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Introduction

Anh Nguyen¹

Return and reintegration form an integral part of human mobility. In light of complex and dynamic migration flows, the discourse on return and reintegration have gained renewed prominence in national and international political agenda in recent years. In 2018, with the adoption of the the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact for Migration), governments pledged to cooperate “in facilitating safe and dignified return ..., as well as sustainable reintegration.” Both host countries (transit and destination) and countries of origin, although having different roles, can greatly benefit from well-governed return and reintegration issues. Their cooperation, along with civil society actors, is essential in the implementation of well-managed return and reintegration policies as advocated in the Global Compact for Migration.

Within this context, the special issue of *Migration Policy Practice* seeks to present challenges, opportunities, existing practices and policy implications in the field of return and reintegration. It explores a wide variety of subjects in these areas, including relevant provisions in the Global Compact for Migration, assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes, specific safeguards for the return and reintegration of children and their families, the role of local governments in the implementation of sustainable reintegration policies, and how to define and measure sustainable reintegration to inform evidence-based programming and policies.

The opening article by Kathleen Newland, co-founder and senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, addresses how return and reintegration-related matters are dealt with in the context of the Global Compact for Migration. It looks at how the Global

Compact for Migration successfully reconciled the often conflicting priorities of host countries and countries of origin. The author argues that while host countries perceive return as a key migration tool for the return of irregular migrants and migrants not eligible for international protection, countries of origin tend to be more averse to facilitating the return of their nationals, due to persisting social, political and economic challenges. Hence, Newland covers the process that led to the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration, which addresses these conflicting priorities and emphasizes the need for cooperation between host countries and countries of origin.

The second article by Nicola Graviano and Noëlle Darbellay from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides an overview of the evolution of AVRR programmes and how IOM, based on its long-standing experience, has recently developed a framework on AVRR to guide practitioners and policymakers. The article presents the vision, principles and objectives outlined in the framework and how these principles can be put in practice. Lastly, the article gives an overview of how the AVRR framework contributes to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Compact for Migration.

The third article by Natalia Alonso Cano from UNICEF and Irina Todorova from IOM looks at return and its impact on individual migrants, in particular children, and offers concrete recommendations to ensure that return and reintegration policies are compliant with child rights. The authors first look at the key principle of the best interest of the child and how it should guide all return and reintegration policies. In addition, they look at other key principles such as non-refoulement and the right to participation, and how these should be applied throughout the whole return and reintegration continuum. Providing key examples from the European context, they also lay out key considerations to ensure safe and dignified return for all children, whether they return with their families, or whether they are unaccompanied and separated.

1 Anh Nguyen is the Head of the Migrant Protection Assistance Division at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva. He is responsible for overseeing IOM’s global approach to the protection and assistance of migrants, which includes programming on IOM’s assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) and assistance to vulnerable migrants (AVM).

The fourth article by Dr Francisco Salvador Hirezi Morataya, Mayor of Zacatecoluca municipality in El Salvador, covers the role of local governments in the implementation of reintegration policies at the local level. The article argues that based on their proximity with citizens, local governments are key instruments for the implementation and tailoring of national policies. Looking at the specific example of El Salvador, a key country of origin in the Central American region, Mayor Morataya explains that often returnees face similar socioeconomic conditions (violence, lack of economic opportunities, etc.) upon return than when they left. Hence, there continues to be a great need to develop assistance programmes to address their needs as well as the needs of the local population. Zacatecoluca, his municipality, has been at the forefront of implementing national policies to address this issue. Efforts have been made to (i) prevent violence, (ii) increase municipal competitiveness, (iii) put in place specific actions to assist migrants and returnees, and (iv) establish partnerships. The municipality has had concrete positive outcomes that illustrate the key role that local governments can play to implement reintegration policies.

Lastly, Nassim Majidi of Samuel Hall and Nazanine Nozarian of IOM focus on sustainable reintegration and how to measure it. Taking into consideration the lack of data for post-return outcomes, the article explains how IOM and Samuel Hall joined forces to develop a broad set of tools and recommendations to measure reintegration sustainability. The article looks at the evolution of sustainability in the context of return and how it has been defined differently by different actors. Using IOM's revised definition of sustainable reintegration, the article presents IOM's efforts to standardize the measurement of reintegration sustainability through field-tested indicators developed with Samuel Hall. Moving from theory to practice, Majidi and Nozarian explain how IOM has since taken concrete steps to mainstream those indicators in the programming of the Organization. This article underlines the essential role of monitoring and evaluation and the need for solid and comparable data to work towards evidence-based policies.

I would like to sincerely thank all the authors who contributed to the drafting of this special issue as well as the editors and their team for their support. I hope this special issue will give you an overview of some key issues related to return and reintegration as well as policy recommendations for the way forward. ■



Return and reintegration in the Global Compact for Migration

Kathleen Newland¹

When negotiations on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact for Migration) opened in January 2018, many observers feared that they would descend to the level of least common denominators, avoiding controversy and offering bland reassurances of goodwill. But the 23 objectives of the final text of the Global Compact for Migration, agreed by 192 members of the United Nations in July 2018 and put forward for adoption in December 2018, did not shy away from contentious issues. Instead, they reached for compromises among States' differing perspectives. One of the most controversial issues the Global Compact for Migration had to deal with was the return of migrants, often against their will, and their reintegration into the economy and society of their countries of origin.

Addressing return and reintegration in the Global Compact for Migration

Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Migration represents a compromise among the needs of origin and destination countries. In it, States commit themselves to “cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration”. The first paragraph under this objective elaborates on three elements of the compromise: protecting the rights of migrants subject to return, guaranteeing readmission to their countries of origin and facilitating sustainable reintegration:

We commit to facilitate and cooperate for safe and dignified return and to guarantee due process, individual assessment and effective remedy, by upholding the prohibition of collective expulsion and of returning migrants when there is a real and foreseeable risk of death, torture, and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment, or other irreparable harm, in accordance with our obligations under international human rights law.

We further commit to ensure that our nationals are duly received and readmitted, in full respect for the human right to return to one's own country and the obligation of States to readmit their own nationals. We also commit to create conducive conditions for personal safety, economic empowerment, inclusion and social cohesion in communities, in order to ensure that reintegration of migrants upon return to their countries of origin is sustainable.

This statement is followed by a menu of nine actions for States to draw on in order to put their commitments into action. The nine are a combination of procedure, guarantees of protection and humane treatment of migrants, and programmes.

The procedure described in actions a, c and d under Objective 21 comprises:

- Developing and implementing “cooperation frameworks and agreements” on safe and dignified return;
- Cooperating to establish the identity of nationals and issue travel documents to them prior to return;
- Providing consular assistance prior to return to prepare returning migrants for re-entry to their countries of origin as well as fostering contacts between consular and other officials from origin and destination countries.

Four guarantees are laid out in actions b, e, f and g:

- Due process guarantees (including individual assessment carried out by competent authorities, allowing all legal remedies to be exhausted before compulsory return) and assurance that return of unauthorized migrants will be safe and dignified;
- Setting up or reinforcing national monitoring mechanisms to recommend ways to strengthen accountability for the safety, dignity and rights of migrants after they return;

¹ Kathleen Newland is a co-founder and senior fellow of the Migration Policy Institute (MPI).

- Ensuring that the best interests of the child migrant determine the return and readmission processes used when children are involved, which includes issues such as family unity and the quality of reception, care and integration arrangements for children who are returned to their countries of origin;
- Ensuring that migrants who take part in voluntary return programmes do so on the basis of free, prior, informed consent.

Finally, two of the proposed actions concern reintegration:

- Provide migrants equal access to a full range of services and protections as well as economic opportunities so that they can reintegrate in and contribute to society;
- Address the needs of communities of return by making them a part of national and local development plans, budgets and infrastructure needs.

Conflicting priorities

Traditionally, international cooperation on compulsory returns has been arranged through bilateral readmission agreements between countries of destination and origin. At the heart of such agreements is, typically, a tradeoff between something the destination country wants (for the origin country to accept and indeed facilitate the return of its nationals, for example) and something the origin country wants (for instance, more visas for its nationals or more development assistance, ideally with fewer strings attached). Some bilateral readmission agreements work smoothly, but most are fraught with tension – reflecting the competing interests of the governments.

Consultation and cooperation between countries of destination and origin are more the exception than the rule when it comes to returns. This is of particular concern when destination countries prioritize the return of criminals, which is common. Although there seems to be some shift towards greater cooperation, for example in the 2016 European Union–Afghanistan agreement, returns are still largely something that is

done to countries of origin.² Cooperation is vital to successful return and reintegration, as it allows for the countries and communities to which migrants return to plan for their arrival, preparing both infrastructure and residents for an influx of newcomers.

Governments of destination countries, particularly in the industrialized North, have come to view the return of unauthorized migrants as a central pillar of effective migration and asylum policy. As policymakers and politicians from these countries see it, unauthorized entry and stay make a mockery of the rule of law, undermine popular support for legal immigration and a generous asylum policy, and weaken public confidence in the general competence of government. For two years running, in 2015 and 2016, respondents to the well-regarded Eurobarometer surveys identified immigration as the most important issue facing the European Union – coinciding with the peak of the Mediterranean migration crisis.³ In 2017, it was second only to terrorism. Concern about uncontrolled immigration has been a major source of fuel for right-wing populism on both sides of the Atlantic, forcing parties from across the political spectrum to address the very real concerns associated with unauthorized migration.⁴ Countries of destination are reluctant to open wide legal migration channels in exchange for returns, lest that be seen as added competition for local jobs and resources.⁵

2 N. Majidi, *From Forced Migration to Forced Returns in Afghanistan: Policy and Program Implications* (Washington, D.C., MPI, 2017). Available from www.migrationpolicy.org/research/forced-migration-forced-returns-afghanistan

3 European Political Strategy Centre, *10 Trends Shaping Migration* (Brussels, European Commission, 2017). Available from https://ec.europa.eu/epsc/sites/epsc/files/epsc_-_10_trends_shaping_migration_-_web.pdf

4 See, for example: D.G. Papademetriou and N. Banulescu-Bogdan, *Understanding and Addressing Public Anxiety about Immigration* (Washington, D.C., MPI, 2016). Available from www.migrationpolicy.org/research/understanding-and-addressing-public-anxiety-about-immigration

5 People in destination countries all over the world routinely overestimate the immigrant share of their countries' populations. A 2017 Eurobarometer survey found, for example, that Italian respondents believed immigrants accounted for 25 per cent of their country's population, when the share was only 7 per cent according to official data, and that British respondents believed immigrants accounted for 21 per cent, but official data indicated that immigrant share was only 9 per cent. (See: European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 469 Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union* (Brussels, European Commission, 2018), p. 21, available from <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2169>)

Policymakers and politicians from countries of origin, by contrast, are under both economic and political pressure not to facilitate the compulsory return of their nationals. In many such countries, migrant remittances keep many families from falling into poverty and are a crucial source of foreign exchange earnings (which help to support the balance of payments and sovereign credit ratings). Migration also serves as a safety valve for the discontent associated with low or uneven economic growth and high unemployment. People see it as the duty of governments to protect the interests of their citizens, and among residents of origin countries, facilitating return is commonly perceived as contrary to those interests. Even significant increases in official development assistance can rarely compensate officials from origin countries for the economic and political risks of appearing to cooperate on returns.

Thus, destination-country insistence and origin-country reluctance can make for difficult and sometimes less than forthright discussions around return. Amid the renewed push by European officials to secure the return of irregular migrants, many have expressed deep frustration over noncompliance with the terms of painstakingly negotiated readmission agreements.

An example of this dynamic can be seen in the readmission agreement negotiated between Norway and Ethiopia in 2012. Ethiopia promised to accept the return of nationals residing without authorization in Norway (the main group being some 700 rejected asylum seekers). It was supposed to be “a closely coordinated, phased, dignified, and humane process ... with respect primarily to voluntary return and the importance of safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration.”⁶ For its part, Ethiopia was obligated to issue travel documents to those designated for return. Norway made heavy financial commitments to the programme, amounting to GBP 8,250 per returnee, divided between the Ethiopian government office overseeing returns, an upfront payment to returnees and continuing integration assistance. But almost two years later, no migrants had been deported under the terms of the agreement and only 54 had

returned voluntarily. These disappointing results were attributed to a lack of commitment on the part of the Government of Ethiopia.⁷ Additional rounds of negotiation took place in 2016, when Ethiopian authorities agreed to accept involuntary returns, and again in January 2018, when the Norwegian Migration and Integration Minister went to Ethiopia to seek ways to expedite return processes.⁸ With a change of government in Ethiopia in April 2018, it remains to be seen whether these steps will translate into increased returns.

Return and reintegration discussions at the global level: Getting to a compact

Return migration has been a central point of discussions and negotiations at the global level since at least 2015, when migration was included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By committing themselves to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the heart of the agenda, UN Member States pledged to work towards “safe, orderly, regular, and responsible migration” (Target 10.7) as a means of reducing inequality within and between countries (Goal 10). “Orderly” migration was understood to be migration that occurs legally, according to the rules established by receiving States, constrained by their obligations under international law. Return migration was not explicitly mentioned in the SDGs but was understood, by the major destination countries at least, as a central component of orderly migration.

