

Practice #5

Establishing a permanent whole-of-government dialogue to foster ownership and sustainability of reintegration mechanisms in Cameroon

Implementing entity: IOM

Project title: EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Sahel and Lake Chad region

Donor: European Union under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

Summary

The implementation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Cameroon was a unique opportunity to strengthen dialogue and collaboration between IOM and the Government of Cameroon on irregular migration and reintegration.

Through the establishment and key role of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) as well as the various Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), reintegration stakeholders regularly meet and coordinate with each other, bringing in the government as an active partner of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, not only at the strategic level, but also in field operations. This made it possible to improve returning migrant assistance, including socio-economic support, job counselling and support for migrants in vulnerable situations.

The PSC provides a framework for discussions on practical ways of strengthening accountability of actors, transferring skills between actors and implementing activities, while the established TWGs (including one on Reintegration) stand for more operational forums for exchange and discussion to

enhance collaboration between IOM and the other actors involved in these different areas of activities. These TWGs support the identification and creation of synergies and facilitate the provision of expertise and programmes by government technical partners for the benefit of the returning migrants.

Operational details

► Description of the activity

Collaboration and dialogue between IOM and the Government of Cameroon on issues related to reintegration have been established through **regular consultations** between stakeholders, within a partnership framework and based on a participatory approach seeking to gradually ensure the accountability of the Government. **Formal and informal meetings, working sessions** and **workshops** are instruments used to develop strategic and operational

guidelines, and to involve Government partners in reintegration assistance.

1. The Strategic Role of the Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative Steering Committee in Cameroon is the decision-making body providing **strategic orientation** for the project. It is co-chaired by the Government of Cameroon, represented by the Minister of External Relations (MINREX), and the Delegation of the European Union (EUD) to Cameroon.

It also engages several ministerial departments according to their mandates and possible technical contributions. These include the following departments:

Institutions	Key Roles of State Institutions Members of the PSC
MINREX ¹	Coordination of Government part
MINAT ²	Material support in civil protection
MINAS ³	Psychosocial support
MINSANTE ⁴	Health control and support for severe cases
MINJEC ⁵	Socio-economic reintegration of migrants and awareness-raising among communities of origin and host communities
MINEFOP ⁶	Support for vocational training
MINPROFF ⁷	Psychosocial support, promotion of gender equality and child protection
MINPMEESA ⁸	Promotion of IGAs and support in developing IGAs set up by migrants into formal enterprises
MINJUSTICE ⁹	Human right protection and legal assistance for returning migrants

MINEPIA ¹⁰	Support for socio-economic reintegration through the promotion of pastoral activities
MINADER ¹¹	Support for socio-economic reintegration through the promotion of agricultural activities
DGSN ¹²	Identification of returnees and verification of nationality
INS ¹³	Support for statistical data collection

The PSC met four times between the launch of the project in June 2017 and December 2019, and discussed several issues including:

- Definition of coordination mechanisms and permanent adjustment of the operational procedures related to reintegration assistance in line with the Cameroonian context;
- Feedback from the Government on conducted activities and results;
- Strategic and operational guidelines on approaches based on the needs and challenges identified on the ground, including involving the community in the reintegration process, providing psychosocial support, conducting referral of migrants to technical ministries and State institutions (MINAS for social and psychosocial support; MINSANTE for the effective assistance to migrants with health-related needs; MINJEC for socio-economic support);
- Capacity-building for stakeholders.

These discussions focused on the **sustainability of the project's achievements and exit strategy**.

¹ Ministry of External Relations

² Ministry of Territorial Administration

³ Ministry of Social Affairs

⁴ Ministry of Public Health

⁵ Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education

⁶ Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training

⁷ Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family

⁸ Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts

⁹ Ministry of Justice

¹⁰ Ministry of Livestock Fisheries and Animal Industries

¹¹ Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

¹² General Delegation for National Security (Délégation Générale de la Sureté Nationale du Cameroun)

¹³ National Institute of Statistics



Second meeting of the Steering Committee in Cameroon, Yaoundé, 18 September 2018 ©IOM/2018



First meeting of the Working Group on Reintegration Support, Yaoundé, 21 November 2017 ©IOM/2017

2. Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)

In response to a recommendation made at the first PSC, **TWGs were set up to promote the effective involvement of technical ministerial departments in the operational component** of the programme, including a Working Group on Reception and Direct Post-arrival Assistance and a Working Group on Reintegration Support.¹⁴

2.1. Working Group on Reception

The **Working Group on Reception and Direct Post-arrival Assistance** played a key role in facilitating the reception and direct assistance operations for migrants upon their arrival in Cameroon. This group is mainly responsible for special flights (**charters**) and cases of arrivals of more than 10 people. In addition to IOM and the EUD, this Group engages the following institutions: MINREX, MINSANTE, MINAS, MINJEC, MINAT, DGSN.

