

ACTIVITIES ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

International Catholic Migration Commission

A. BACKGROUND

1. A note on ICMC

The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), an organization of 172 members in nearly every country of the world, and with its own operations and staff on the ground in some 40 countries, serves and protects refugees, migrants, especially vulnerable migrant workers, victims of human trafficking, fragile families and unaccompanied minors, and internally displaced persons, regardless of their faith, race, ethnicity or national origin.

Active both in operations and advocacy, ICMC works directly and through its members on concrete programmes and policy development related to migration, often as it intersects with development. This report highlights the activities that ICMC performs and manages directly. It notes, but does not present the work done by ICMC members worldwide.

2. ICMC engagement on international migration and development

At the policy level, ICMC signaled its commitment to the current migration and development debate when it served as an adviser to the Global Commission on International Migration. In July 2006, the members of ICMC approved a new strategic plan explicitly targeting migration and development as one of the top priorities of ICMC for the coming years.

ICMC participated in the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, first as a member of the Steering Committee for the civil society component, second as one of the speakers at the informal interactive hearings with NGOs, civil society and the private sector in July 2006, and later as one of only five NGOs invited to speak at the High-level Dialogue itself, contributing to the round table on “Measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of all migrants, and to prevent and combat smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons”. ICMC was 1 of 12 organizations selected to prepare and present the report on civil society at the first day of the Intergovernmental Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007. In addition, ICMC actively participated in online consultations in the editing of the background papers prepared for the official Civil Society Day with a principal role regarding the paper entitled “The migration–development nexus: Migration out of choice vs. migration out of necessity”, and as rapporteur for the final and forward-looking session “Looking ahead: Strategies and partnerships for the future”.

With respect to operations, a number of ICMC programmes throughout the world address important aspects of the intersection between migration and development, including:

- Peacebuilding, community-building and voluntary return programmes for displaced minorities, small villages, individuals and families in both post-conflict and post-disaster situations.
- Counter-trafficking, rescue, legal services and the return of victims of human trafficking and exploited domestic workers.
- Counselling, livelihoods training and microcredit programming.

- Refugee processing for resettlement in third countries, including pre-departure cultural orientation for integration purposes.

By design, most of these programmes involve capacity-building of local community or governmental institutions. Taken together with other partners and ICMC members, this activity represents a front-line network of migration and development.

B. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES TO THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE AND FIRST GLOBAL FORUM

1. Parallel event at the Global Forum in Brussels

In tandem with the formal Global Forum process in 2007, ICMC, together with three other NGOs from Asia, Europe and Northern America, co-organized the “Global community forum on migration, development and human rights”, which was held in Brussels parallel to the State-led sessions of the Global Forum. About 200 people and NGOs attended this parallel event, even though there was minimal funding. Participants included a number of NGOs, faith-based and labour groups that had not been selected to be part of the official Civil Society Day, not only from Brussels and Europe, but from other regions of the world as well.

With the expressed goal of generating concrete proposals and projects, ICMC ran a two-part workshop featuring officials from three offices of the European Commission. With 47 NGOs and labour participants attending, the workshop was the most popular of the 10 offered at the parallel event and gave funding officials the opportunity to discuss funding streams with NGOs. Similarly, NGOs were given the chance to discuss with EC officials actual programming already under way in the area of migration and development. Among the major development actors participating were Cordaid and Oxfam.

ICMC reported on the Civil Society Day of the Global Forum and on the informal parallel event, at a round table organized by the Transatlantic Institute, the Brussels affiliate of the American Jewish Committee.

2. Creation of a civil society International Platform for Migration, Development and Human Rights

One of the outcomes of the parallel event was the unanimous approval of an ICMC proposal to establish a permanent, global civil society platform on migration and development to ensure better collaboration, clarity and consistency of engagement of civil society in this global debate, particularly among the NGOs and labour movements. It was agreed that the first task of the new platform would be to create communication capacities so that like-minded NGOs, labour and other groups could communicate regularly. The second task would be to develop a funding strategy. Key work would include supporting regional and national strategies on migration and development, both within and outside the process of the Global Forum.

3. Creation of a new civil society website on migration and development

Acting on the conviction that the migration and development debate cannot be held without the active participation of civil society, and especially without those organizations that have already set important trends in the field of migration and of development activities, ICMC has taken steps to create a new website on migration and development.

Although the Global Forum and IOM websites host considerable libraries of official documentation, quality research and other materials on migration and development, the new website will provide added value by approaching the issue from a civil society perspective—one centred on the human being in the context of migration and development and the need to highlight practical, rights-based solutions that already exist as well as possibilities for the future. Complementing existing websites, the new site will:

- Search for, identify and make accessible quality writings and other materials on migration and development that are not adequately presented on other websites or in other forums, giving particular priority to those of NGOs, faith-based and labour organizations.
- Promote the sharing of concrete research and data, including experience, evaluations, lessons learned and best practices, with an emphasis on programming that serves poor and vulnerable people in the area of migration and development.
- Increase awareness and preparation regarding international processes such as the Global Forum and other migration and development events and processes at bilateral, regional and international levels.

4. Asia Conference on Migration and Development

As the Global Forum on Migration and Development moves to the Philippines in 2008, there is an opportunity, indeed an urgency, to contribute voices, values and perspectives that are distinctly Asian. Working directly with the National Catholic Commission for Migration (NCCM) of Thailand, ICMC is organizing a two-day regional conference in Bangkok in mid-2008, to facilitate such a contribution both within the process of the Global Forum and in other international and regional discussions of migration and development. This conference will leverage the broad network, special role, and experience of catholic organizations long engaged throughout the region either in migration or development, or both.