The migration crises of 2015 provided the impetus for a summit meeting at the UN General Assembly in September 2016 on large movements of migrants and refugees. The wide-ranging New York Declaration adopted by consensus at the summit set out a series of commitments, one of which elaborated obligations surrounding return and readmission. It reflected SDG Target 10.7 in its approach to returns, urging countries to cooperate to ensure that migrants without authorization to remain could be returned to their countries of origin or nationality in a safe, orderly and

6 C. Eide, “How to understand the outcomes of migration policy? A study of the return agreement between Ethiopia and Norway”, working paper 74 (Oxford, University of Oxford, International Migration Institute, October 2013). Available from www.imi.ox.ac.uk/publications/wp-74-13/@/download/file

7 Ibid.

8 *Norway Today*, “800 Ethiopians may be forcibly returned to Ethiopia” (*Norway Today*, 22 February 2016), available from <http://norwaytoday.info/news/ethiopia-opens-forcibly-returned-from-norway/>; S. Getachew, “Norwegian minister in Addis to discuss immigration” (*The Reporter Ethiopia*, 13 January 2018), available from www.thereporterethiopia.com/article/norwegian-minister-addis-discuss-immigration

dignified manner; in accordance with international law, human rights law and non-refoulement; and with consideration for the best interests of the child and due process. It also noted that “cooperation on return and readmission forms an important element of international cooperation on migration.”⁹ Looking ahead, the New York Declaration articulated States’ commitment to negotiate a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Peter D. Sutherland, had taken up the issue in a report to the Secretary-General that was extensively discussed in advance of the summit. As he summed it up, “[r]eturn is an integral part of a functioning migration system, but the way it is currently handled is often detrimental to both migrants and relations among States. Whether people are returning voluntarily, either on their own initiative or with State assistance, or are being forcibly removed, their human rights must be respected. Reintegration programmes should be aligned with national and local development strategies and the needs of the communities to which migrants return.”¹⁰ Among his recommendations on how to ensure orderly migration (including returns), he called on States to “start a dialogue among countries of origin, transit, and destination on return practices and standards, with a view to establishing a common understanding and, ultimately, shared principles to govern cooperation on return and reintegration in all world regions.”¹¹ He recommended that States use IOM, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and the regional consultative processes to conduct this dialogue.

These recommendations were taken up at the 10th meeting of the GFMD, in 2017, when return migration was on the agenda. In one of the meeting’s roundtables, ways to enhance and realize the development potential of migrants who return to their countries voluntarily were considered. While the session did

not address the development consequences of compulsory return, it did suggest that this subject be taken up in a future GFMD meeting. The background paper for the roundtable noted that “[a]n important nexus exists between the readiness of host countries to welcome migrants and the readiness of countries of origin to readmit forcibly returned migrants.”¹² In this agenda item, the GFMD again showed its capacity to advance the discussion of sensitive topics of great concern to participating States without confrontation. Meanwhile, negotiations for the Global Compact for Migration had begun, and it quickly became clear that making a strong statement on return, including the obligation of States to readmit their returning nationals, was a top priority – indeed, an absolutely necessary ingredient – for many destination countries. Nearly two years after the New York Declaration, 191 UN Member States (except only the United States) agreed on the final draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in July 2018.

By the time the Global Compact for Migration was presented for formal adoption at a summit meeting in Marrakech in December 2018, a campaign to oppose it had been mounted, and several countries announced they would not attend the Marrakech conference. Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority of 164 UN Member States did adopt the Compact. At the formal vote in the General Assembly on 19 December, 152 States voted to endorse the Global Compact for Migration while 5 opposed it. Twelve States abstained, and 24 did not vote (which was not, for most of this group, an expression of opposition to the Compact). In the end, only 3 per cent of the States voting (and 2.6% of the UN membership) opposed the Compact, which therefore stands as the consensus of an overwhelming majority of States.

The hard part: Implementation

Negotiating a compromise on return and reintegration for the Global Compact for Migration was an arduous process. But the implementation of Objective 21 may be harder still. The competing interests of origin and

9 UN General Assembly, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (19 September 2016), paragraph 58. Available from www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/71/1

10 UN General Assembly, “Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration” (New York, United Nations, 2017). Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/15/documents/Report%20of%20SRSG%20on%20Migration%20-%20A.71.728_ADVANCE.pdf

11 Ibid.

12 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), “Roundtable session 2: Migration and development through multilateral and bilateral partnerships: Creating perspectives for inclusive development. Roundtable session 2.2: Fostering the development impact of returning migrants”, background paper (GFMD, n.d.). Available from https://gfmd.org/files/documents/gfmd_2017-2018_rt_session_2.2_background_paper.pdf

destination countries have not gone away. The spirit of commitment that allowed the Global Compact for Migration negotiations to succeed sets an encouraging new context. But perhaps more important will be a growing realization that national interests beyond migration can be served by cooperating on return and reintegration. Failure to cooperate on return and reintegration has undermined good relations among States that need each other to promote development, foster peace and security, respond to humanitarian needs and achieve other common goals.

Objective 21 incorporates the priorities of both origin and destination countries – for fair and humane treatment of their nationals along with help in reintegration and for responsible readmission policies, respectively. Perhaps even more important than the details of the menu of actions is the symbolic importance of an agreement on this most contentious issue. The treatment of returns in the Global Compact for Migration demonstrates a will to cooperate across competing interests and to find common ground. All parties get something they want; none gets everything it wants. If States deliver on their commitments in this arena, all will be better off. ■

**Reintegration programmes
should be aligned with national
and local development
strategies and the needs
of the communities
to which migrants return.**

- Peter D. Sutherland



A framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration

Nicola Graviano and Noëlle Darbellay¹

Introduction

Recent years have seen the rise of complex and mixed migratory flows.² This increased human mobility is motivated by many factors, which sometimes overlap: just to name a few, the need to flee from conflict, natural disasters or violence; the lack of economic opportunities in the home country and the desire to enjoy better living conditions abroad; and the deteriorated environmental conditions in one's own country. Restrictive asylum policies combined with limited availability of regular migration channels make that migration often happens in an irregular fashion and contribute to the increase of the volume of migrants who find themselves stranded in host or transit countries because of lack of legal status or because they are not found to be in need of international protection. These migrants are unable to remain in their destination countries and for this reason they often feel the need to return home. In other cases, such a need is motivated by the desire to reunite with families, by changed conditions in either host countries or countries of origin, or by a sense of achievement of the migration experience and the willingness to start a new life back home. The process of return is often followed by a phase of reinclusion or reincorporation in the economic and social life in the country of origin, which is commonly referred to as reintegration.³

Return and reintegration can be challenging for many stakeholders, given their transnational nature⁴ and impact on a multitude of players. For host and transit countries, return is an important means of exercising their sovereign right to determine who can enter and remain on their territory in accordance with their obligations under international law. In countries of origin, return can strain the socioeconomic fabric, especially when high numbers of returnees arrive over a short period of time. Return can also generate a reduction in the remittances that migrants, both in regular and irregular situations, send back home. Finally, returning migrants may struggle to readapt and rebuild their lives once back home, owing to economic, social and psychosocial factors that are often similar to those that prompted them to migrate in the first place.

Return and reintegration of migrants and asylum seekers have gained renewed political importance in the agenda of national and international policymakers around the world. In his 2017 report, then Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Peter D. Sutherland, called on States “to start a dialogue among countries of origin, transit and destination on return practices and standards, with a view to establishing a common understanding and, ultimately, shared principles to govern cooperation on return and reintegration in all world regions.”⁵ Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (Global Compact for Migration), calls on governments to cooperate “in facilitating safe and dignified return ..., as well as sustainable reintegration”, including by promoting voluntary return programmes.

1 Nicola Graviano is Senior Specialist for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva. Noëlle Darbellay is Return and Reintegration Officer at IOM in Geneva.

2 IOM, *World Migration Report 2018* (Geneva, 2017). Available from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

3 *IOM Glossary on Migration* (forthcoming).

4 This paper focuses mainly on return and reintegration from one country to another and does not cover the return and reintegration of internal migrants, including internally displaced persons, nor the return and reintegration of refugees.

5 UN General Assembly, “Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration” (New York, United Nations, 2017). Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/events/coordination/15/documents/Report%20of%20SRSG%20on%20Migration%20-%20A.71.728_ADVANCE.pdf

Since 1979, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been implementing assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes to provide a human rights-based, migrant-friendly and cost-effective option⁶ to migrants whose journeys have often taken a different route than what initially expected and who desire or need to return home but lack the means to do so. In December 2018, IOM released a key publication titled *A Framework for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration* (hereinafter referred to as the *Framework*). This article looks at the evolution of voluntary return and reintegration programmes that has led to the development of the AVRR framework. The write-up outlines the main elements of the latter – in particular its principles and objectives – and explains how the framework contributes to achieving the global goals of the international community. Finally, this feature focuses on the next steps for the implementation of the framework.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration 1979–2019: An evolving global concept with different local practices

The first AVRR activities were implemented in Germany nearly 40 years ago. Since then, IOM has provided humane and dignified support for the return and reintegration of over 1.6 million people throughout the world. Throughout the years, AVRR concepts and practices have undergone major changes, mainly owing to the evolving environment in which AVRR programmes are implemented.

Firstly, AVRR has gradually expanded beyond Europe and is now embedded in national policies and return migration practices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Americas and the Western Balkans. Between 2014 and 2017, the share of voluntary returns operated by IOM from non-European Economic Area (EEA)

countries rose from 15 to 30 per cent of all such activities. This share grew even more in 2018 to reach approximately 45 per cent of all returns operated by IOM during the year.⁷ This shows that although the EEA remains the area from which most AVRR projects are implemented by IOM as the region where the concept of AVRR was first introduced, AVRR is now embedded in the migration policy frameworks and migration management systems of many countries worldwide.

Secondly, in the last five years, other important key trends that have been observed are the increasing number of voluntary returns from so-called transit countries, for instance from Greece, Turkey and the Niger; the higher volumes of voluntary returns South–South, particularly within the Middle East and the African continent;⁸ and the increased vulnerability to which migrants are exposed due to dangerous migration routes. From 2016 to 2017, the share of migrants in vulnerable situations assisted by IOM with return and reintegration increased from 3 per cent to almost 5 per cent of the overall caseload.⁹

Thirdly, the past few years have witnessed an increase in the number and variety of actors funding and/or involved in the implementation of voluntary return and reintegration programmes. Some governments in Europe have taken a more active role in handling return programmes through their own administrations, their cooperation agencies or through super national bodies.¹⁰

6 The cost of deportation is estimated by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, to be on average 5,800 euros per individual deportee (see: M. Civillini and L. Bagnoli, “Skyrocketing costs for returning EU migrants” (*EUobserver*, 5 May 2017), available from <https://euobserver.com/migration/137720>). Canada Border Service Agency estimates the cost at 1,500 Canadian dollars for unescorted removals and 15,000 Canadian dollars for escorted removals (see: K. Pauls, “Here’s how Canadian taxpayers and private agencies help asylum seekers” (*CBC*, 15 March 2017), available from www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/asylum-seekers-benefits-1.4023251), while the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (see: www.ice.gov/) spends on average 10,854 US dollars per individual deportee.

7 IOM, “Assisted voluntary return and reintegration bulletin”, fourth quarter, 1 October–31 December 2018. Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/iom-avrr-bulletin-2018-4.pdf

8 More recently, the AVRR approach has also found application in humanitarian settings in the form of voluntary humanitarian return (VHR). For example, in 2017 and 2018, IOM provided identification and assistance to return home safely, mostly to West Africa, to more than 35,000 migrants previously in detention or stranded in Libya.

9 IOM, *Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration 2017 Key Highlights* (Geneva, 2018). Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/avrr-2017-key-highlights.pdf

10 For instance, in 2017, the European Union called for the strengthening of the role and mandate of Frontex in the field of return, including for voluntary departures.

Importantly, there has been renewed interest among development actors in supporting sustainable reintegration. In this respect, it is worth noting that AVRR was not originally conceived as a tool to generate development in countries of origin but rather as a migration management instrument to facilitate the humane and dignified return of migrants who were unable or unwilling to remain in host countries. For this reason, Ministries of Interior or their equivalent at the regional and/or international levels have traditionally been the main donors for AVRR programmes. Throughout the years, reintegration support has been progressively added to AVR interventions, first in the form of limited cash assistance and then in that of more comprehensive packages to support returning individuals. This positive evolution reflected not only the policymakers' willingness to provide an incentive for migrants to leave voluntarily (as opposed to be forcibly removed or remain irregularly in the host countries) but also that assistance to migrants upon return is necessary to support their reintegration process and make it sustainable.

Recent interest from development actors has reshaped the thinking over the ultimate goals of AVRR and with regard to the nexus between return, reintegration and development. In this sense, stronger attention than ever before is now being devoted to the role that communities of origin can play in making reintegration more successful and how reintegration programmes should be designed and implemented to cater for the needs and priorities of those family members and peers who did not have the opportunity to migrate or who did not receive any support in their reintegration process. This change has also brought stronger focus on the need to promote migrant protection during the return and reintegration process, to enhance ownership of local actors, and to reinforce capacities in the provision of return- and reintegration-related services, in line with established development plans.

Among other initiatives, this new approach to reintegration is currently being implemented with the support of the European Union (EU). Indeed, the EU–IOM Joint Initiative on Migrant Protection and Reintegration, which was launched in December 2016 with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, is the first comprehensive programme to save lives and protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa. Covering 26 African countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa and North Africa, this initiative aims at

helping returning migrants restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities, thus having the potential to complement local development and mitigating some of the drivers of irregular migration.¹¹

A framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration

Reflecting these developments, IOM has developed an AVRR framework with three key objectives: (1) reaffirm the key tenets of AVRR in an “increasingly interconnected and interdependent world”;¹² (2) guide decision makers and practitioners in the design and implementation of AVRR-related policies and programmes; and (3) propose a road map to address voluntary return and reintegration holistically, based on coordinated policies and practices between stakeholders responsible for migration management and development at the international, national and local levels. This article focuses specifically on the first objective, highlighting how the framework's principles and objective contribute to the achievement of global commitments.