Thus, the Working Group on Reception played key roles including:

- Facilitating authorisations from the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon/National Aviation Authority to obtain a landing permit for special or charter flights (MINREX);
- Reducing delays in obtaining access to international zones at airports (MINREX and DGSN);
- Facilitating police procedures (hearing of returnees, identification and verification of nationality) (DGSN);
- Registering returnees (MINJEC and IOM);
- Conducting an initial medical screening and vaccinations (if necessary) for returnees (MINSANTE);
- Supporting IOM in the distribution of pocket money to eligible returnees during charter flight returns;
- Supporting initial general interviews and psychosocial support for all returning migrants (MINAS and IOM);
- Providing information to returning migrants about the socio-economic reintegration process (MINJEC and IOM);
- Providing meals, water and other basic commodities to returning migrants (MINAT and IOM);
- Assisting in obtaining police escort to facilitate the transfer of the returning migrant from the airport and the hotel for transit accommodation before the trip to their final destination (MINREX and DGSN);
- Providing accommodation upon arrival and support for the trip to the final destination (IOM).

The Working Group on Reception has proven important for the reception of **migrants in situation of vulnerability** (migrants with severe pathologies, migrants with health-related needs, etc.) who need special assistance with the support of the MINSANTE focal points (provision of ambulances and emergency first aid).

A **WhatsApp group** administered by MINREX and IOM was created to facilitate communication within the Group.

¹⁴ Faced with the challenges and needs encountered in the field, another group is gradually being set up: Working Group on Health and Psychosocial Support.



Security screening of migrants who returned by charter flight from Libya, 21 November 2017 ©IOM/2017



Medical assessment of migrants who returned by charter flight from Libya, 21 November 2017 ©IOM/2017



Transportation from Yaoundé Nsimalen airport to hotel for migrants who returned through charter flight from Niger, 8 May 2018 ©IOM/2018

2.2. Working Group on Reintegration Support

The members of the Working Group on Reintegration Support include: EUD, IOM, MINREX, MINJEC, MINEFOP, MINPMEESA, MINAS, MINPROFF, MINEPAT, MINEPIA, MINADER, FNE¹⁵, and PARI-JEDI¹⁶. This working group meetings bring together experts from different ministries in charge of government reintegration programmes and who have proven field experience.

This group appears to be a **space for information exchange, advocacy and joint development of responses** to reintegration-related challenges of the returning migrants. The structural challenges and root causes of irregular migration in Cameroon, as well as the conflict sensitivity issues of the programme, are also discussed within this working group.

The collaboration developed within the framework of this working group makes it possible to **build on Government partners' support**. In fact, **MINJEC provided IOM with 15 reintegration counsellors** (10 in Yaoundé and 5 in Douala, the country's two main cities, which account for more than 90% of the returning migrants), responsible for the socio-economic counselling for migrants and the setting up of their reintegration projects. This support is based, among others, on a **mapping of projects and promising niches** in the different regions, developed by the FNE and MINJEC as part of their "standard" activities aimed at facilitating employment insertion of young people and job seekers. This mapping is thus made available by these institutions for the purpose of supporting returning migrant reintegration.

As soon as returning migrants' economic projects are developed, they are submitted to the Working Group on Reintegration Support for approval as part of **validation sessions**. During these sessions, an analysis of the different projects is carried out, as well as a synthesis by sector and by field of activity. Stakeholders then evaluate the projects submitted based on criteria such as the profitability, viability, relevance, and technical feasibility. On the latter aspect, the relevant ministries can make **recommendations** for improvement of the project. At the end of the meeting, the projects are either approved or amended with specific indications on inputs to be made. Between June 2017 and

¹⁵ National Employment Fund

¹⁶ Support Programme for the Return and Integration of Youths from the Diaspora

December 2019, 1,674 reintegration projects have been approved in the framework of four sessions.

Further activities proposed as part of the reintegration assistance are coordinated and implemented jointly by IOM and partner technical departments, such as vocational and employability training for returning migrants (MINEFOP) or support for migrants in vulnerable situations (**MINAS, which has also provided IOM with 4 counsellors** – 2 in Yaoundé and 2 in Douala – to provide psychosocial support to returning migrants).



