programme promises to help in that effort.”

The programmes assist the Government to develop a national policy to combat trafficking in Sri Lanka and enhance collaboration and coordination among government agencies and NGOs to share experiences.

“This global phenomenon has to be curbed before it reaches epidemic pro-

portions, hence there is a need for all stakeholders, government authorities and organizations working on this issue to come together to combat human trafficking and reap the benefits of migration for socioeconomic development of the country,” Mr. Mohamed Abdiker, IOM’s Chief of Mission told the gathering.

Human trafficking is the third largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world, and is emerging as one of the most urgent human security issues of today. Trafficking in persons includes forced domestic labour, prostitution, or involuntary marriage, and even illegal organ theft. Nearly all countries face the problem of human trafficking in some way or another.

“We consider trafficking in persons, especially persons being sent abroad, sometimes with forged documents, to be a very serious issue,” said Mr. A.R. Waidyalankara, Director of Sri Lanka’s Bureau for Protection of Women and Children. “This programme will assist us in filling the gaps in knowledge to help us more vigorously identify and prosecute those perpetrators of human trafficking.”

## A more concerted effort needed to curb trafficking effectively

The Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment in collaboration with IOM hosted a consultation in Colombo, bringing together stakeholders to share information and collaborate more closely on interventions related to human trafficking. The consultation resulted in the formation of a wider working group on counter-trafficking among key government agencies, international organizations and NGOs, which will meet on a regular basis to discuss, and act on trafficking related issues.

Key government agencies participating at the consultation included, the Department of Immigration and Emigration, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, the Women’s and Children’s Bureau of the Police and the National Human Rights Commission. The NGO and IO sectors were represented by organizations such as the International Labour Organization and Migrant Services Centre.

Minister of Child Development and Women’s Empowerment, Honourable Ms Sumedha Jayasena addressing the gathering at the consultation said, “I am happy that my Ministry is initiating a discussion on human trafficking – an issue we must all pay attention to. I hope this discussion will lead to the formulation of policies to combat human trafficking”.

# Post reintegration support to returnees

IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) unit signed an agreement with the Nucleus Entrepreneurs Foundation (NEF) to further support returnees, who return to Sri Lanka under the "Voluntary assisted return and sustainable reintegration" programme, to improve their enterprises, entrepreneurial skills and develop business linkages. The Nucleus approach is an effective tool promoting micro, small and medium entrepreneurs to improve their enterprises through the formation of business cells. These cells participate in activities which are aimed at promoting joint interests. Since signing of the agreement in October, IOM and NEF have identified and supported over 50 returnees who have either established enterprises or are engaged in employment, to upgrade

their businesses and improve their careers.

NEF provides counseling services to returnees on entrepreneurial and



A training in progress

professional development, enhance market opportunities for returnees through the "nucleus" network and source and facilitate access to demanded products and services to

returnees individually or through the nucleus groups. NEF also organizes workshops and engages returnees in business development programmes. The returnees also benefit from the opportunities available to the network in various sectors. When required, NEF also provides extended services such as business links, further skills development in business management to the returnees.

In addition, during the last quarter the AVR unit has also provided nearly 80 returnees with airport assistance, 57 with reintegration assistance and organized two business development training programmes in partnership with Competency based Economies through Formation of Enterprises Sri Lanka.

## GIVING BACK LIFE

*Thurairajah Thesumani\**, a teacher from Maskeliya in Central Sri Lanka migrated to Europe in search of greener pastures. Little did he know that the spurious agents through whom he travelled were to leave him stranded in Belarus. Months later, dreams of living a better life all shattered, Thurairajah returned to Sri Lanka under IOM's "Enhanced capacity building in migration management to support effective return and sustainable reintegration of returnees to Sri Lanka" programme.

Returning home with just the clothes on his back he was in for more bad news. He could no longer go back to his job.

IOM, under the same programme then supported him to open a communication centre which he now runs together with a retail outlet sell-

ing fancy items and baby goods. "When I first started the business the income was good but after sometime I faced stiff competition from mobile phone companies in the area" says Thurairajah.

