

International Organization for Migration

International organisations are important for the civil services exam. Direct questions can be asked about them in the UPSC Prelims exam. In this article, you can read all about the International Organization for Migration (IOM), its origins, functions, India's relations, etc.

What is the International Organization for Migration?

International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organization that works closely with governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental partners in the field of migration to aid orderly and humane migration for the benefit of the human race. Headquartered at Geneva, Switzerland, it has a global presence with over one hundred offices across the world.

A brief overview of the IOM is given in the table below:

| Overview of International Organization for Migration | |
|---|---|
| Year of formation | 1951 |
| Type | Intergovernmental Organisation |
| Headquarters | Geneva, Switzerland |
| Members | 173 member states and 8 observer states as of March 2019 (over 80 global and regional IGOs and NGOs are also observers) |
| Director General | Antonio Vitorino |
| Staff | 11.500 |

To know more about the locations of Important Headquarters of International Organisations, visit the linked article.

IOM Origin

- The roots of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) can be traced back to 1951 when a Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants

from Europe (PICMME) was created by the International Migration Conference at Brussels, Belgium.

- In 1952, the Committee began its operation as the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) and its activities were limited to population activities from Europe to North America, Latin America and Oceania.
- The Constitution of the ICEM came into force in 1954.
- In November 1980, the name of the group was changed to the Inter-governmental Committee for Migration (ICM), the word 'European' being dropped to recognize the broader and worldwide role of the body.
- Further amendments to the ICM Constitution were made in 1987, effective 1989, and ICM formally came to be known as IOM.

To know more about the origin of Europe's recent refugee crisis, visit the linked article.

IOM Objectives

The objectives of the IOM are to provide for organised transfer of migrants, including refugees, displaced persons and other individuals forced to leave their homelands; meet the needs of both emigration and immigration countries; and provide migrants with resettlement services.

IOM Structure

- The IOM has a Council, an Executive Committee and a Secretariat.
- The Council consists of representatives of all member-states and observer-states and meets annually. It has the powers to decide on matters of policy, programmes and finance.
- The nine-member Executive Committee meets twice a year and is elected annually.
 - It is responsible for preparing the work of the Council and making recommendations on the basis of reports by sub-committees on budget and finance, and coordination of transport.
- The Secretariat is headed by a Director-General.

IOM Activities

- Since its inception in 1952, the IOM has assisted over 10 million refugees and migrants all over the world.
- The activities of the IOM are carried out by 82 field missions and sub-offices worldwide (as of early 1998).
- Migration assistance is given through transportation facilities, emergency operations programmes, and resettlement services involving orientation courses, placement services and vocational and language training.

- The IOM has developed some specific 'migration for development' initiatives to help developing countries meet their needs for skilled personnel.
- The Selective Migration Programme, initiated in 1965, facilitates the transfer of technology from Europe to Latin America through the migration of highly qualified individuals.
- Other similar programmes include the Return of Talent Programme for Latin America and Africa; the Integrated Experts Programme in Latin America and Asia; and the Horizontal Cooperation in the Field of Qualified Human Resources Programme in Latin America.
- In addition, the IOM participates in efforts to address the 'brain-drain' problem faced by developing countries by encouraging the return of their citizens who did not return following overseas education or job training.
- The Emergency Humanitarian Return Programme (EHRP) was launched in 1993 to facilitate the return of skilled personnel in Central and Eastern Europe to their original homes in Asia, Africa and Latin America.
- In the 1990s, the IOM was involved in activities to deal with migration flow following the break-up of the USSR and former Yugoslavia.
- Migration programmes in African countries hit by civil war were also assisted by the IOM.
- In addition, the Organisation assists in the formulation of national migration policies, carries out studies on migration issues, and acts as a multilateral forum where key migration issues may be discussed in the course of international seminars.

It also offers advice to refugees and the governments with respect to migration. IOM works in the following broad areas of migration:

- Forced Migration
- Migration and development
- Facilitating Migration
- Regulation of migration

IOM and UN

- IOM was accorded the status of a Permanent Observer to the United Nations General Assembly in the year 1992.
- A cooperation agreement was signed between the United Nations and International Organization for Migration in 1996.
- A resolution to make IOM a related organization of the United Nations Organization was unanimously passed at the United Nations General assembly.
- On the 19th of September 2016, at the United Nations summit for Refugees and Migrants, an agreement was signed between Ban-Ki-Moon (United Nations Secretary-General) and William Lacy Swing (IOM Director General) to give effect to the resolution.

- This move was taken in order to give an identity to the IOM which has progressed into a successful organization working for migration-related issues.
- The United Nations considers IOM's role to be imperative in handling the refugee crisis across the world. To protect the rights of refugees, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants* was also adopted at the UN summit for Refugees and Migrants.

India and IOM

India was granted an observer's status to IOM in the year 1991 and became a member state in 2008. IOM has helped India airlift Indian nationals out of Kuwait during Iraqi invasion and also repatriation of about thirty thousand Indians stranded abroad in the last 15 years.

Recently, the IOM and the Government of India signed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that aims to serve as a platform for the joint implementation of programmes and activities enhancing the management and facilitation of overseas employment of Indian workers worldwide.

Under this programme, IOM and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) will jointly create labour mobility management projects such as the establishment of an Overseas Workers Resource Centre to disseminate information on legal opportunities for potential overseas workers and the implementation of mass information campaigns.

A grass root level information campaign to make people aware of the risks of irregular migration to Europe in general and Belgium in particular is implemented by the IOM in the District of Jalandhar in the State of Punjab.