The AVRR framework articulates IOM's vision, which is that “migrants in need are assisted to return voluntarily, safely and in dignity and are supported in achieving sustainable reintegration, in full respect for human rights and regardless of their status”.¹³ To achieve this goal, the framework underlines that AVRR programmes be anchored in international law and rest on two pillars. First is the protection of the rights of migrants, regardless of their nationality or migration status and without discrimination, in order to preserve their safety, physical integrity, well-being and dignity. These rights are outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the nine core international human rights treaties.¹⁴ Second is the principle that States have the sovereign right

11 See: <http://migrationjointinitiative.org/>

12 For further information, please refer to: IOM, *World Migration Report 2018* (Geneva, 2017), p. 27. Available from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

13 To access the publication *A Framework for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration*, see: <https://publications.iom.int/books/framework-assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration>

14 The nine core international human rights treaties are available from www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx

to determine who may enter and remain on their territory, subject to their respective obligations under international law (including the principle of non-refoulement).

The AVRR framework sets out seven key principles that in IOM's view should be adhered to in order to support dignified voluntary return and sustainable reintegration.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration principles

- **Voluntariness.** In the context of AVRR, voluntariness is assumed to exist if two conditions apply: (1) there is *freedom of choice*, which is defined by the absence of physical or psychological pressure to enrol in an AVRR programme; and (2) the returnee can make an *informed decision*, which requires the availability of timely, unbiased and reliable information upon which to base the decision.
- **Migrant-centred response.** AVRR puts the rights and needs of the migrant at the forefront. Individual assessments should be undertaken to provide tailored support to each migrant throughout the return and reintegration process in a gender- and age-sensitive manner. This is particularly important for migrants in vulnerable situations, who may require a thorough assessment of their situation and targeted assistance that meets their specific needs.
- **Safety.** AVRR programmes need to take into account safety considerations, such as the general level of security, and operational challenges that may affect the provision of return and reintegration assistance. Returns to certain regions or countries may need to be limited or suspended if one or a combination of these factors amounts to a situation which poses a threat to the safety of returning migrants and/or staff involved in the provision of AVRR assistance.
- **Sustainability of reintegration.** The sustainability of migrant reintegration is at the core of the AVRR approach. Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice rather than necessity.
- **Confidentiality.** Migrant privacy needs to be respected by putting in place strict safeguards for handling personal data of AVRR beneficiaries, taking all reasonable and necessary precautions to preserve the confidentiality of personal data and the anonymity of individuals. All personal data must be collected, used, transferred and stored securely in accordance with international data protection standards.¹⁵
- **Dialogue and partnerships.** Institutional dialogue fosters constructive and balanced exchanges between stakeholders involved at different stages of the AVRR process. It promotes a common understanding of challenges related to return and reintegration while informing and influencing policy development. Cooperation between a variety of actors – government and non-governmental – at the international, regional, national and subnational levels is required to enhance the range and quality of return assistance available to migrants, avoid duplication of efforts and foster the sustainability of reintegration.
- **Evidence-based programming.** Systematic and continuous data collection, and monitoring and evaluation have to be established throughout the entire AVRR process to understand the impact of AVRR interventions and inform ongoing and future programme designs. Feedback mechanisms should also be in place to allow migrants to express their views on the assistance received in an open and confidential manner.

Operational objectives: Putting principles into action

The AVRR framework also defines six key objectives and related activities that inform the implementation of AVRR programmes and projects. With regard to facilitating voluntary return, the framework highlights the importance of migrants being able to make an informed decision and take ownership of the voluntary return process (Objective 1), and of ensuring they reach their countries of origin in a safe and dignified manner (Objective 2). When it comes to

15 The standards include the principle of lawful and fair collection of data, for a specified and legitimate purpose, the principles of consent, confidentiality, access and transparency, and data security. For the IOM data protection principles, see: *IOM Data Protection Manual* (Geneva, 2010), available from http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomdataprotection_web.pdf

sustainable reintegration, the framework underscores the need for an integrated approach, through which returnees are able to overcome individual challenges to reintegration (Objective 3), communities have the capacity to provide an enabling environment for reintegration (Objective 4), and adequate policies and public services are in place to address the specific needs of returnees and communities alike (Objective 5). Finally, the framework insists on the importance of ensuring that migrant vulnerabilities are addressed throughout the voluntary return and reintegration process (Objective 6).

Stemming from the principles and objectives of the AVRR framework, IOM has recently taken important steps at the global level that complement and reinforce the initiatives implemented in the field. IOM has developed a new scale of indicators to measure reintegration sustainability at the individual level together with a scoring system, allowing to measure reintegration outcomes and to facilitate the measurement of returnees' progress towards sustainability (see the article "Measuring Sustainable Reintegration" in this issue of *Migration Policy Practice*). In the same vein, IOM is developing a reintegration handbook and a training curriculum,¹⁶ which will provide practical guidance to internal and external practitioners and policymakers on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance, ensuring a consistent approach. It is foreseen that the reintegration handbook will be released in the first half of 2019. Lastly, to build on its efforts in the field of sustainable reintegration, in 2019, IOM will also launch a knowledge management online portal with an overall aim of strengthening information-sharing and harmonization of return and reintegration approaches, processes and tools as well as centralizing and disseminating knowledge in the field of return and reintegration.

As outlined in the framework's priorities for the future, additional efforts need to be made, among others, to enhance the quality and standardize AVRR support, particularly for migrants in vulnerable situations, promote dialogue and joint programming between host and transit countries and countries of origin, and strengthen accountability and feedback mechanisms on return and reintegration.

16 These tools are part of the Operationalize an Integrated Approach to Reintegration (ORION) project, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development under the Safety, Support and Solutions in the Central Mediterranean Route programme.

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration framework: A contribution to the implementation of global goals

The principles and objectives outlined in IOM's framework underpin the Organization's commitment to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and to contribute to migrants' socioeconomic well-being, in line with its Migration Governance Framework, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration.

More precisely, in the context of the Agenda for Sustainable Development, States pledged under Target 10.7 to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through facilitation of voluntary returns, thereby underlining the relevance of AVRR as an essential pillar of migration management and as a preferred option for migrants to return in a humane and dignified manner. In addition, AVRR contributes to Target 10.2, which intends to empower/promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status by supporting returnees in their economic, social and psychosocial reintegration processes in their countries and communities of origin.

Through local partnerships and cooperation in the implementation of and referrals for reintegration support, AVRR is also relevant to achieving Target 17.17, which aims to encourage and promote effective public, public–private and civil society partnership. Finally, by engaging and building the capacity of relevant stakeholders at the local, regional and national levels, AVRR programmes foster a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the importance of well-managed return policies, thereby relating to Target 17.9, which focuses on the need to enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation. Such an approach is particularly relevant to countries facing challenges and/or limited capacity in reintegrating returning migrants.

As far as the Global Compact for Migration is concerned, the AVRR framework contributes directly to Objective 21, and more specifically actions 21.b, 21.f, 21.h, 21.i and 21.g, which focus,

among other things, on voluntary programmes, migrant children, evidence-based programming, monitoring and sustainable reintegration. The framework also contributes to actions 3.c and 12.e as well as Objectives 4, 7 and 13, which focus on the availability of information, the provision of accurate and timely information, addressing and reducing migrant vulnerabilities, access to documentation and alternatives to detention. These are all core issues of the AVRR framework's principles and objectives as highlighted above.

Conclusion

Recent developments in the global political agenda reflect the growing recognition among policymakers that both return and reintegration are essential aspects of the migration cycle. The question, therefore, is no longer whether return and reintegration should be managed but rather how they can be managed for the benefit of migrants, host and transit countries, and countries of origin.

For 40 years, IOM's AVRR programmes have provided a means to meet the most challenging aspects of return and reintegration, addressing migrant aspirations and government concerns concurrently. The latest evolution of migration trends, donors' interest and the number of actors involved in return and reintegration have resulted in new opportunities for AVRR, first and foremost to strengthen the link between reintegration and development and thus contribute more effectively to global priorities.

The recently published *Framework* outlines the value of AVRR as an essential pillar of migration management, enabling migrants to return in a voluntary, humane and dignified manner and to reintegrate sustainably. The scope of the framework goes beyond IOM's own engagement and is intended to guide policymakers and practitioners involved in the design and implementation of AVRR programmes. Cooperation between all these actors will determine the success of its implementation. ■

The AVRR framework articulates IOM's vision, which is that “migrants in need are assisted to return voluntarily, safely and in dignity and are supported in achieving sustainable reintegration, in full respect for human rights and regardless of their status”.



Towards child-rights compliance in return and reintegration

Natalia Alonso Cano and Irina Todorova¹

Introduction

In recent years, the topic of migration has been increasingly in the spotlight of political discourse. The negative perspective on migration found in public discourse and reflected in the political arena has an influential impact on the future of individual migrants. People on the move are often generalized into the simple-seeming category of irregular migrants and are expected to return home. In reality, people on the move encompass regular and irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and the same persons may move between different categories several times along their journey. Actors who contribute to the decision-making procedure and implementation concerning return may not consider that migrants are not a homogenous group of people but exhibit a distinct set of needs and vulnerabilities. To a large extent, they include migrant children.

As for our undisputable understanding of internationally agreed law, children are more vulnerable and in need of protection than adults. Yet, migration authorities often treat migrant children as mere cases for asylum-status assessment instead of treating them as children in the first place, as supposed to be.² As a result, children in return procedure may experience disproportionately harsh treatment, inadequate care, lack of options and even

the threat of serious harm upon return.³ Therefore, policymakers, asylum officials, social workers and other actors working with migrant children should be urged to approach their cases in a manner that is firstly compliant with their rights as children and only in a second step with their status as migrants.

Best interests of the child: The core principle for durable solutions for migrant children

Considering the best interests of the child in the case of migrant children means finding a durable solution for them that secures their long-term protection, survival and development needs whether they are within a family or as unaccompanied children. Durable solutions may involve settling and further integrating in the country of current residence, returning to and reintegrating in the country of origin, or resettling to a third country as a family unit or to facilitate family reunification. Consequently, the identification of a durable solution should be based on a comprehensive approach, having reviewed the different possible options to identify which would best safeguard the best interests of the individual child, and ensures the child's development into adulthood in a safe and supporting environment.

States are obligated to assess and take the child's best interests as a primary consideration in individual decisions and should not be overridden by other considerations such as migration management.

Any action concerning migrant children – from the moment of identification to the final decision on their legal status and integration procedure, resettlement or return/transfer for family reunification purposes – ought to be conducted in the best interests of the child. This applies to all children, no matter if they are unaccompanied or in the care of family members.

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2 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Principle 10, *Principles and Guidelines, Supported by Practical Guidance, on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations* (2018). Available from www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf

3 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs (UN OCHA), *Humanitarian Needs Overview 2018: Afghanistan* (2017), p. 13. Available from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afg_2018_humanitarian_needs_overview_1.pdf

The “best interests of the child” is defined by the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child as a threefold concept: it is a right, a principle and a rule of procedure.⁴

- **A substantive right:** The child has a right “to have his or her best interests assessed and taken as a primary consideration”.⁵
- **A legal principle:** “If a legal provision is open to more than one interpretation, the interpretation which most effectively serves the child’s best interests should be chosen.”⁶
- **A rule of procedure:** “Whenever a decision is made that will affect a specific child, an identified group of children or children in general, the decision-making process must include an evaluation of the possible impact (positive or negative) of the decision on the child concerned.”⁷

In addition, the principle of the best interests of the child is discussed in significant international agreements such as the following:

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC):** Article 3 of the UN CRC states that “in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”.⁸
- **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (hereinafter referred to as the Global Compact for Migration) as well as European Union (EU) legislation:**⁹ More concretely, Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Migration discusses safe

and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration. Objective 21 action (g) calls to “ensure that return and readmission processes involving children are carried out only after a determination of the best interests of the child, take into account the right to family life, family unity, and that a parent, legal guardian or specialized official accompanies the child throughout the return process, ensuring that appropriate reception, care and reintegration arrangements for children are in place in the country of origin upon return”.¹⁰

- **EU asylum and return instruments:** These include the 2008 Return Directive¹¹ and the 2017 Communication on the Protection of Children in Migration.¹²

However, since the implementation of the Return Directive in 2008, European and national courts have received cases of violations of migrant children’s rights, ruling for annulments of decisions concerning removal¹³ or detention of children¹⁴ and their parents.¹⁵ The necessity of supervision through domestic and international high courts illustrates a discrepancy between existing legal instruments to foster return and/or reintegration procedure in the best interests of the child and the lack of practical implementation of this principle.

4 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “General comment no. 14 on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (art. 3, para. 1)”, CRC/C/GC/14 (29 May 2013), paragraph 6. Available from www.refworld.org/docid/51a84b5e4.html

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Article 3, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), (1989). Available from www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

9 European Migration Network (EMN), *Approaches to Unaccompanied Minors following Status Determination in the EU plus Norway* (Brussels, EMN, European Commission, 2018). Available from http://emn.ie/files/p_201808090907072018_emn_sythesis_unaccompanied_minors_09.08.2018.pdf

10 Objective 21(g), Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018). Available from https://refugeemigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

11 European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and Council of the European Union, of 16 December 2008, on Common Standards and Procedures in Member States for Returning Illegally Staying Third-Country Nationals (*Official Journal of the European Union*, 24 December 2008). Available from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:348:0098:0107:EN:PDF>

12 European Commission (EC), “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The protection of children in migration” (Brussels, 2017). Available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170412_communication_on_the_protection_of_children_in_migration_en.pdf. Additionally, the principle of the best interests of the child is equally reflected in the proposal for the Return Directive’s recast.

13 *ZH (Tanzania) v Secretary of State for the Home Department*, United Kingdom Supreme Court 4 (2011).

14 *Rahimi v Greece*, European Court of Human Rights (2011).

15 *Nunez v Norway*, European Court of Human Rights (2011).

