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EVALUATION OF IOM RAVL

Final Report - January 2015



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones



Credit Photo: Altai Consulting

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCIM	Department for Combating Irregular Migration, Government of Libya
EU	European Union
GAWFA	Gambia Women's Finance Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
RAVEL	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration program for migrants stranded in Egypt and Libya
RAVL	Regional Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Program for Stranded Migrants in Libya
SIT	Scholars in Transit

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of the EC-funded Regional Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Program for Stranded Migrants in Libya (RAVL) was organized around three main research modules:

- 1) Interviews with beneficiaries of AVRR initiatives (20): 10 interviews with stranded migrants in Tripoli, who were about to return to their countries of origin with IOM's support; 10 interviews with RAVL returnees in their countries of origin, in Togo and Ghana.
- 2) Interviews with IOM staff (15): interviews with the sending mission in Tripoli (5) and the receiving missions in Accra and Lomé (5) and also with 5 offices in other countries of return (Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia).
- 3) Interviews with IOM's partners (10): interviews with consulates and community leaders from countries of return (Cameroon, Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo, Guinea, Bangladesh, Ghana, Mali, Pakistan, Sierra Leone).

The first part of the fieldwork was conducted in Libya and Altai Consulting focused on questions regarding program design and implementation, RAVL's outreach mechanisms, the selection of beneficiaries and, finally, assistance to beneficiaries in the pre-departure phase. The second part of the fieldwork took place in Ghana and Togo and the research team looked into four main research questions: support to beneficiaries during their travel back home, assistance to beneficiaries after their return, returnees' perceptions about their reintegration and the level of coordination between IOM Libya and IOM offices in countries of return throughout the project. In the final phase of the fieldwork, Altai Consulting conducted interviews with IOM staff in other countries of return in order to complement the information collected in Ghana and Togo.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- RAVL was part of an effort to **resume AVRR activities in Libya**, after their interruption during the 2011-Revolution. It aimed at answering **a pressing demand from stranded migrants, often kept in detention centers**. The program also constituted an attempt to address regional challenges, in particular immigration detention.
- IOM staff in both Libya and countries of return proved to be **very skilled and engaged**. The operational officers had been involved in AVRR initiatives for several years and they were used to interacting with migrants in need. The team had significant experience conducting interviews and was accustomed to operating in difficult environments such as detention centers.
- Despite the tense environment in Libya, the Tripoli office had succeeded in developing **excellent coordination with other stakeholders**. IOM Tripoli has had good working relations with the Libyan authorities, which facilitated IOM's access to the detention centers and granted RAVL beneficiaries with free exit visas. In addition, IOM staff worked closely with consulates of countries of return, which referred migrants wanting to return to the Tripoli office.
- IOM Libya also collaborated with IOM offices in the countries of return but this sometimes proved difficult because it involved staff from 18 countries who, in many cases, never met. Responsibilities were split among the offices. The cooperation among the missions was consistent but could be further strengthened.
- RAVL raised other challenges in terms of **planning and budgeting** because external factors impacted the program activities. For instance, IOM Tripoli had no accurate projection on the number of requests it would receive for returns and it did not always have control over when

these requests would arrive. Additionally, RAVL budget had to be modified due to increasing travel costs and unspent reintegration grants – because not all of the returnees had requested use of their grants.

- Another difficulty for IOM staff was **the lack of uniformity among AVRR programs**. IOM staff have to familiarize themselves with new objectives and procedures at the beginning of each AVRR initiative, whereas standardizing all of these programs in terms of design and implementation could save them a significant amount of time.
- Finally, **monitoring processes** were in place, with comprehensive internal guidance notes, but they were not systematically enforced because of logistical constraints, lack of time and budget. Offices of return often faced difficulties contacting beneficiaries a few months after their return because they had moved or changed their phone number. In addition, the IOM staff did not always have the human and financial resources to visit the returnees and interview them in person. It could also be that some returnees preferred not to be contacted by IOM, which is their individual right.

Main Recommendations:

- ⇒ Apply uniformity to all AVRR programs (reintegration grants, procedures, forms, monitoring, etc.).
- ⇒ Increase funding allocated to monitoring and hire an outside contractor – an NGO, a research firm, or a partner university – to do the work, because IOM staff lacks time and resources to systematically visit beneficiaries in the field.
- ⇒ Enhance information sharing between sending and receiving missions, before and during the program.