IOM also provided him with an opportunity to meet the NEF counselors and discuss about his future business plans and new skills he would like to acquire. Thurairajah then mentioned about his interest in learning more about the functioning and maintenance of photocopier machines which would come in handy in running his communication centre.

The one day enterprise awareness workshop conducted by NEF for AVR returnees paved a platform for him to exchange ideas with other returnees and compare experiences. NEF also arranged for a consultant specializ-

ing in the maintenance of photocopier machines to work with Thurairajah, showing him how to dismantle and assemble the machine as well as how to service it himself. "I learnt a lot about the technical functioning of the machine. It will be useful for me because I can now service the machine myself without having to pay an additional cost for the service technician", says Thurairajah.

Full of dreams again, this time he is eager to follow courses on human resource development, human rights and peace building. "I can then find employment in a NGO in the area to supplement my income. Of course, I will still continue to run this business with my wife's support even if I get such an employment opportunity" says Thurairajah with smiles of hope spreading across his face.

\* (Real names not used)

## IOM upgrades facilities at St. Michael's College, Batticaloa

IOM provided improved educational and extra-curricular facilities to St. Micheal's College in Batticaloa, one of the oldest and reputed schools in the district with a student population of over 3,000 and 100 teachers.

IOM with funding from the European Commission provided furniture, musical instruments for the school's western band, a photocopier and a duplication machine. To boost student reading, IOM also assisted in setting up a library in the school.

These improved facilities will not



only enable the school to increase the annual intake of students to grade one but will also increase the success rate of students who sit for the GCE Ordinary and Advanced Level examinations.

At a ceremony organized by the school development society of St. Michael's College, IOM handed over the equipment to the school authorities and to the Zonal Office of the Department of Education. The project was funded under IOM's Voluntary Assisted Return and Sustainable Reintegration programme.

## IOM and USAID relocate tsunami- affected to Bandaragama

Nearly three years after the devastating tsunami, there was a glimmer of renewed hope in Sisilwatte, Bandaragama, in the Kalutara district, as 44 families who survived the catastrophe moved into their new transitional shelters.

IOM with funding from USAID provided transitional shelters, permanent toilets and access to a water source on plots of land these families bought through a government grant. The shelter site was handed over to the residents by the Minis-

ter of Disaster Management and Human Rights, Honourable Mr. Mahinda Samarasinghe and IOM's Chief of Mission Mr Mohammed Abdi Ker.

Under this project, IOM has supported over 40 relocations and completed over 500 shelters during the last quarter. The "relocation package" includes a transitional shelter, a permanent toilet, access to a wa-

ter source and where possible basic internal electrical wiring. In addition to relocations, IOM's care and maintenance activities also include upgrading of shelters and other infrastructure, providing water and sanitation, waste management and protection facilities, training on personal safety, conducting workshops for capacity-building of these shelter residents and decommissioning of sites.



A section of the shelter site

Hon Minister Samarasinghe and Mohammed Abdi Ker opening the shelter site



### FINALLY A HOME FOR THE PIERIS FAMILY

Ratnasiri Pieris, a carpenter, is one of the shelter residents of Sisilwatte who struggled to survive with neither a home nor a proper income during the last three years. "Since the tsunami we have been moving from one emergency shelter to another, starting with a school nearby", says Ratnasiri Pieris who lived with his family in Moratuwa prior to the tsunami. "We are indeed thankful to IOM and USAID for providing us with this shelter – which is more solid and secure. Until now we lived in shelters built out of wooden planks with inadequate space. It is inside this that the whole family, my wife and I, my grandchildren and sometimes my daughters when they visited us with their families, cooked and slept", he adds.

Pieris explains of the numerous problems they faced while living in these emergency shelters, "there were no proper sanitation facilities, the whole place flooded when it rained and there were many instances where we found harmful reptiles inside our tiny abode". They also found the crowded environment at these shelter sites not conducive to relax or to bring up young children.