To enhance the application of the best interests of the child and properly exercise children’s rights, the principle of the child’s best interests should not only appear as a subcategory of migration management but must be of primary consideration in the entire approach to accompanied and unaccompanied migrant children.¹⁶

In this article, the authors suggest concrete recommendations to policymakers and administrative officials for child rights-compliant assessment, decision and implementation in voluntary return and reintegration procedure, underlying the necessity to prioritize the best interests of the child in all procedural and operational steps.

Upon arrival and during consideration of a durable solution

Individually tailored, safe, independent and impartial procedures should be adopted for migrant children upon arrival and during the consideration of a durable solution, including return. These procedures should be underpinned by the core principle of the **best interests of the child** complemented by the principle of non-refoulement and the right to be heard.

The best interests of the child – discussed above – should be systematically considered in the entire process, from the moment the child is identified until a durable solution is found for the child.

The principle of non-refoulement protects migrant children from return to countries where there are substantial grounds for believing they will be at real risk of irreparable harm. A child rights perspective on this principle includes a substantiated risk to the child’s life, survival and development as well as deprivation of liberty.¹⁷ Cases where children are turned back at borders or returned to their countries of origin or third countries without an assessment or determination of their claim to international protection might amount to a violation of this non-refoulement principle.

The right to be heard¹⁸ requires respect for the child’s right to express his or her views freely and for those views to be taken into account in all decisions in line with the child’s evolving capacity. It entails that the views and opinions should be heard throughout the process, including keeping the child informed about the process, collecting information from the child, seeking his or her view, and exploring available sustainable solutions and possible outcomes with the child.

These core principles should be incorporated in the implementation of procedures with the following considerations:

Guidelines: When a child is found to be irregularly present on a territory, immigration authorities should be able to refer to and implement the guidelines/national legal framework for children’s rights-compliant procedure to provide immediate protection and assistance, as well as seek for a durable solution for the child’s future, considering at all stages the best interests of the child. They should emphasize the need for systematic consideration of the individual circumstances of the child, irrespective of the circumstances of the parents.

Also, the procedures should foresee the assessment of the child’s sense of home, the possibilities for individual development, and family tracing and assessment. Family unity should be respected throughout the whole process unless it has been demonstrated that this is not in the child’s best interests.¹⁹ In addition, family unity considerations should not be used to justify immigration detention.

Reception: Upon arrival, as mentioned above, procedures should be individually tailored, safe, independent and impartial. Children should not be screened by immigration or border enforcement officials, but rather should undergo a multidisciplinary assessment conducted by trained child-sensitive cultural mediators, social workers, psychologists, doctors and lawyers. The professionals should avoid repeated interviews with the child on his or her traumatic events/journey to avoid any additional harm or putting the child at risk of reliving the negative experience.

16 EC, “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: The protection of children in migration” (2017).

17 Initiative on Child Rights in the Global Compacts, “Child-rights compliant returns as part of sustainable solutions for migrant children” (May 2018). Available from www.childrenonthemove.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Initiative-response-to-the-GCM-draft.pdf

18 Article 12, UN CRC.

19 Committee on the Rights of the Child, “General comment no. 6: Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin”, thirty-ninth session (2005), paragraph 81. Available from www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/GC6.pdf

Case study on assistance from IOM Slovakia

Three male unaccompanied children from Afghanistan were found on Slovak territory. Due to the lack of documentation, their declared age of 15 remained uncertified. Upon a medical examination, the age was confirmed. The boys were taken into a children's home and provided with a legal guardian; they also received relevant assistance and Slovak language lessons. IOM Slovakia provided a lawyer and an interpreter. The lawyer and guardians discussed with the children the available legal options: to apply for international protection; to stay in the children's home with a granted tolerated stay permit until the age of 18; to reunify with family members in the EU under the scope of the Dublin Regulation;* or to opt for assisted voluntary return and reintegration. Taking into consideration all the possible outcomes, two of the boys decided to apply for asylum, while the third applied to be transferred to Germany under the Dublin Regulation to stay there with his brother.

* See: <https://eea.iom.int/publications/promoting-family-reunification-and-transfer-unaccompanied-minor-asylum-seekers-umass>

As a first step, each child's physical and psychological state should be evaluated on the spot to detect the individual needs and immediate assistance to be provided.

In case of missing documentation, the age of the child might remain unclear. Anyone claiming to be underage²⁰ should be granted the benefit of the doubt and thus be treated accordingly²¹ until an age assessment can be conducted in a respectful, non-invasive and multidisciplinary manner.²² The assessment must be explained, providing child-friendly information in a language that the child understands.²³ Gender- and culture-sensitive medical

20 Everyone under the age of 18 is to be considered and treated as a child. Nevertheless, IOM experiences that authorities frequently apply standards of adults for children of 17 years of age.

21 Committee on the Rights of the Child, "General comment no. 6" (2005), paragraph 31.

22 European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *Age Assessment Practice in Europe* (Luxembourg, 2013). Available from www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/public/EASO-Age-assessment-practice-in-Europe1.pdf

23 Council of Europe, "Child-friendly age assessment for unaccompanied migrant children" (2017). Available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20170920-Rapport%20Fiala-EN.pdf>

examinations should be conducted by professionals who are familiar with the child's cultural and developmental characteristics.

Once the child is safe, he or she has a right to and must be informed about his or her legal rights. The child's wishes and views should be heard and taken into account in accordance with his or her age and maturity.

Considerations for unaccompanied and separated migrant children: If migrant children are identified as unaccompanied, they should be provided appropriate accommodation in a safe and protective environment, separated from adult migrants, such as in qualified foster care. Additionally, unaccompanied and separated migrant children should receive a provisional qualified and trained guardian either from the government or a relevant non-governmental organization (NGO) with which they can create a relationship of trust.²⁴ The guardian has an overview of the child's activities and gives his or her consent about decisions concerning the child's education and social life.

As part of the return consideration procedure for unaccompanied and separated migrant children, the child's family should be traced and assessed to reunify the child with the family if it is found in his or her best interest.²⁵

Detention: The authors would like to stress that detention due to the migration status should, under no circumstances, be considered suitable for children. Detention, even for a short period, can have a devastating effect on a child's mental health, well-being and development. The experience of force, physical restraints or family separation will likely result in traumatic experiences that migrant children must not be confronted with, especially considering the high probability that they might have already been through distress during their situation on the move.

24 IOM, "Addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Greece" (Athens, 2015), p. 16. Available from https://greece.iom.int/sites/default/files/IOM%20Greece_UAM%20final_0.pdf

25 Family tracing and assessment should be conducted unless determined not to be in the best interest of the child. See: EC, *Comparative Study on Practices in the Field of Return of Minors* (2011), p. 166. Available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/pdf/general/return_of_children-final.pdf

Incidents of young children being put in detention in EU Member States have been found to be inhumane and inappropriate to their vulnerable condition.²⁶ A case of a five-year-old Congolese girl who was arrested at the Brussels airport after entering Belgium without legal documentation²⁷ can serve as an example. The girl was kept in detention for two months under the same conditions as adult migrants instead of being placed under the care of a guardian. In such drastic cases, courts of several EU Member States have ruled that detention is not compliant with children’s nor with family rights. Alternatives to detention exist and have proved operational and cost effective. Nevertheless, half of the Member States still allow detention of unaccompanied children for asylum or return processes,²⁸ leaving considerable additional potential for more child-rights compliance.

Good practice

In a joint regional project of IOM, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Save the Children,* actors from seven EU Member States cooperated to support migrant children in Europe. The project included concretely the provision of age-appropriate information to children on their protection rights. The content was provided orally and via information sheets that are accessible in seven different languages.

*See: www.iom.hu/childprotection/

Key considerations for safe return and sustainable reintegration

After the assessment of the child’s best interests has been conducted, the child’s wishes have been heard, and all valuable information on the child’s and the family’s situation has been gathered, immigration authorities, in consultation with other relevant actors, need to make the decision whether the child should remain within the territory, resettle in a third country or return to his or her country of origin. In

any case, the most sustainable decision for the future of the child should be made. Consequently, family reunification should always be preferred, unless the family assessment has proven that this would not be in the best interests of the child.

Before proceeding with return and reintegration, the following should be considered:

- The child has been well informed and has expressed a will for voluntary decision to return.²⁹ For children accompanied by families, the decision to participate in voluntary return and reintegration is made by the family members of age. In this case, it should nevertheless be ensured that the child’s opinion is heard and that the child agrees to his or her family’s decision. For both, accompanied and unaccompanied children, it must be provided that, upon return, no child will be at risk of harm, or of (re)trafficking or exploitation.³⁰
- As part of the family assessment, the family’s or the legal guardian’s financial situation (possible outstanding debts to smugglers or traffickers which could threaten the child’s safety to return) and willingness for return of the child should be taken into consideration.
- The child’s chances to reintegrate into the country of origin, particularly into the educational system, should be examined. When voluntary return and reintegration is considered for unaccompanied and separated children, it must be additionally assured that specifically determined persons or agencies will be responsible for the child’s care and custody.
- It is of high importance to underline that forced removal of children (whether unaccompanied or within their families) should only be considered as a last resort as it will hardly ever be in the best interests of the children concerned. Instead, voluntary return with adequate assistance throughout the return and reintegration process

26 Ibid., p. 92.

27 *Mubilanzila Mayeka and Kaniki Mitunga v Belgium*, European Court of Human Rights (2006).

28 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *European Legal and Policy Framework on Immigration Detention of Children* (Vienna, 2017), p. 36. Available from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/child-migrant-detention>

29 See: EC Directive 2008/115, available from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:348:0098:0107:EN:PDF>; IOM, “Supporting safe, orderly and dignified Migration through assisted voluntary return and reintegration”, Global Compact thematic paper (2017), available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Assisted-Voluntary-Return-and-Reintegration.pdf

30 EC, *Comparative Study on Practices in the Field of Return of Minors* (2011), p. 177.

should always be considered the preferred option. Where voluntary departure does not occur, procedural and operational safeguards must be followed and ensured before deciding whether to proceed with removal, and during the implementation of such a decision.

Implementing voluntary return with the best interests of the child at its heart

If voluntary return and reintegration has been identified and agreed upon as a durable solution, it must be assured that it is implemented in the best interests of the child. This applies to the entire return and reintegration procedure, beginning with pre-departure support and counselling. The scheduling of the departure should be organized consensually.

While waiting to return, children should continue having access to safe accommodation, education and health services.³¹ This includes the condition that the pre-departure period should be as long as necessary for children to finish their school year and to take account of family or social relations.³²

The actual return procedure should be conducted in a child-sensitive manner, especially regarding unaccompanied and separated children. This means that unaccompanied children should be escorted by appointed staff on their return journey and be welcomed at the destination by a family member or a legal guardian.

If family reunification has been determined to be against the interests of the child, a State agency ought to take charge of the child. The agency must be provided with sufficient information to be able to take over the care of and custodial responsibilities for the child.

Lastly, return and reintegration in the best interests of the child foresees post-arrival and reintegration

support.³³ This can include financial support, legal assistance, and access to education and social services. To ensure sustainable reintegration for any child, a number of conditions should be in place: legal safety with valid documentation; physical safety with adequate and protected space to live and learn; material safety in the receiving communities; and psychosocial safety to ensure well-being.

IOM Slovakia created a reintegration scheme focused on the medical assistance to the autistic child of an Azeri family. The plan covered a six-month stay in a day-care centre and provision of accommodation for the parents. During daycare, the boy received therapy for children affected by autism. IOM Slovakia coordinated the implementation of reintegration with IOM counterparts from Azerbaijan.

The reintegration should follow an individually tailored plan that takes into consideration the views of the child, includes immediate protection measures and long-term solutions, and should be monitored closely by stakeholders from the country of current residence as well as the country of origin.³⁴ While primary reintegration assistance is often provided by international organizations and NGOs, long-term reintegration plans should be led by the national authorities of the country of origin in close collaboration with the family.

The success of the whole return and reintegration relies on a close cooperation between various stakeholders who are often not fully informed or connected to each other. Thus, cross-border cooperation and communication between them is necessary.

Prior to actual return, the successful work and results are based on collaboration between the public, private and volunteering sectors, including various ministries, NGOs, migrant communities, social workers and medical staff.³⁵ It is therefore highly recommended that close dialogue, agreement and cooperation be established between countries of return and countries of origin, as well as the actors involved, to achieve a swift, effective and sustainable solution for the child at all stages of the return and reintegration process.

31 EC, *Comparative Study on Practices in the Field of Return of Minors* (2011), p. 181.

32 Article 7(2), EC Directive 2008/155, available from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:348:0098:0107:EN:PDF>; section 6.1, *EU Return Handbook*, available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/return_handbook_en.pdf

33 Objective 21, Global Compact for Migration (2018).

34 IOM, "Addressing the needs of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) in Greece", p. 17.

35 Ibid.

Furthermore, a posterior/follow-up cooperation is desirable, as it enables a multidisciplinary monitoring of the child's well-being and reinforces the sustainability of reintegration. Return monitoring is most effective as part of an integrated child protection system led from the national level with adequate support to local authorities. A post-return monitoring plan for a minimum period of 24 months is recommended based on extensive experience to ensure that the child receives adequate support towards sustainable reintegration.

Conclusion

An efficient way to achieve return that is compliant with child rights is to strive for procedure, decision and implementation that envision the child's best interests as a primary consideration rather than a subordinate criterion of a migrant-classification assessment. At all stages of the migration cycle, children must receive treatment and care that responds to their own needs and high vulnerabilities in a prompt manner to avoid any further risks and trauma to the child. Furthermore, family unity has to be prioritized as long as it is in the child's best interests.

Measuring success of returns should not rely on the primary indicator of the rate of returns but rather on how these returns are performed and how they avoid creating further cycles of precarious and insecure migration that result in increased suffering, human rights violations and abuse of children. Indicators of success should be based on attainment of rights compliance, levels of protection and sustainable reintegration.