RETURN OF 790 MIGRANTS AND REINTEGRATION OF 571 RETURNEES

- **RAVL supported the return of 790 migrants from 17 countries, and the program assisted 571 in their reintegration – against an original target of 733.** In Libya, IOM relied on effective outreach mechanisms to inform stranded migrants on the possibility to return home with its support, through visits to Libyan detention centers and a close cooperation with consulates of countries of return.
- IOM Tripoli provided a package of pre departure services to beneficiaries, including a vulnerability screening, a medical visit and counseling. In some cases, IOM also distributed non food items packages in the detention centres.
- Most of the RAVL beneficiaries were **economic migrants** who had come to Libya irregularly to work for a few years and save money. They all appeared disillusioned with the situation in Libya and denounced the working conditions, violence and racism. The majority of RAVL beneficiaries were actually **in detention centers** prior to their departure.
- **The Tripoli office provided humane and effective transportation back to their country of origin**, with a systematic and effective vulnerability screening, psycho social counseling, information sharing at the departure and sufficient support throughout the journey. However, most beneficiaries appeared to be **very vulnerable prior to their return**, due to mistreatment in detention centers or scarce resources for the ones who stayed in Tripoli. This, along with uncertainty regarding their date of return, constituted a major difficulty for the RAVL returnees.

- **In the countries of return, 571 migrants received a €800-grant and most chose to start a micro-business.** They engaged in a number of sectors, from farming to trading and transportation services, depending on where they lived and their skills. **The majority of the returnees interviewed were in a better economic situation than when they had left,** because they had used their reintegration grant to establish their own shops. Some, however, faced persistent difficulties, due to their family situation or pending debts.
- Offices in countries of return provided comprehensive assistance to returnees and IOM staff proved effective at providing **counseling** for returnees who were often fragile when they got back. IOM support included recommendations to develop a business plan, explanations regarding IOM administrative procedures and counseling for the migrants who had been through traumatic experiences.
- **Distance to IOM offices** could yet constitute a barrier to reintegration because returnees could not always afford to travel to the capital to meet with the IOM staff. In addition, the reintegration **procedure** was not very adapted to the economy prevailing in the countries of return – often little developed and with few established and enforced regulations – and sometimes resulted in delays for the beneficiaries. As for RAVL reintegration process, partnerships with NGOs, governments in countries of return and the private sector were limited, but IOM missions were interested in expanding them.
- Almost all of the returnees interviewed (9) stated that **they would not want to go back to Libya.** All insisted on the hardships they had been through, on their way to Libya and in Libya, particularly in the detention centers. Several IOM missions nonetheless reported that some of RAVL beneficiaries had emigrated again – although this was impossible to quantify due to the lack of data available.
- While all of the returnees stated that they had made the right decision to come home, some acknowledged that returning had been difficult and, sometimes, **shameful.**¹ Several of the migrants interviewed felt guilty of having spent their resources on a trip that had proved unsuccessful. They yet recognized that their family was generally pleased to have them back and proved supportive.
- RAVL has also had **positive effects on returnees' relatives and community.** Measuring this was beyond the scope of this research, but it could be argued that IOM's assistance aided local development through support to small businesses. This aspect would need to be further documented to ensure that the local markets in which IOM returnees engage are large enough to absorb all of the micro-enterprises funded by IOM.
- Finally, it should be emphasized that returnees can have a major impact **in discouraging aspiring migrants from leaving their country by risky or irregular means.** RAVL beneficiaries often explained that they decided to go to Libya because they heard or met another migrant who had advised them to go to Tripoli to make a living. By telling people about the hardships experienced travelling illegally to Libya, RAVL returnees may deter aspiring migrants from going to Tripoli irregularly.

Main Recommendations:

- ⇒ Establish transit centers, in Libya for the pre-departure phase and in countries of return for the post-arrival period. These centers could also provide psychological assistance to the returnees.

¹ As noted by IOM, this emotion is not restricting to AVRR cases, but is common of many returning labour migrants who have faced difficulties abroad.

- ⇒ Study opportunities for partnerships with NGOs, in particular micro-finance organizations, and the private sector.
- ⇒ Set up offices in regions of return to ensure a reintegration process that better meets the returnees' needs – provided donor funding is available.
- ⇒ Develop returnees' networks and establish a sponsorship initiative with successful returnees.
- ⇒ Simplify the procedure for the disbursement of reintegration grants.
- ⇒ Collect data and analysis on micro-businesses and the impact of IOM's support to small businesses in the regions of return.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CONTEXT

1.1.1 MIGRATION TO LIBYA

Libya constitutes an important crossroad for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa moving North. There is a mixed flow coming to Libya, with different types of migrants and asylum seekers leaving their homes for varying reasons, but all following the same routes into Libya. Various come to Libya to work for a few years and return home, others are only transiting on their way to Europe and a few still come to Libya to settle. As the Libyan government has not yet created a framework for migration or asylum, all of them are treated as illegal immigrants¹ and many are either detained indefinitely or deported, often only across the border where they are left in the Sahara.