Distribution of pocket money to migrants returned by charter flight from Libya, 5 February 2018
©IOM/2018

Consultations with members of Working Group on Reintegration Support have therefore **resulted in**, among other, the following:

- Better socio-economic and job counselling for migrants;
- Support in the design, validation and monitoring of economic reintegration projects;
- Effective implementation of pre-setting technical and entrepreneurial training;
- Setting-up of a referral mechanism for migrants in vulnerable situations to MINSANTE hospitals and psychosocial support from MINAS.

► Approach/Rationale

The mechanisms described above were put in place to ensure a permanent dialogue between the reintegration stakeholders. This should **facilitate reintegration assistance activities** and **strengthen government ownership** of coordination and reintegration assistance mechanisms in order to ensure the sustainability of these mechanisms and

the assistance provided to returning migrants.

► Partnership/Synergy

The collaboration between IOM and the Government under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative is both the result of a partnership approach and an expression of actors' commitment to implement the project within the framework of synergies that are constantly being consolidated, although they are still largely informal. This collaboration is based on pre-existing relationships, built through previous and ongoing projects on other themes (including the fight against trafficking in persons, remittances, etc.).

► Useful contacts and references

For more information: jointinitiative@iom.int.

Evidence base

► Outcome and Evidence

The following are the **main results achieved** in terms of outputs and outcomes:

- **Government structures are actively involved** in the implementation of the project;
- **Administrative procedures** with the government are **facilitated** thanks to its ownership of the project;
- **Sustainable referral mechanisms have been established** to support vulnerable migrants;
- Migrants are supported in the development of their reintegration projects (reintegration projects are developed, examined, validated, and **better adapted** to the socio-economic environment of the return communities with the support of the PARI-JEDI/MINJEC Reintegration Counsellors);
- **Specialised State services and institutions are mobilised** to provide effective support for migrants until their reintegration project is implemented.

These findings have not yet been specifically evaluated but were reached indirectly through (i) feedback from returning migrants and (ii) feedback from reintegration actors. For example, it can be noted that during the last 2 PSC

meetings, stakeholders generally expressed their appreciation of the project and activities carried out, and the initial complaints gave way to relevant and constructive proposals from the stakeholders.



Third meeting of the Working Group on Reintegration Support, Yaoundé, 27 March 2018
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► Recommendations

The main challenges in the collaboration between IOM and the Government are:

- a) Difficulties in implementing commitments made by stakeholders on time due to **budget constraints** for the government, which is facing **growing needs, including those of young people left behind in Cameroon**;
- b) The Government's concern about the **potential incentive effect of assistance on irregular migration** (push factor);
- c) **Delays** in negotiating conventions and memoranda of understanding for migrant referral, including delays in response from State structures.

To this end, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a) Implement interventions that **factor in non-migrants** and address the immediate causes of unsafe migration;
- b) **Gradually include return communities in the support provided to returning migrants** and encourage their contribution to awareness-raising activities on irregular migration among potential migrants;

- c) Continue **advocacy** (by IOM but also by Government departments) so that, while engaging the highest (political) level of decision-making, the Government responds promptly by signing conventions and memoranda of understanding for timely referral of returning migrants to relevant public services.

In addition, decentralised local authorities, civil society and, ideally, the private sector should be involved in reintegration assistance.

IOM adopts a collaborative and synergistic approach to encourage the Government to become more engaged in promoting shared accountability, empowering local actors and transferring responsibilities for the sustainability of the approach and mechanisms put in place under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.

To build a strong partnership, it is important to favour, on a regular basis, informal meetings with the focal points, and to prepare well for discussions with the Government prior to official meetings.

► Conditions for replicability

Availability and agreement of the Government to set up Thematic Working Groups and, more generally, appropriate coordination and governance structures.

Knowledge Management Hub

Factsheet developed under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in December 2019

Published by the Knowledge Management Hub in March 2020

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets on good and promising practices in reintegration assistance. It aims at disseminating good and promising practices on reintegration assistance to reintegration practitioners worldwide.

It is supported by IOM's Knowledge Management Hub (KMH). The KMH has been established by IOM in late 2017 under the EU-funded *Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration* to provide support to the EU-IOM Actions addressing migrant protection and sustainable reintegration in Africa and in Asia.



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