Stakeholders deciding upon a child's future should be aware that their decision will impact the child's well-being and the development of the child into adulthood. We should engage ourselves to secure a safe and sustainable future for migrant children who, above all, should be treated in a manner that is appropriate to their age, regardless of their origin or legal status. ■

At all stages of the migration cycle, children must receive treatment and care that responds to their own needs and high vulnerabilities in a prompt manner to avoid any further risks and trauma to the child.



The contribution of local governments to the reintegration process: The experience of Zacatecoluca, El Salvador

Dr Francisco Salvador Hirezi Morataya¹

Introduction

Governance for safe, regular and orderly migration is at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and many of the structural factors that are linked to migration dynamics are closely connected to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Similarly, there is hope that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration strengthens coordination in the multidimensional environment of international migration and serves as a framework to address migrant-related issues, human mobility and other aspects of international migration.

In parallel to these global frameworks, the implementation of comprehensive policies for preventing irregular migration and for managing returnees has the potential to have a positive impact on the quality of life and the development of communities and countries of origin.

Implementation of national policies: The role of local governments

There is growing awareness of the capacity of local governments or municipalities to effectively implement policies and programmes as a result of their direct contact with their citizens and their potential to mobilize participation. They are also an ideal instrument for the local implementation of national policies and the development of targeted initiatives.

In the area of migration, local governments can lead the development of good practices for the prevention of irregular migration and the effective management

of reintegration of returnees through the support of strong institutions, the creation of strategic alliances and capacity-building aimed at strengthening their leadership.

This article presents the case of the municipality of Zacatecoluca in El Salvador. By means of comprehensive strategies and strategic partnerships, it has taken advantage of the opportunities offered by migration and the return of migrants. Rather than be impacted by the challenges related to migration, this community has in fact managed to improve its performance in municipal competitiveness indexes and has consistently reduced the levels of violence experienced in the locality.

The article is structured in three sections. The first section covers the context of migration in El Salvador and the social and economic conditions that affected Zacatecoluca before the implementation of a programme that aimed to prevent irregular migration and to support the reintegration of returnees.

The second section describes the community and national initiatives implemented by the municipality, including the creation of the Office of Assistance to Migrants and Their Families in Zacatecoluca as well as the Return and Reintegration Project.

Finally, the third section gathers conclusions drawn from the experience in Zacatecoluca, as well as general observations that can guide the work of other communities that face challenges and opportunities associated with the return and reintegration of migrants.

Context

The recent history of El Salvador is marked by the exodus of almost 3 million Salvadorans (approximately 33% of its population) as a result of an armed conflict that took place in the 1980s, increased insecurity and natural catastrophes. Family reunification, in particular for unaccompanied and separated children, as well as the difficulty faced by the population to build a decent

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life, have been, among others, important factors that led to migration.

Widespread violence in El Salvador poses important challenges to the progress of development. It is one of the factors that hinders the availability of job opportunities for the youth. Likewise, violence has negatively impacted educational centres, preventing education from becoming an asset for the social mobility of people. A significant number of young people drop out of the education system when they feel threatened.² Similarly, violence has had a negative impact on family stability; in many instances, migration, both internal and external, has led to family separation for prolonged periods of time.

It is estimated that approximately one third of the Salvadoran population live outside the country, 93.5 per cent of whom in the United States, where they represent the second largest migrant population of Latin Americans after the Mexican community and constitute the sixth largest immigrant population.³

In 2017, the number of people forcibly returned to El Salvador totaled 26,463, of whom 23,938 were adults and 2,231 were children and adolescents.⁴ The deportees are mostly young men between 18 and 25 years of age, although there has been an increase in women and children over the last two years.⁵

One of the greatest challenges associated with returns to El Salvador has been to analyse and systematize in detail the characteristics and needs of the returnees, in order to better design support programmes. Such programmes should allow them to reintegrate into the economic and social dynamics of their community, facilitating the sustainability of their reintegration in the country and avoiding a new attempt to migrate irregularly.

There is a need to strengthen assistance and reintegration programmes in the municipalities with the greatest migratory flows and with the largest number of returnees while incorporating the suggestions from the XX Vice-Ministerial Meeting of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) on the processes of integration, return and reintegration in the design of policies and programmes.⁶

The study *Perfil Laboral de la Población Guatemalteca Migrante Retornada, para su Reinserción Laboral*⁷ contains observations applicable to the management of return and reintegration processes in the countries of the Northern Triangle of Central America (NTCA). Among them is the need to address the stigma associated with being forcibly returned to one's country of origin following an administrative or judicial decision. Likewise, deportation is a painful process for migrants that is exacerbated by the conditions that migrants have been exposed to during their migration process: violence, discrimination, stigmatization, family disintegration, loss of assets and living environment, among others. To address this particular situation and facilitate the social and labour reintegration of returnees, there is a need for the creation of dignified and quality employment opportunities, and also complimentary psychosocial support.

It is estimated that the average cost of an irregular migration attempt is USD 6,384 when carried out through a smuggler, popularly referred to as a coyote. Forty-one per cent (41%) of these attempts are paid by family members abroad, 32.3 per cent by loans, 21.7 per cent by using savings and 5.8 per cent through other sources of funding.⁸ In the case of returnees who used loans to travel, the return implies paying off these debts without having fulfilled their objective, a fact that they will have to face once back in their

2 Fundación Salvadoreña para el Desarrollo Económico y Social, *Factores de Riesgo y Protección para la Prevención de la Violencia en Jóvenes Escolares de El Salvador* (La Libertad, 2016).

3 Gobierno de El Salvador, *Política Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante Salvadoreña y Su Familia* (2017), p. 24.

4 International Organization for Migration (IOM)/Northern Triangle Migration Information Management Initiative (NTMI), "El Salvador: Cifras oficiales de retornos, enero–diciembre 2017". Available from <http://mic.iom.int/webntmi/descargas/sv/2017/12/dic2017SV.pdf>

5 Gobierno de El Salvador, *Política Nacional para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante Salvadoreña y Su Familia* (2017).

6 XX Reunión Viceministerial Conferencia Regional sobre Migración (CRM), "Integración, retorno y reinserción social y productiva de las personas migrantes", Mexico City, November 2015.

7 Gobierno de la República de Guatemala, Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social, Programa Empleo Juvenil, *Perfil Laboral de la Población Guatemalteca Migrante Retornada, para su Reinserción Laboral* (Dirección General de Empleo, Departamento de Movilidad Laboral, 2017).

8 Gobierno de El Salvador, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores; La Dirección General de Estadística y Censos (DIGESTYC); Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador (BCR); and IOM, *Encuesta Nacional de Migración y Remesas: El Salvador 2017* (San Salvador, IOM, 2017).

communities. Irregular migration can also represent a higher risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking.⁹

Therefore, in addition to the problems that characterize the communities of origin, the returnees may face psychosocial stress and difficulties in social and community reintegration, which increase depending on factors such as the time spent abroad, unemployment, indebtedness and social stigmatization, among others. These situations must be addressed by the countries and communities of origin in order to reduce conflict and social exclusion during the reintegration processes.

One such community is Zacatecoluca, the capital of the Department of La Paz, located in the centre of El Salvador, a municipality with 75,000 inhabitants and with population distribution of 65 per cent urban and 35 per cent rural. Its main economic activities are trade, services, agriculture and livestock and, to a lesser extent, medium-sized industries. In 2014, Zacatecoluca was deeply affected by a spiral of violence, which placed it as the fourth most violent municipality in El Salvador.¹⁰ In this community, overwhelming violence and the difficulty to have a decent standard of living acted as very important push factors and led to the irregular migration of some of its inhabitants. As a result, many forced returns to Zacatecoluca have taken place, and, according to recent statistics from the General Directorate of Migration and Immigration, the municipality of Zacatecoluca comes tenth among municipalities with the highest number of returnees to El Salvador from the United States and Mexico.¹¹

Prevention of irregular migration and reintegration in Zacatecoluca

In recent years, the community of Zacatecoluca has undertaken a series of coordinated actions aimed at improving social and economic conditions, addressing structural causes of migration and creating a favourable environment for the reintegration of returnees. Initiatives of a national and local nature

have resulted in tangible and quantifiable results that have improved the environment and opportunities in the municipality. To date, there has been an improvement in the local competitiveness indexes and a reduction of violence by 60 per cent according to different indicators, which has led to substantially improved security.¹²

It is worth asking what the factors have been that have allowed this Salvadoran municipality to make an important change in its situation since 2015, when Plan El Salvador Seguro was launched in Zacatecoluca.¹³ Four important elements explain this qualitative leap:

- Focus on the prevention of violence
- Increase in municipal competitiveness index
- Specific actions to assist the migrant and returnee population
- Establishment of partnerships

Prevention of violence

Prevention of violence has been one of the central elements of Zacatecoluca's commitment to reducing irregular migration and promoting the reintegration of returnees. The community has dealt with the prevention of violence at a structural level through the generation of a protection framework; the creation of opportunities including sports, vocational training, employment and recreation; and the recovery of public spaces – all contributing as well to the prevention of irregular migration.

The Government of El Salvador, with the support of international actors and other institutional and social actors, launched Plan El Salvador Seguro in 2015 in Zacatecoluca and other municipalities of the country. The objective of this strategy is to comprehensively control the phenomenon of violence through the recovery of safe, dynamic and rehabilitated public spaces for the enjoyment of families and citizens; the creation of workshops to deliver life skills training; the promotion of entrepreneurial projects; reintegration into the education system through flexible education modalities; and the opening of youth employment

9 Government of the United States, U.S Embassy in El Salvador, "Reporte sobre Trata de Personas 2014: El Salvador – Nivel 2". Available from <https://sv.usembassy.gov/es/our-relationships-es/official-reports-es/trafficking-in-persons-report-2014-es/>

10 See: www.transparencia.gob.sv/institutions/pnc/documents/estadisticas

11 IOM/NTMI, "El Salvador: Cifras oficiales de retornos, enero–julio 2018".

12 See: <http://sigm.gob.sv/general/violencia.xhtml?jsessionid=73641519706f75c9b21287e264e?m=0801&d=LP>

13 Concejo Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia, "Resumen ejecutivo", Plan El Salvador Seguro (2015), adapted and applied to Plan Zacatecoluca Seguro.

offices focusing on the population at risk, which has achieved the placement of 286 people in the workplace.¹⁴ Zacatecoluca, in coordination with the Ministry of Justice and Security of El Salvador, also opened a local office to support victims of violence and encouraged the practice of artistic and cultural activities, such as the establishment of philharmonic, dance and painting schools. These schools were established by the municipality of Zacatecoluca with respective support from the Cultural Centre of Zacatecoluca and a violence and crime prevention programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Increasing competitiveness

Zacatecoluca has also focused on improving its municipal competitiveness indexes, which, before 2009, were at their lowest point. This has been possible, thanks to the development of innovative proposals that have attracted investment and improved mobility. An example of this line of action is reflected in the recovery of the historic centre of Zacatecoluca. Previously, the centre was occupied by around 6,000 informal vendors that prevented urban mobility in this place, as well as in the main parks of the city. The transit difficulties and the presence of unregulated and informal vendors generated situations of social violence and the exclusion of citizens.

With coordinated efforts and through a broad process, different actors and collaborators managed to recover the historical centre, rebuild parks and enable the development of new markets with adequate infrastructure and oversight. The result has been a much higher performance and a substantial increase in the municipal competitiveness index.¹⁵

The rural sector has also been included in the strategy of the municipality. A rural development unit with a territorial approach has been created with the prime objective of achieving agriculture adapted to climate

change. This element adds value to products including fruit, horticulture, basic grains and local livestock. Science and technology have also been applied to the production process, which has allowed Zacatecoluca to insert itself into dynamic regional markets and for agricultural producers to generate profits and maintain a decent standard of living. It should be noted that the depopulation of the rural sector has been partly due to the absence of socioeconomic opportunities that force the population to migrate internally or abroad. This new development model promotes productive processes that have a positive impact on the quality of life and human development locally. Likewise, the projects are characterized by having a gendered and youth-centred approach, as well as by an active participation of the national government in the development of projects.

Specific actions to assist the migrant and returnee population

The Government of El Salvador and the municipality of Zacatecoluca are making efforts to specifically assist the migrant and returnee population.

At the national level, the Vice Ministry for Salvadorans Abroad has been created and the Special Law for the Protection and Development of the Salvadoran Migrant Person and His/Her Family has been passed. Similarly, the National Policy for the Protection and Development of the Salvadoran Migrant Person and His/Her Family, the National Council for the Protection of the Migrant Person and His/Her Family, and the programme “El Salvador is your home”, aimed at returning nationals, have also been established.

Academia, the private sector, civil society, church and non-governmental organizations as well as governmental organizations have also developed initiatives in this area.

For its part, the local government has considered the importance of adapting and implementing national public policies to the municipal context. Mayors are closest to their communities and represent an ideal space for the application of these policies.

Previously, El Salvador had no municipal offices for the assistance of migrants and their families. With the participation and cooperation of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the technical assistance of CONMIGRANTES (an interinstitutional council responsible for guiding government efforts

14 Figures are from the Office of the Mayor of Zacatecoluca, with the support of the Ministry of Labor, Asociación Intersectorial para el Desarrollo Económico y Progreso Social (CIDEP) and the municipal youth employment office. The data is for 2017 (140 placements) and 2018 (146 placements).

15 RTI International, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Escuela Superior de Economía y Negocios, *Municipal Competitiveness Index 2013, El Salvador: Measuring Local Economic Governance to Create a Better Business Environment* (2013).

related to migration), the first municipal office was established in Zacatecoluca to serve this important segment of the population through local governments.