The Asia conference will bring significant added value to the current global discussion of migration and development, by:

- Bringing together major operational stakeholders engaged in migration and development in Asia, including civil society organizations, Government officials, and representatives of leading regional and international institutions.
- Promoting a regional approach to problems, perspectives and solutions, with analyses and recommendations that will be brought to the Global Forum in the Philippines.
- Encouraging a focus on human dignity and well-being, and
- Initiating a process of national consultations in preparation for the conference and the 2008 Global Forum.

By convening leading Asian stakeholders, particularly in civil society, this conference will offer an important complement to regional processes on migration and development at the intergovernmental level, such as the Colombo Process. Moreover, the conference's focus on human dignity and well-being will provide some balance to what has been to date in the global debate an almost exclusive focus on the strictly economic aspects of migration and development.

5. Publications and conferences related to migration and development

As a contribution to the migration and development debate and to broader activities relating to migrants, ICMC published in 2006 a book entitled “Strengthening the rights of migrant workers and their families with international human rights treaties”. A do-it-yourself toolkit, the book examines all seven core international human rights treaties related to migrant workers. The publication of this reference book responds to two needs often expressed by states, international organizations and civil society in the migration and development debate: the need to consider migrant rights in core United Nations treaties beyond the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which is the newest and least ratified of the seven, and the need to give more attention to those rights in the migration and development debate. The toolkit also offers a closer look at the Convention on Migrant Workers, which, although widely misunderstood and even misrepresented, summarizes all universal rights that apply specifically to migrant workers and members of their families.

In addition to the processes of the High-level Dialogue and the first Global Forum, ICMC participated in a number of conferences in Asia, Africa, Europe and Northern America—including several involving representatives of states and the European Union—discussing perspectives on international migration, demographics and other drivers of a new paradigm, and emerging issues and gaps in labour migration, global governance and development. In 2007, ICMC published the following papers, which are available at www.icmc.net:

- To leave or not to leave: The right to not migrate and what the church is doing to help people to stay at home.
- Getting practical in migration and development: Integration and NGOs as keys in practical programming and policy making.
- Bringing experience and practice to the migration and development table: Observations and questions for reflection.
- Meeting needs, filling gaps in international migration: How the church and other international institutions respond to migrants in the age of mobility.
- Mobile, global and hard at work: Revaluing migrant options, risks and dignity in the age of globalization.
- Rights, migration and development: Bridging the gap.

C. OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT ADDRESS KEY ASPECTS OF THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

ICMC programmes operate at the nexus of the migration and development debate. States, international organizations and civil society have supported the Global Forum agreeing that migration should be a choice and not a necessity, a growing convergence that evokes the core message of ICMC to reduce forced migration. Two activities in particular come to mind, each contributing to the migration and development debate in a theoretical and practical way:

- To reduce human trafficking—one of the worst forms of migration—and its effects, ICMC worked successfully over several years with the Government of Indonesia on a new anti-trafficking law that was enacted in 2007.
- To promote orderly migration, ICMC and its members have long worked with a number of Governments providing cultural orientation and security processing pre-departure, and reception, employment and integration programmes post-arrival to refugees and other migrants. Such programmes—tested, refined and proven effective over the years in helping hundreds of thousands of people to move legally all over the world—can be implemented elsewhere to organize labour migration in an orderly way.

1. Services and standards for migrants injured or traumatized while crossing borders

Over the course of regular consultations at conferences and with ICMC members in Africa, Australia, Europe, Mexico and the United States of America, ICMC was urged to broaden the ongoing debate on mixed migration flows to address the suffering of all migrants injured in such flows—that is, not just the refugees or asylum-seekers, but migrants regardless of their status. These migrants have long and wrongly been dismissed simply as “economic migrants” unworthy of international protection. In June 2006, ICMC presented to the UNHCR Standing Committee a statement in the name of all NGOs calling for better humanitarian services to respond to all victims of violence and trauma crossing borders, e.g., through physical and psychosocial care. Such services and standards would: (a) include identification and processing of victims of violence and trauma, trafficked persons, and children—especially unaccompanied minors; (b) go beyond rescue at sea to post-rescue obligations for care; (c) be implemented not only along sea borders, but along land borders as well, and (d) offer responses that are obligatory and resourced, rather than ad hoc and voluntary, as is presently the case.

D. ROLE OF SURVEYS IN PROVIDING EVIDENCE TO FORMULATE EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES TO SUPPORT THESE ACTIVITIES

ICMC is currently conducting three surveys to support its development of policies and programming:

- A survey of ICMC members worldwide on activities regarding human trafficking.
- A survey of ICMC members in Africa on current migration experience and activities.
- A survey of the world’s most dangerous borders, to inform the debate on standards and services for migrants who have been injured or traumatized crossing borders.

E. ENGAGEMENT OF ICMC MEMBERS

In all of these activities, it is important to recognize the involvement of ICMC members worldwide. While a number of ICMC members are operational partners in programming and advocacy, all are regularly consulted for their input on these issues and processes. Working in partnership with states, international and civil society organizations around the world, the ICMC network is committed to better understanding and collaboration on international migration and development.