His story is tragic, just like the rest. Yet, a smile of hope breaks out as he looks at the new transitional shelter built on his own land. "We now have something to call our own and above all a place where we can live peacefully", Pieris concludes.

## IOM creating a better learning environment for preschoolers in Earlalai East, Jaffna

St. Isidore pre-school, the only one in Earlalai East, was damaged during the civil strife in 1996. Although repaired subsequently, it lacked the basic facilities for preschoolers and their teachers.



The recently renovated pre-school building



The new play area

IOM together with the Catholic Youth Club of

Earlalai - Soorawathai and local government authorities provided a toilet, overhead water tank, pre-school furniture and play material including children's plastic toys, a see-saw, swing, matslide, climber, and a merry-go-round.

To coincide with the opening cer-

emony, the pre-school, attended by around 30 children, held their annual sports meet on the same day. "We had to send our children to a pre-school in the next village in spite of all inconveniences this caused as this pre-school did not even have the basic necessities" said a parent. "But I am sure with the upgrade to the building and all

the new play material they will now enjoy attending this pre-school", she concluded.

The project, aimed at creating a better learning environment by providing early childhood development facilities was funded by the UK Home Office and the European Refugee Fund.

## Transporting relief to conflict-affected areas

IOM with funding from DIAC commenced its transport and logistics facility to humanitarian and government agencies in December 2007, enabling a swift delivery of relief and reconstruction materials to conflict-affected areas in Sri Lanka. IOM trucks were dispatched over 160 times carrying medical equipment, livelihood items, solar panels, furniture, relief supplies and building material including, timber, cement, tiles and roofing sheets for IOM and for different international organizations during December 2007 and January 2008.

This reliable and efficient service, which is also free-of-charge, ensures a rapid response in the event of a humanitarian emergency.

## IOM's efforts in long-term tsunami recovery through livelihood and community development support in Ampara

With funding from the EC, IOM contributes to the overall community recovery and development in the tsunami-affected district of Ampara through a four-year-programme.

The programme which aims to reach 80,000 to 100,000 people consists of three components; community development, livelihood development and the strengthening of project support partners. Under the community development component construction of several social infrastructures including two schools, a multipurpose building, a clinic, a pre-school and five water sup-

ply projects are underway.

Under the livelihood development component there are five ongoing projects including two markets and three irrigation projects. Under this component, IOM is also in the process of supporting 150 people, mainly women, in Uhana in the Ampara district, producing aggregates manually. IOM helped these producers in the creation and official registration of three cooperative societies, under the Cooperative Act. Training sessions on group formation and leadership were also given to these formed cooperative societies to

further strengthen their societies. To establish a sustainable project it has also been identified that new technology in the form of manually-operated rock crushers would help each worker to increase his/her daily production by 25-30 times. Manual crushers, which do not require large operational costs, are procured from South Africa for this purpose. The aggregate producers will receive assistance to organize their operations and to find a market for their products. Additional small enterprise development training on topics such as management and accounting will also follow.

## Supporting IDPs and host communities in war-affected areas

Under a new programme funded by ECHO, IOM supports newly displaced, re-settled and resettling IDPs with shelter, livelihood options, non food relief items and water and sanitation facilities in districts directly affected by the conflict.

Under this project, to date over 450 emergency shelters have been constructed or upgraded in Mannar and Batticaloa districts. Under the livelihood component of the project, training on composting is ongoing for 200 beneficiaries in the Jaffna district while training on livestock is ongoing for 150 beneficiaries from the Batticaloa district. After the training workshops these beneficiaries will be advised further on how to market their products. The beneficiaries will also receive tool-



kits and livelihood equipment following the trainings.

The programme will also construct and upgrade over 150 toilets and 10 water sources in the coming months. Hy-

giene promotion workshops have been conducted for 350 beneficiaries and a number of workshops have also been planned for the future. After the workshops these beneficiaries will also receive hygiene toolkits.



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**Photos taken by Zack Taylor of USAID and IOM staff**