On 30 May 2018, the first municipal office assisting migrants and their families in El Salvador was inaugurated in Zacatecoluca. For its creation, the following guidelines were taken into account: the SDGs, the Habitat III principles, the Habitat III Global Conference on Cities and Migration on the Global Migration Pact: The Role of Local Authorities, and the Global Compact for Migration; as well as national laws and policies on migration, namely, the Five-Year Plan 2014–2019 of the Government of the Republic, and the Seventh Municipal Strategic Plan 2015–2018 of Zacatecoluca.

The main objective of the municipal office is to contribute to and provide advice on the prevention of irregular migration, to assist returnees and to strengthen links with Salvadorans abroad. These actions will be achieved through strategic alliances with key actors in the territory, in coherence with Goal 17 of the SDGs.

The specific objectives of the office include:

- **The prevention of irregular migration**

In this regard, the following actions will be undertaken: implementation of a strategy for awareness-raising and guidance on the risks of irregular migration; comprehensive assistance to the families of migrants who remain in the country; reduction of the risk factors that compel migration; assistance and reduction of social, physical, and labour vulnerabilities of people and groups at risk for irregular migration; and prevention of human trafficking.

- **Assistance to returnees**

Under this area, actions for dignified and sustainable return, reception, and reintegration include: capacity development and recognition of qualifications and competence; linking returnees with job opportunities; management with the competent organizations for the return to facilitate tools, work skills and other elements that returnees need for their reintegration; promotion of full social and community integration of returnees and their families and enabling public spaces for coexistence.

- **Facilitating links with the diaspora abroad**

This includes creating spaces and opportunities for the participation of Salvadorans abroad in the formulation and implementation of public policies, plans and projects for municipal development; managing and coordinating cooperation and partnerships for community projects and programmes and socioeconomic development; and carrying out dissemination, information and accountability actions of the activities undertaken.

- **Some innovative measures**

These include: gradually regularizing the informal sector, which would generate ventures and opportunities for job creation and self-employment, especially in the informal trade sector; encouraging investment in sectors that are still underdeveloped, such as products of the knowledge economy; or adding value to El Salvador's fruit products, agro-industrial development and aquaculture. All these measures will be of great help to correct the risk factors for irregular migration and to support returnees.

The Office of Assistance to Migrants and Their Families should not be understood as a unit isolated from the rest of the municipal units but rather as a strategic articulator of all of them on behalf of migrants and their families, so that their different activities are oriented towards the objectives outlined above. Such coordination functions are indispensable.

Partnerships

Partnerships with other organizations are fundamental to the functioning of the municipal office. In this sense, the municipal Office of Assistance to Migrants and Their Families and IOM jointly established two public recreational spaces for coexistence in communities with returnees.

Partnerships have also been established with the following entities:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which provides technical support and accompaniment in the preparation of the municipal policy of assistance to migrants and their families;
- CONMIGRANTES, established by the Special Law for the Protection and Development of the Salvadoran Migrant Person and His/Her Family, which provides technical advice;

- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), through its Alternatives programme, whose fundamental focus is the prevention of irregular migration through awareness campaigns and psychosocial support to returnees;
- IOM, which has contributed to the strengthening of the Office of Assistance to Migrants and Their Families, training of municipal technical personnel and the rehabilitation of two community integration spaces in an area with a high number of returnees;
- The International Rescue Committee, which provides humanitarian aid to returnees and has a virtual platform for linking information for facilitating communication with the institutions within El Salvador;
- Swisscontact, for the certification of labour competencies of returnees; and
- The Independent Monitoring Group of El Salvador, for the reintegration of returnees into working life.

To operationalize the coordination with all these organizations, a technical working group for follow-up has been created in which the activities aimed at the three specific objectives of the municipal office are linked, avoiding duplication of efforts and achieving the optimization of resources.

Likewise, through the Municipal Committee for the Prevention of Violence in Zacatecoluca, the work of the Office of Assistance to Migrants and Their Families has been coordinated with the School of Human Development; the Childhood, Youth and Women's Unit; and the Rural Development Unit in actions for the prevention of migration and for the care of returnees. All these entities mentioned are present in this technical working group.

Conclusion

Migration represents a challenge for the sustainable development of El Salvador and the municipality of Zacatecoluca. Solving problems associated with irregular migration requires the following measures to achieve optimal governance:

- Facilitate the integration of all actors in the search and implementation of solutions.

- Develop a holistic approach that takes into account the diverse causes of migration to propose multidimensional and intergenerational strategies.
- Enhance the role of local governments as the main link for the local implementation of public policies and measures to overcome this challenge.
- Include in the awareness campaigns the importance of participation of schools, churches, media and civil society actors to raise awareness about the reality of irregular migration and the dangers involved.

As has been demonstrated through different forums and meetings at the regional and global levels, cities must develop capacities and strategies to serve our migrant population, transform socioeconomic conditions and avoid irregular migration. The systematized participation and leadership of local governments will contribute to these goals, since the welfare of the population from the point of view of human development as well as the adoption of plans and adaptation projects are key factors in addressing situations that increasingly affect irregular migration.

Currently, Zacatecoluca is developing the instruments and strategies necessary to structurally address risk factors and irregular migration as a whole. It is essential that the best practices developed in this community can be disseminated to other municipalities and associations in the country, with the purpose of creating a network of municipalities linked to the prevention of irregular migration and the support of returnees. Likewise, it is important to sensitize civil society, the private sector, academia and religious groups to become allies to disseminate this policy and create opportunities to prevent irregular migration and the reintegration of returned Salvadorans. ■

... cities must develop capacities and strategies to serve our migrant population, transform socioeconomic conditions and avoid irregular migration.

These photographs show Zacatecoluca before and after the rehabilitation of public spaces.



Plaza José Simeón Cañas (BEFORE)



Plaza José Simeón Cañas (AFTER)



A recreational space for integration and coexistence, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through IOM.



Measuring sustainable reintegration

Nassim Majidi and Nazanine Nozarian¹

Introduction

Return triggers the uncertain process of reintegration. Evidence shows that the moment of return is the beginning of a process that takes time, is multidimensional and is often non-linear. There are no accurate global estimates of return migration due to a general lack of data, lack of recording and lack of agreement on definitions. The majority of returns are spontaneous, initiated by migrants, when their movement and choice are not hindered by State policies.² Return is increasingly orchestrated by States with the support of international organizations through assisted returns, and repatriation programmes in the case of refugees returning “home”. This paper focuses on the former,³ reviewing recent evolutions in assisted returns programming and offering a way forward on a more responsible approach to reintegration of returning migrants. It calls for more attention to standards of protection, knowledge and monitoring for reintegration in all contexts. As published in a previous issue of *Migration Policy Practice*, where post-return monitoring is not possible, assisted return should not be taking place.⁴ This paper puts at the centre evolutions in reintegration thinking and

planning, presenting key considerations for actors working in the reintegration realm.

Setting standards for sustainable reintegration in the context of return

With decreasing acceptance of migrants to Western countries, stricter border controls and measures at entry, the use of return as a migration management tool has risen. Academics and practitioners have cautioned against this instrumentalization of returns as an area of public policy intervention. “Return remains fiercely controversial”⁵ and its effects remain underexplored. What do we know of the impacts of return migration policies and programmes? What do we know about what happens after return? Return is proposed as inherently positive, paired with concepts such as “belonging” and “reintegration”, assuming that return is naturally linked with a process of economic, social and cultural insertion back “home”. Evidence shows that assumptions of a natural order are not met and instead that reintegration is, in reality, a complex process riddled with highs and lows experienced by returnees and their communities.

There is, to date, a scarcity of available and comparable data on post-return outcomes. This lack of evidence has been the source of criticism around assisted voluntary return programmes, raising questions of accountability to returnees and the need to balance a State-driven agenda on returns. This is especially relevant when return implies return to a conflict setting or a recent post-conflict setting where rights may be put in danger.

Recognizing the need to strengthen accountability, establish data standards and monitoring processes, Samuel Hall and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) worked together in 2017 under the Mediterranean Sustainable Reintegration (MEASURE)

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2 M-L. Flahaux and S. Vezzoli, “Examining the role of border closure and post-colonial ties in Caribbean migration”, *Migration Studies*, 6(2):165–186 (2018). Available from <https://academic.oup.com/migration/article/6/2/165/3829671>

3 This article does not include discussions on durable solutions in the context of refugee returns and forced displacement. Other ongoing work funded by the ECHO Enhanced Response Capacity (ERC), commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council/the Norwegian Refugee Council/the International Rescue Committee and conducted by Samuel Hall in 2019 focuses on lessons learned on refugee return and (re-)integration through case studies (covering Afghanistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic).

4 N. Majidi and L. Hart, “Return and reintegration to Afghanistan: Policy implications”, *Migration Policy Practice*, 6(3):36–41 (2016). Available from http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_policy_practice_journal_27.pdf

5 R. Black and S. Gent, “Sustainable return in post-conflict contexts”, *International Migration*, 44(3):15–38 (2006). Available from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2006.00443.x>

Project, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), to develop a comprehensive framework towards reintegration sustainability in the context of return. Among other deliverables aiming at improving reintegration programming, a set of field-tested indicators and an approach to reintegration measurement and monitoring were designed at a global level through five country case studies.⁶

Below is what we concluded was the necessary minimum.

- First, monitoring sustainable reintegration begins with **establishing principled standards** that commit reintegration programmes to a protection approach, to the returnees’ well-being, dignity and enjoyment of all rights; and an approach framed around partnerships with community or national actors.
- Second, these overarching standards have to be accompanied by programming standards notably through a **case management approach** to support returnees through the many highs and lows of their reintegration process in an individualized manner.
- Third, **measurement and monitoring standards** have to include objective and subjective indicators that provide individual and community-level data on reintegration. Individual measurements can be turned into reintegration scores to help identify those who succeed or struggle the most, learn from them and support them using learning to adapt programming.

This third component on measurement standards is discussed in further detail in the next section, while the approach to principles and case management are discussed in a summary report.⁷

6 Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, summary report commissioned by IOM and funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (Geneva, IOM, 2017). Available from http://samuelhall.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/01/IOM_SAMUEL_HALL_MEASURE_REPORT-2017.pdf

7 Ibid.

Defining and measuring sustainable reintegration⁸ in the context of return migration

When H. returned to Afghanistan, his initial feeling was one of warmth and welcome as his family embraced him. “I reconciled with my mother and my brother,” he explains. This initial phase faded, as life at home erupted for a while into the occasional fight with family members over his perceived westernization and lack of ability to find work, difficulties participating in community events and feelings of marginalization. These eruptions eventually evened out, with invitations to social events allowing H. to reassert himself into the fold of community life, even while still managing a sense of separation.

S. experienced a similar story. After returning to Senegal from Libya, where he had lost his money to a smuggler and in prison, S. found himself at a low financial point but determined to take advantage of opportunities at home. Being young and returning from abroad without resources was an initial burden, and S. found some difficulty being taken seriously in his community. Eventually, he succeeded in opening the family business again but clients were sparse, and issues forging relationships with local providers left the shop often empty. In spite of S.’s difficult experience in Libya, he considered moving again, viewing migration, in spite of the trauma he experienced while on the move the first time, as the only existing opportunity to grasp onto.⁹

These testimonies illustrate the multidimensional (economic, social and psychosocial) difficulties inherent in the reintegration process. Faced with this, literature and policy both lack agreement on definition and indicators of reintegration sustainability; this is reflected in three main approaches.

8 The terms “sustainable return” and “sustainable reintegration” have often been interchangeably used in the literature. There is a clear need to move away from discussing return (an event and a concept often viewed from the perspective of migration governance) towards a broader discussion of sustainable reintegration (a context-dependent process within the community and the country of return), as outlined in the article.

9 Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, 2017. Available from http://samuelhall.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/01/IOM_SAMUEL_HALL_MEASURE_REPORT-2017.pdf

Approaches to sustainability in the context of return migration programmes

The first approach, often taken by return-managing governments, considers sustainability as lack of further migration after return. The European Commission, for example, states that “‘sustainable return’ implies the absence of re-migration after return because the returnee is fully integrated socially and economically in the home community.”¹⁰ The European Migration Network goes even further by arguing that sustainability should also discourage irregular migration of other community members in the country of origin: “Sustainable return is return which deters new irregular migration of the returnee and – where possible – of other third-country nationals in the Country of Return by consolidating the position of returnees in their home countries and – where possible – enabling the returnee to consolidate the position of other people in his/her community or country of return.”¹¹

However, not all contexts of return offer sufficient opportunities for re-establishment of a dignified livelihood. In such cases, as Black and Gent point out, continued mobility after return is more sustainable than a definitive return, especially if executed through legal channels as a result of free choice, not out of necessity.¹² Remigration is not a sign of unsuccessful reintegration: on the contrary, transnational livelihood may be enabled by skills acquired during the reintegration process, giving the migrant a chance to a dignified, fulfilling livelihood.¹³ Mobility is key

to protection. The possibility of remigration should not be included as a sign of failed reintegration as migration remains a positive lifeline and as mobility is a solution for many.¹⁴

The second and, to this date, still the most common approach in return migration programmes focuses on the individual. It recognizes multiple dimensions of reintegration (social, economic and psychosocial). Among these dimensions of reintegration, the economic dimension is emphasized. Whyte and Hirsland (2013) refer to the material conditions for building sustainable livelihoods as essential to sustainable return, including access to housing and basic services as preconditions for economic reintegration, diversified income and lack of debt to the list of sustainability indicators.¹⁵ As important are access to social networks,¹⁶ the degree of reintegration into family networks and support from family networks,¹⁷ and the connection to and acceptance by the local community.¹⁸ Having a network to rely