There is also a flow of migrants returning home from Libya. For some, particularly economic migrants from West Africa, the objective was to come to Libya to work for some time before returning home. Others do not find the employment opportunities they expected in Libya, given the increase in competition for low-skilled jobs, especially after the increase in irregular unskilled migrants post-Revolution. This, coupled with the ill treatment and discrimination they experience in Libya, pushes them back home. However, for some of them, the shame of returning home empty-handed prevents them from going back and keeps them in a vulnerable position in Libya.

Return and reintegration assistance precisely seeks to address these and other challenges faced by migrants who wish to return home, and aims to assist them in doing so in a safe and dignified manner.

1.1.2 ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

IOM defines AVRR as “the administrative, logistical, financial and reintegration support to rejected asylum-seekers, victims of trafficking in human beings, stranded migrants, qualified nationals and other migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country who volunteer to return to their countries of origin.”

The first Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) program was implemented in 1979 in Germany.² Over the years, AVR became Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) with more programs including a reintegration component.³ In the meantime, more countries started supporting AVRR and, since the mid-2000s, IOM missions in countries that were themselves countries of return, such as Libya and Morocco, have also developed this type of program. AVRR is now acknowledged as one of the elements of an effective migration management system.

IOM’s framework for AVRR defines the objectives of IOM’s AVRR program as follows:

- 1) “To safeguard migrants’ dignity and rights in operating their return, while seeking adherence to applicable international principles and standards;
- 2) To ensure that migrants have access to protection and refugee determination mechanisms;
- 3) To preserve the integrity of regular migration structures and asylum procedures;

¹ The term ‘illegal’ here refers to the Libyan government’s qualification of the irregular migrants.

² See p. 26, IOM, ‘Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration: Annual Report of Activities 2011’.

³ See p. 26, IOM, ‘Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration: Annual Report of Activities 2011’.

- 4) To enhance cooperation between origin, transit and host countries in the return process and reinforce the responsibility of countries of origin to their returning nationals;
- 5) To address the roots causes of irregular migration through a rights-based lens;
- 6) To advocate for the adoption of comprehensive voluntary return approaches, inclusive of post-return reintegration assistance, wherever possible, as a more effective, sustainable and mutually beneficial option that can contribute to addressing repeated irregular migration.”¹

1.1.3 RAVL

The Regional Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Program for Stranded Migrants in Libya (RAVL) is an AVRR program implemented by IOM Libya between February 2012 and May 2014. This EU-funded program aimed at supporting the return and reintegration of 733 stranded migrants in Libya to their country of origin.² RAVL benefited irregular migrants from West and East Africa, but also some from South Asia. Under this program, IOM provided beneficiaries with assistance to return to their location of origin within their home country (pocket money for the travel and airport assistance), along with financial assistance (in kind) to support their reintegration (€800). This money could be used by migrants to fund medical assistance, training or to set up micro-businesses. IOM offices in countries of return were in charge of the reintegration process, with technical and managerial oversight by IOM Libya, the project management site and, where needed, the Regional Migrant Assistance Specialist in IOM's Regional Office MENA in Cairo.

1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objective of this evaluation is to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes and sustainability of the Regional Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Program for stranded migrants in Libya, and specifically the RAVL project, along with the tools used for this assistance (forms and databases).

Specifically, the evaluation focuses on:

- 1) Pre-departure: Analysis of the relevance and effectiveness of each step of the RAVL process.
- 2) Post-Departure (Ghana and Togo): Analysis of the quality and effects of the reintegration process in the countries of origin.
- 3) Program tools: Forms, databases and monitoring and evaluation tools.

¹ See: <http://www.iom.int/cms/return-assistance-migrants-governments>

² Following the no cost extension from 31st December 2013.

