IOM Worldwide

Established in 1951, IOM is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.

With 162 member states, a further 9 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by providing services and advice to governments and migrants.

IOM currently has 9 regional offices (Bangkok, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Dakar, Cairo, Nairobi, Pretoria, San Jose, and Vienna), two special liaison offices (Addis Ababa and New York) and two administrative centers (Manila and Panama City).

IOM Regional Office - South America

IOM Regional Office (RO) for South America was created on July 2011 and is located in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was formerly the Mission with Regional Functions (MRF, English acronym) for the Southern Cone.

Through all its missions in the countries of the region, Buenos Aires RO supports the governments’ efforts in the development of their policies and other areas concerning migration in response to migrants’ needs.

Furthermore, it supports and guides all activities carried out by IOM missions in the region.

Migration in South America - General trends

Traditionally, the migration dynamic in South America was marked by intra-regional and extra-regional patterns. In the last years, intra-regional migration has been increasing and it is the dominant trend today.

Such intraregional movements have as destination, countries mainly of the Southern Cone, being Argentina, Chile and Brazil the countries that attract the highest number of the region’s migrants, most of them coming from Andean countries and Paraguay. Disparities in economic and labor opportunities keep on being the driving factors of these migration processes.

Another migration pattern is the emigration of nationals from South America to North America (the United States and Canada) and Europe (mainly Spain and Italy).

The third pattern is the extra-regional immigration. In the last years, the numbers of immigrants coming from other regions and settling in South America has significantly increased. Thus, the migration of nationals from countries in Africa, Asia, North America, Central America, the Caribbean and Europe has been increasing.

Finally, South America receives a high number of returnees from developed countries, which is probably the consequence of the labor and social security crisis affecting the main countries of destination for some years. Several governments of the region have return programs including the support for their nationals’ return and reintegration.

Likewise, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants keep on affecting the region’s countries.
IOM Regional Strategy is implemented through six thematic areas based on a human rights approach for migrants and has been developed to respond to the migration dynamics and challenges in the region.

1. **Promotion and protection of migrants’ rights**

IOM fosters migrants’ human rights and their protection by strengthening the capacities of the governments to implement policies and programs which allow migrants’ access to their fundamental rights despite their migration status and provide assistance to the most vulnerable. IOM emphatically supports the struggle against xenophobia, racism and discrimination.

2. **Support for freedom of movement of migrants within the framework of the regional integration**

As part of the support to the processes of regional integration, IOM provides technical assistance to governments in the implementation of initiatives that contribute to the freedom of movement of South American migrants. Regularization processes, initiatives to facilitate residence as well as the implementation of projects for the social and cultural integration and labor insertion, are part of the governments’ efforts supported by IOM in the region based on its human rights approach.

This way, IOM recognizes the migration achievements in the context of MERCOSUR, CAN, UNASUR and CELAC (for their Spanish acronym).

3. **Migration management support through migration dialogues**

Aiming at responding timely and properly to the challenges of migration governance in the region and based on its human rights approach, IOM strengthens the capacities of institutions responsible for migration in the definition of their policies, rules and migration programs. In this sense, advances in migration matters in the region are highly related to the participation of the governments in the South American Conference on Migration (CSM), main consultative process of non-binding dialogue and agreement on migration in the region whose technical secretariat is exercised by IOM Regional Office for South America.

4. **Strengthening the link between Migration and Development**

One of IOM’s priorities in South America is highlighting the positive impact of migration in the development mainly of countries of destination. IOM also propels, hand in hand with the governments, strategies led to strengthen migrant transnational nets and their links with countries of origin and to reduce the negative impact of migration processes.

5. **Migration management, environment and climate change**

Based on its global strategy to face the challenges of migration due to environmental factors, IOM in South America works closely with governments in the development of strategies to reduce the vulnerability of population in risk of forced migration due to climate change and to provide humanitarian assistance in case of natural disasters.

Part of its strategy includes strengthening the governments’ capacities of response at all levels (local and national) to develop disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change plans targeted to the most vulnerable communities.

6. **Emergency Response**

IOM has the capacity to coordinate and provide immediate response to the needs of the population affected mainly by natural disasters or those victims of conflicts, mostly Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

IOM cooperates with governments and United Nations organizations in the establishment of joint actions to reduce the risk of disasters. In this sense, IOM has been appointed as cluster lead agency for Camp Coordination and Camp Management, to respond to the needs of people displaced by natural disasters.