10 European Commission Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, *Comparative Study on Best Practices to Interlink Pre-Departure Reintegration Measures Carried Out in Member States with Short- and Long-Term Reintegration Measures in the Countries of Return* (N.p., 2012). Available from <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/comparative-study-on-best-practices-to-interlink-pre-departure-reintegration-measures-carried-out-in-member-states-with-short-and-long-term-reintegration-measures-in-the-countries-of-return-pbDR0113275/?CatalogCategoryID=FLIKABstbqUAAAEjs5EY4e5L>

11 European Migration Network, *Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation of AVR(R) Programmes* (2016). Available from https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/guidelines_for_monitoring_and_evaluation_final_jan2016.pdf

12 Black and Gent, “Sustainable return in post-conflict contexts”, *International Migration*, 2006. Available from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/14682435/44/3>

13 A. Fonseca, L. Hart and S. Klink/IOM, *Reintegration: Effective Approaches* (Geneva, IOM, 2015). Available from www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Reintegration-Position-Paper-final.pdf

14 K. Long, “Rethinking ‘durable’ solutions”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (E. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, G. Loescher, K. Long and N. Sigona, eds.). Available from www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199652433.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199652433-e-013

15 Z. Whyte and D.V. Hirsland, “Assisted return of rejected asylum seekers – how can we create sustainability?”, *DIIS Policy Brief*, May (2013), available from www.diiis.dk/files/media/publications/import/extra/pb2013_assisted_return_of_rejected_asylum_seekers_whyte_webversion.pdf; K. Koser and K. Kuschminder, *Comparative Research on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants* (Geneva, IOM, 2015), available from www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/AVRR-Research-final.pdf

16 R. Ruben, M. Van Houte and T. Davids, “What determines the embeddedness of forced-return migrants? Rethinking the role of pre- and post-return assistance”, *The International Migration Review*, 43(4):908–937 (2009), available from www.jstor.org/stable/20681735?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents; J.P. Cassarino, “Conditions of modern return migrants – editorial introduction”, *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 10(2):95–105 (2008), available from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001812/181209E.pdf>

17 A. Strand, S. Bendixsen, E. Paasche and J. Schultz/Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), *Between Two Societies: Review of the Information, Return and Reintegration of Iraqi Nationals to Iraq (IRRINI) Programme*. CMI Report R 2011:4 (N.p., 2011). Available from www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/retur/between-two-societies.pdf

18 M. Van Houte and M. de Koning, “Towards a better embeddedness? Monitoring assistance to involuntary returning migrants from Western countries” (Centre for International Development Issues (CIDN), Radboud University, Nijmegen; Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt), University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2008). Available from www.ru.nl/cidin/@717372/pagina/

on, participation in local events and membership in organizations are some of the indicators proposed by Koser and Kuschminder.¹⁹ Whyte and Hirslund also note the importance of access to information on social relations as part of this dimension.²⁰ Indeed, reintegration can be threatened by stigmatization and tensions between the returnee and those who “endured hard times” in the place of return, or by creation of insular returnee networks.²¹ Both risks and overall social cohesion are insufficiently considered/covered in policy or programmatic action.

The psychosocial dimension of reintegration, though less prominent in literature, is defined as the subjective feeling of safety, security and stability. Whyte and Hirslund²² emphasize the importance of (re)constructing one’s identity after return, the feeling of being at home and psychological well-being.²³ Under this dimension, the ability to live free of protection concerns, peer acceptance and support are central elements to sustainable reintegration.²⁴

Building on the multidimensional approach to reintegration, the third approach highlights the imperative to understand sustainable reintegration

as a relation between individuals and the local population or communities of return. An elementary approach to considering realities beyond the returnee is the comparison to the population in the place of origin, with a benchmark point of comparison to the local population. Thus, returnees are considered as sustainably reintegrated when they reach similar socioeconomic and well-being status as the population in the community of return. However, it is unclear which segment of the local population is most appropriate for comparison. Reaching livelihood levels of the local community will not indicate sustainability if push factors remain strong, or if returnees’ aspirations are not fulfilled. Especially in more unstable or underdeveloped environments, access to basic services and safety might be limited for all, providing little opportunities for sustainable reintegration. If such structural factors are not addressed, they will continue to result in migration as a coping mechanism to actual or perceived inadequate standard of living, insecurity and lack of opportunities.

While authors have articulated the relationship between a returnee and local population differently, many have recognized the need to assess how community and a returning migrant influence each other through a community or ecosystem lens.²⁵ In line with the concept of embeddedness and the shift of focus towards the community level, Kuschminder argues that “reintegration is a two-sided process occurring between the return migrant and the society of return.”²⁶

Building on and addressing limitations of these approaches, IOM revised its definition of sustainable reintegration, which asserts that:²⁷

reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities,

19 Koser and Kuschminder, *Comparative Research on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants*, 2015. Available from www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/AVRR-Research-final.pdf

20 Whyte and Hirslund, “Assisted return of rejected asylum seekers – how can we create sustainability?”, 2013. Available from www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/extra/pb2013_assisted_return_of_rejected_asylum_seekers_whyte_webversion.pdf

21 Fonseca, Hart and Klink/IOM, *Reintegration: Effective Approaches*, 2015. Available from www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Reintegration-Position-Paper-final.pdf

22 Whyte and Hirslund, “Assisted return of rejected asylum seekers – how can we create sustainability?”, 2013. Available from www.diis.dk/files/media/publications/import/extra/pb2013_assisted_return_of_rejected_asylum_seekers_whyte_webversion.pdf

23 Psychosocial stability or well-being refers to “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, World Health Organization, *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice – Summary Report* (Geneva, 2004), available from www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/promoting_mhh.pdf).

24 Fonseca, Hart and Klink/IOM, *Reintegration: Effective Approaches*, 2015. Available from www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Reintegration-Position-Paper-final.pdf

25 Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, 2017. Available from http://samuelhall.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/01/IOM_SAMUEL_HALL_MEASURE_REPORT-2017.pdf

26 K. Kuschminder, “Female return migration and reintegration strategies in Ethiopia”, PhD thesis, Maastricht University (2014). Available from www.merit.unu.edu/training/theses/kuschminder_katie.pdf

27 N. Gravano, A. Götzelmann, N. Nozarian and A.J. Wadud/IOM, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return* (Geneva, IOM, 2017). Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf

and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.

Moving beyond the individual, the definition recognizes that reintegration is a multifaceted phenomenon that refers to the economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions and concerns of both returnees and the communities to which they return. It is also linked with structural factors in the external environment – as the factors affecting reintegration are not dissimilar to those that pushed migrants to leave in the first place. Finally, the definition also highlights that remigration does not necessarily imply lack of sustainability. What counts is whether new migration happens as a matter of choice or not, as also outlined in Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

Measuring reintegration sustainability

Based on this new definition, IOM has moved to standardize the measurement of reintegration. Drawing on empirical research and analysis conducted in 2017 by Samuel Hall under the MEASURE Project in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Senegal and Somalia, new tools to measure reintegration sustainability were developed. Building on global protection frameworks and on the literature on reintegration, the research team field-tested indicators in these five countries reflecting different return contexts.

This work resulted in the development of 15 indicators and 30 measurement elements relating to the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration, together with a scoring system for measuring reintegration outcomes that facilitates the measurement of returnees' progress towards sustainability.²⁸

As outlined in the table that follows, the economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration contributing to economic self-sufficiency. The related indicators cover income source, the reliability and adequacy of employment or income-generating activity, debt-to-

spending ratio, food security and a self-assessment of satisfaction with the economic situation. The social dimension reflects the extent to which returnees have reached social stability within the community. The related indicators include access to basic services and infrastructure in connection with housing, education, justice, health and other public services. The psychosocial dimension encompasses the emotional, mental and psychological elements of reintegration. The related indicators include the sense of belonging, participation in social activities, the ability to rely on a support network, and potential tensions, conflicts and signs of distress.

ECONOMIC DIMENSION	
Measurement Elements	
1.	Satisfaction with current economic situation
2.	Frequency of food insecurity
3.	Ability to borrow money
4.	Frequency of borrowing money
5.	Debt-to-spending ratio
6.	Perceived access to employment and training
7.	Currently working
8.	Ownership of productive assets
9.	Currently searching for a job

SOCIAL DIMENSION	
Measurement Elements	
10.	Access to housing in the community
11.	Perceived standard of housing
12.	Access to education in the community
13.	Children enrolled in school
14.	Access to justice and law enforcement in the community
15.	Possession of ID
16.	Access to health care in the community
17.	Quality/Adequacy of health care in the community
18.	Access to documentation in the community
19.	Access to safe drinking water in the community
20.	Access to public services in the community

²⁸ The research report *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration* recommends beyond these quantitative indicators, qualitative tools and complementary approaches, thus providing thorough suggestions for evidence-based programming.

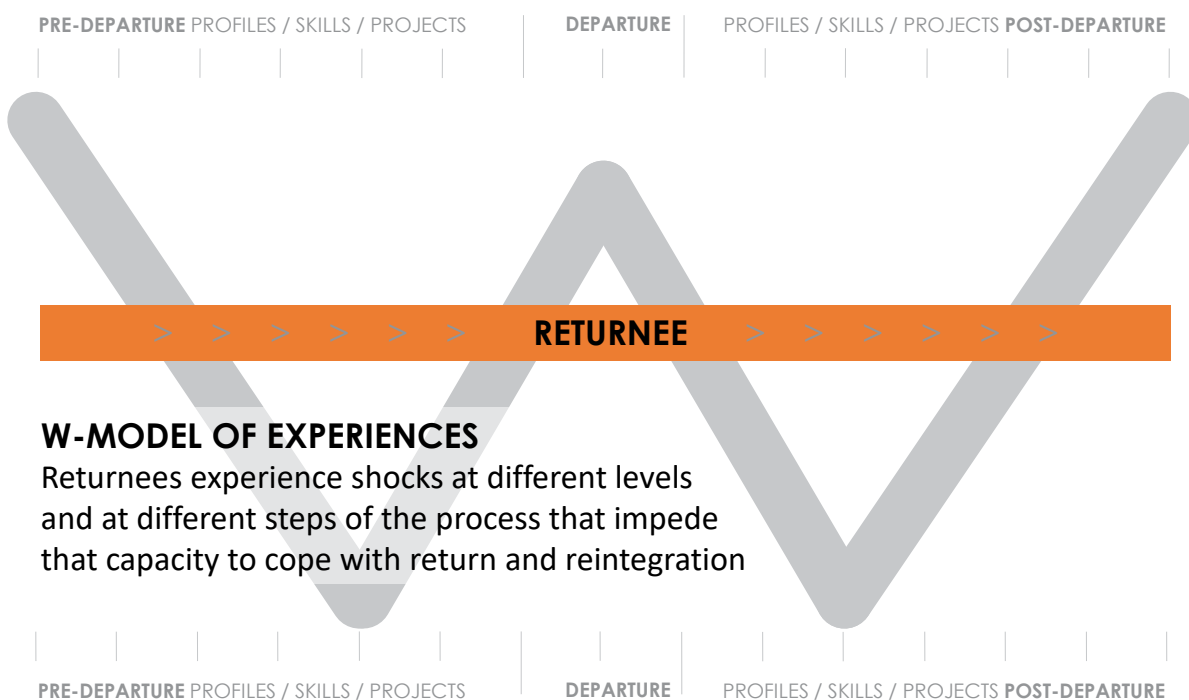
PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSION
Measurement Elements
21. Participation in social activities
22. Strength of support network
23. Sense of belonging to the community
24. Sense of physical security
25. Frequency of conflict with family/domestic tension
26. Feeling of discrimination in the country of origin
27. Frequency of experiencing signs of distress
28. Desire to receive psychological support
29. Subjective ability to stay in the country of origin
30. Need versus wish to remigrate

All the above elements are to be captured using a reintegration sustainability survey based on these core indicators and developed together with a

scoring system. Designed to be easily deployed in IOM’s reintegration programming, the scoring system generates a composite reintegration score and three-dimensional scores measuring economic, social and psychosocial reintegration, as outlined in the definition of sustainable reintegration.

Qualitative tools were also inherent parts of the approach to define the monitoring indicators. Returnees experience both highs and lows in their reintegration process, and often experience difficulties connecting with their families, communities of return or society at large. An approach that reflects this non-linear process is required, either through longitudinal data collection or through the support of in-depth discussions helping to reflect the reintegration trajectory. Additionally, an approach that goes beyond the individual perspective of reintegration is required, to integrate the viewpoints of families, peers and community actors.

Figure 1: The W curve model of reintegration experiences



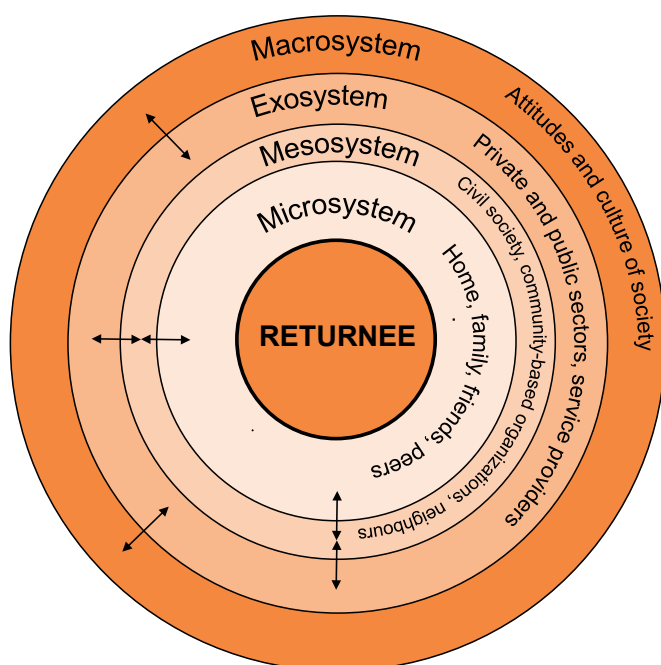
The use of the W curve model (of settlement or (re)integration) effectively does this and helps identify the key moments that shape returnees’ reintegration experience. By allowing returnees to identify the highs and lows of their return and reintegration experience in a spatial and temporal

manner, and by also including the voices and perspectives of family and community members, the model provides information that can allow for the tailoring of interventions, providing the evidence base for future programming to address low points and build up high points.

