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IOM International Organization for Migration

MIGRANT WORKERS HIT BY CRISES NEED COMPREHENSIVE,
LONG TERM HELP, SAYS IOM ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY, 2012

GENEVA- 18th December 2012 - The evacuation of more than 200,000 migrant workers from Libya in 2011 focused world attention on the plight of tens of thousands of migrant workers, mainly from low-income, developing countries, who found themselves swept up by the political upheaval, without money, jobs, documentation or any means of getting home to their families.

Their marginal status in Libya and obvious vulnerability touched a chord with international donors who stepped in to help agencies including IOM and UNHCR to mount a massive repatriation operation. They included the World Bank, which funded a USD 10 million IOM airlift of 35,000 migrants to Bangladesh.

The crisis highlighted the fact that conflicts and man-made or natural disasters can impact already vulnerable migrants resulting in humanitarian crises. The international community, and in particular migrant sending and receiving countries, must recognize the implications of crises for migrants and their families left behind and act to mitigate both the short and long term consequences, says IOM as it marks International Migrants Day.

“The evacuation of migrants from Libya was a remarkable humanitarian achievement, but was a job half done. While we recognized the reintegration needs of returning Bangladeshi and worked with the government and the World Bank to meet them, we failed to recognize the needs and well-being of other migrants who returned empty-handed to economically depressed and food insecure countries such as Chad and Niger,” says IOM Director General William Lacy Swing.

“Crises can result in complex and often unpredictable short and long term population flows. These bring with them a raft of challenges that the international community needs to address comprehensively. They include the protection of vulnerable migrants from crisis-related violence and exploitation in their host country, and in transit, and their safe and sustainable reintegration once they get home,” he notes.

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IOM's Migration Crisis Operational Framework, which was officially endorsed by the Organization's governing Council on 27 November aims to institutionalize IOM's capacity to respond to migration crises and to address some of the gaps that currently exist with regard to migration in international humanitarian systems.

It seeks to help States to fulfill their responsibility to assist and protect mobile populations, because migrants are more likely to be subject to hardship, human rights violations and discrimination in crisis situations.

The framework addresses the needs of people crossing borders who are not covered under current international protection because their displacement is not related to persecution, international migrants stranded in countries of destination or transit, and internally displaced people.

It lists 15 sectors of possible intervention including camp management and displacement tracking; shelter and non-food relief items; transport assistance for affected populations; health support; psycho-social support; reintegration assistance; activities to support community stabilization and transition; disaster risk reduction and resilience building; land and property support; counter trafficking and protection of vulnerable migrants; technical assistance for humanitarian border management; emergency consular assistance; diaspora and human resource mobilization; migration policy and legislation support; and humanitarian communications.

“Finding humane and effective solutions to the complex and multi-faceted challenges of crisis-related migration flows requires strong partnerships between international organizations, States and a variety of non-state actors, including NGOs, the media, the private sector, religious groups and transnational diaspora communities,” says IOM Director General Swing. “We all share a responsibility to protect the human rights of all people on the move.”

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