To cover the disconnect that returnees may perceive, the research team opted for the use of an ecosystem approach, built on human ecology theory. This model allowed to see where returnees felt their strongest and weakest connections, exploring their day-to-day interactions across economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. This tool proved to hold operational relevance as it also helped unpack “the community” lens.

Indeed, a common question across all country settings in the MEASURE Project was the inability to define “the community” in a standardised way, at a time when donors and programming require “community-level” interventions. To address this, the research team used the ecosystem approach to defining return communities by identifying, through qualitative research, the most relevant actors supporting (or representing an obstacle to) reintegration. The ecosystem approach can be used by the case worker to identify the enablers and inhibitors of sustainable reintegration, and to engage with those actors through relevant and multi-layered interventions.

Figure 2: Ecosystem approach to returnee integration



Source: Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration* (Geneva, 2017).

The research revealed that often the microsystem is present to support the returnees but that difficulties arose within the mesosystem. As a result, frequently, the returnees’ daily life ends up being limited to the family sphere. Immediate families provided what financial support they could and are the primary source of this support. However, this assistance is often limited given a structurally difficult situation in return communities. These difficulties at the structural level require, as outlined in IOM’s report titled *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return*, area-based interventions aiming to reinforce the provision of essential services and fulfilment of rights in key domains, such as education, health, psychosocial assistance, access to natural resources, employment, and housing for returnees and non-migrant populations alike.

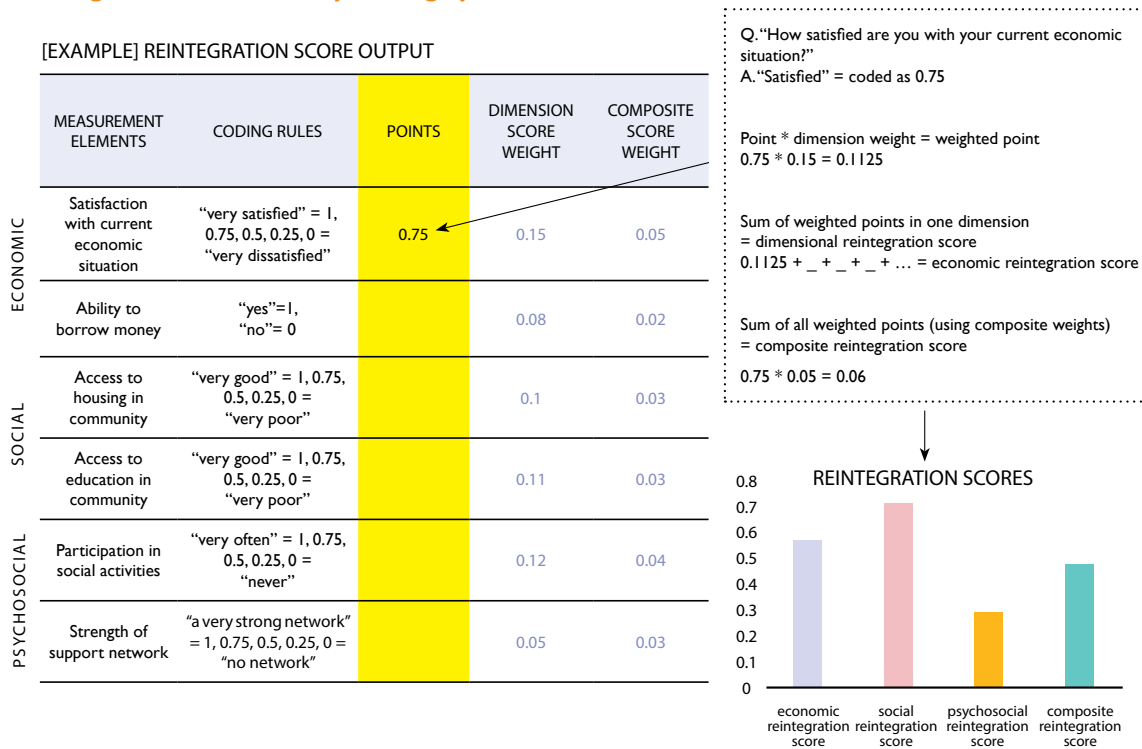
From theory to practice

These sets of harmonized indicators and monitoring tools will allow IOM and other practitioners to learn, adapt and adjust the provision of reintegration assistance to specific contexts. They will also be key for programme evaluation, as well as an evidence base for research, enabling comparisons of trends in beneficiary reintegration across dimensions, country contexts and over time.

As a result of the research conducted by Samuel Hall, IOM has taken concrete action by including the sustainability indicators in programming to improve reintegration monitoring. MiMOSA, IOM’s institutional information management system, is being enhanced to foster systematic and quality data collection on reintegration support and outcomes using these indicators.

A proper and effective monitoring framework can be time-consuming, costly and risky – it requires the ability to reach communities of return and returnees in a regular, safe, and effective manner according to measurement tools and frameworks; and the ability for returnees to effectively answer and participate in monitoring and evaluation activities without endangering their security in their communities of return. They will therefore not be the responsibility of IOM alone, requiring instead multiple stakeholder investment to support learning on post-return outcomes. They will also require donor support to ensure that longitudinal data collection can be supported in communities of return, to go from “snapshots” to understanding dynamics and coping strategies, and to ultimately assess impact.

Figure 3: Reintegration sustainability scoring system



Source: IOM Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance (SCPF), "A framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration and indicators for measuring sustainable reintegration", paper at the SCPF twenty-third session (4 October 2018).

The indicators and tools outlined above provide a common framework and monitoring standards within which to measure reintegration outcomes. Incorporation of this knowledge at both the policy and practice levels is needed. The report *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration* reinforces the need for stronger multistakeholder investment and funding to support reintegration programming. Because reintegration is an ongoing and multidimensional process that involves entire communities, complementing traditional models of individual assistance with stronger referral systems and investment from non-traditional actors, including private sector, development and national actors, is crucial. Ensuring a multistakeholder involvement requires a learning and advocacy agenda, sharing evidence from monitoring and measurement tools that allows for the improvement of reintegration approaches and their mainstreaming into programming, donor and national planning. Effective measurement leads to strong learning outcomes, which can be used to address the actual needs of both returnees and the communities of return in order to ensure a sustainable reintegration process.

Conclusion

A donor-supported, not donor-driven, reintegration process is needed to allow practitioners to support those who should be in the driving seat to define their own reintegration plans: the returnees and their ecosystem.²⁹ The future of reintegration also rests on the availability of comparable data and a consensus around indicators to be measured, across programmes, contexts and agencies. This is a first step towards this collective outcome.

Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Migration deals exclusively with return and reintegration. After an intense negotiation, 192 States have committed themselves to cooperate on facilitating safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration. Although monitoring is not explicitly part of this objective, facilitating the reintegration of migrants

29 Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, 2017. Available from http://samuelhall.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/01/IOM_SAMUEL_HALL_MEASURE_REPORT-2017.pdf

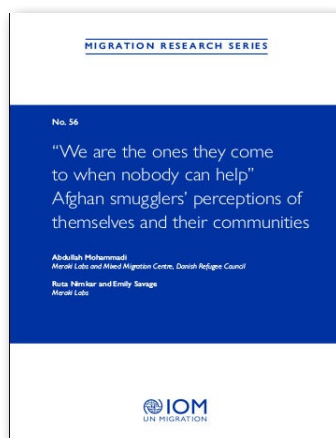
and protecting their rights is included. Being able to measure reintegration is crucial to ensuring that protection standards are upheld. In order to make return and reintegration work for all in a context of varying political and national agendas, a unified system of standards of measurement is essential. Communicating, supporting and sharing these standards begin with IOM's work under its return and reintegration programmes. However, a full commitment of donors is needed to invest in the case management approach and in individual and community-level monitoring processes if returnees are to be given a full set of tools with which to shape their own reintegration process.

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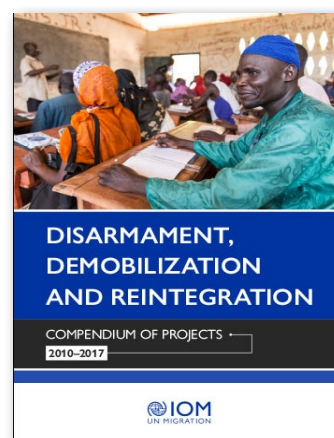
MRS No. 56 - “We are the ones they come to when nobody can help” Afghan smugglers’ perceptions of themselves and their communities

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English

Authored by Abdullah Mohammadi, Ruta Nimkar and Emily Savage, this publication in the Migration Research Series analyses the perceptions that Afghan smugglers have of themselves and of their relationships with their communities in Afghanistan. The paper is based on interviews with 23 smugglers in three sites in Afghanistan and considers community dynamics and low-level smugglers rather than high-level organizers of smuggling networks. It highlights that smuggling networks have a long-standing and respected place in Afghan culture. The paper also provides an analysis of factors that affect perceptions of and trust in smugglers among Afghan society. It concludes with some implications to support policy responses and programming concerning migrant smuggling and migration in Afghanistan.



Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Compendium of Projects 2010–2017

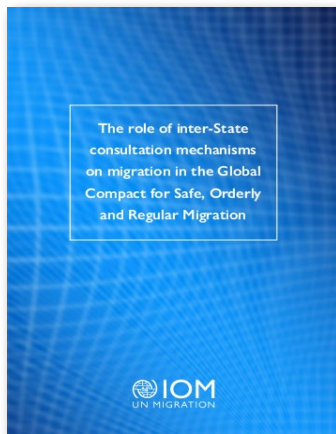
2019/104 pages

English

In the context of assisting in the transition and recovery of conflict affected societies and communities, IOM has supported disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes for ex-combatants/fighters and their communities of return, through more than 120 projects over the last 25 years. Primarily comprised of reintegration-related work, these projects have been spread across more than 30 countries, with particularly extensive work in Colombia and sub-Saharan Africa.

IOM’s involvement in DDR derives from the Organization’s commitment to the prevention and resolution of conflict as a principle driver of crisis induced displacement. DDR programming not only addresses the causes and consequences of conflict, as critical instigators of displacement, but helps create conditions for the progressive resolution of displacement situations and the prevention of future displacement.

This Compendium presents a selection of IOM’s DDR portfolio between 2010 and 2017, embedded within a broader, theoretical framework. The document is structured in two parts. The first part outlines the theoretical context and the second presents IOM’s DDR and DDR-related programmes between 2010 and 2017. These projects reflect the evolution of DDR, presented in three distinct ‘generations’ of work, which accordingly map to different contexts, project approaches and beneficiaries.

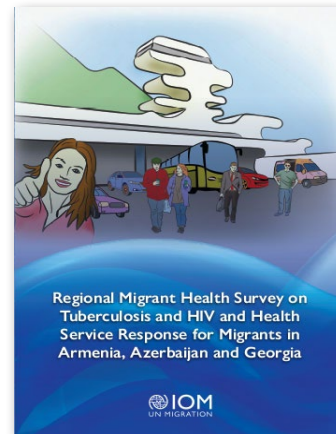


The role of inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

2019/60 pages

English

This review revisits the role of inter-State consultation mechanisms on migration (ISCMS) in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration with the aim to identify their potential contribution in attaining the global compact commitments and the potential complementarity and added value of ISCM engagement in the Global Compact for Migration, recognizing the ISCM’s mostly regional and interregional nature. The review is based on a desktop research of existing documents and ISCMS’ positions on the Global Compact for Migration, as well as survey and telephone interviews among ISCMS. While the review is not exhaustive of all ISCMS’ opinions, it nonetheless reveals a snapshot of where ISCMS see themselves in the Global Compact for Migration after its adoption. Building on the findings of the Seventh Global ISCM Meeting (http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_grcp7.pdf), this review highlights certain good practices of the surveyed ISCMS, which together cover a total membership of 160 States and include all regions of the world.



Regional Migrant Health Survey on Tuberculosis and HIV and Health Service Response for Migrants in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

2019/128 pages

English

This regional survey report presents findings from qualitative and quantitative surveys among migrants in the South Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The objective of the qualitative survey was to assess experiences with and access to public health-care services related to HIV and tuberculosis (TB) in migrants’ own countries and abroad. Specific goals were to clarify barriers in availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality (AAAQ) of TB and HIV health services for migrants within the countries of origin and destination, as well as collect recommendations and opinions for improving AAAQ of TB and HIV health services for migrants. The objective of the quantitative surveys was to measure HIV prevalence and TB signs and symptoms among migrant populations. Other goals were to determine the study participants’ migration experiences, living and working conditions, sexual behaviour, and HIV testing and TB screening history in their own country and abroad. This evidence will help to ensure the development of adequate migrant-inclusive policies and public health interventions, especially related to TB and HIV.



Call for authors/Submission guidelines

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Migration Policy Practice welcomes submissions from policymakers worldwide. As a general rule, articles should:

- Not exceed five pages and be written in a non-academic and reader-friendly style.
- Cover any area of migration policy but discuss, as far as possible, particular solutions, policy options or best practice relating to the themes covered.
- Provide, as often as applicable, lessons that can be replicated or adapted by relevant public administrations, or civil society, in other countries.

Articles giving account of evaluations of specific migration policies and interventions, including both evaluation findings and innovative evaluation methodologies, are particularly welcome.

To discuss any aspect of the journal, or to submit an article, please contact:

- **Solon Ardittis** (sardittis@eurasylum.org); and
- **Frank Laczko** (flaczko@iom.int)