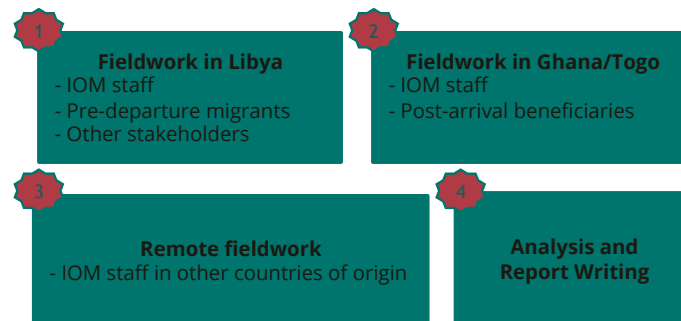
2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

As shown in Figure 1 below, the study was organized around four main research modules. They are as follows:

- 1) Interviews were conducted in Libya with IOM staff and migrants awaiting return, focusing mainly on pre-departure assistance.
- 2) Interviews were conducted in Ghana and Togo with IOM staff and beneficiaries to assess post-arrival and reintegration assistance.
- 3) Interviews were conducted by phone with IOM staff in countries of origin other than Ghana and Togo in order to gain insights into program outcomes in other locations.
- 4) The fourth and final phase involved a cross analysis of the various research modules.

Figure 1: Research approach



2.2 FIELDWORK

The fieldwork for this study relied on three main components and a total of 45 key informant interviews (KIIs) undertaken from June to July 2014:

- 1) Interviews with beneficiaries of AVRR initiatives (20): 10 interviews with stranded migrants in Tripoli, who were about to return in their country; 10 interviews with RAVL returnees in their country of origin, in Togo and in Ghana.
- 2) Interviews with IOM staff (15): in the sending mission, Tripoli (5 interviews), and in the receiving missions, in Ghana and Togo (5) but in 5 other offices in countries of return (Benin, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia).
- 3) Interviews with IOM's partners (10): consulates and community leaders from the countries of origin.

2.2.1 LIBYAN FIELDWORK

In the first part of the fieldwork, which was conducted in Libya, Altai Consulting focused on three main questions:

- Program design and implementation;
- Selection of beneficiaries and RAVL's outreach mechanisms;
- Assistance to beneficiaries in the pre-departure phase.

The fieldwork in Libya combined four main research modules: a desk review, KIIs with IOM staff, in-depth interviews (IDIs) with migrants, and further KIIs with other stakeholders, consulates and community leaders from traditional countries of return.

DESK REVIEW

First of all, Altai Consulting reviewed **all of the program documents available**. This included RAVL's proposal, logical framework, budget, work plan, a database regarding RAVL beneficiaries, the program guidelines, the Reintegration Officer's field reports, RAVL forms and reports regarding the activities of the Gambia Women's Finance Association (GAWFA). This desk review provided information regarding the program design and the conditions of its implementation. It also helped the research team understand the nature of IOM's support in the pre-departure, transit and post-arrival phases, thereby allowing them to better frame the study.

KIIs WITH IOM

The research team completed **five KIIs with IOM staff** who had been involved in RAVL in order to collect information about program design and implementation, along with program outcomes. The interviews focused on RAVL's design phase, its relevance to the Libyan environment, the risks associated with the implementation of such an AVRR program, the organization of the IOM office in Tripoli, the different tools on which the mission relied for its procedures, RAVL's planning and budget, the level of coordination with Libyan authorities, consulates of countries of return and other IOM missions and the nature of the monitoring. The research team also asked IOM staff about the selection process for RAVL beneficiaries, along with the nature of the support provided to migrants in the pre-departure phase.

IDIs WITH MIGRANTS

The research team also conducted **IDIs with 10 beneficiaries of an AVRR program who were in the pre-departure phase**. These migrants were in the process of registering with IOM for AVRR under the Norwegian program. While they were not RAVL beneficiaries, the selection and return process under the Norwegian program was similar to the one under RAVL so these IDIs were useful in understanding migrants' background, what issues they faced in their country that made them leave, why they decided to come to Libya and how they reached Tripoli, what issues they were currently facing in Libya and what were their motivations to return, the suitability of the level of assistance they received from IOM, along with what they hoped to achieve in their home country.

KIIs WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Altai Consulting interviewed **ten representatives from embassies of countries of return or community leaders**, from Togo, Guinea, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Pakistan and Sierra Leone.

These meetings provided information on the situation of migrants in Libya, the nature of the interactions between migrants and the embassies, the level of cooperation between IOM Libya and the consulates, the strengths and the weaknesses of the existing coordination mechanisms and whether these could be strengthened.

LIMITATIONS

The research team tried to meet with officers in Libyan detention centers to collect information about the situation in these centers, the trends in the recent years and their level of cooperation

with IOM and embassies of countries of return. However, the research team was not able to schedule these meetings due to the security conditions in Tripoli.

2.2.2 FIELDWORK IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN (GHANA AND TOGO)

In the second part of the fieldwork, the research team interviewed IOM teams and beneficiaries in Ghana and in Togo. In this phase, the team focused on four main questions:

- Support to beneficiaries during their travel;
- Assistance to beneficiaries after their return;
- Perceptions of returnees about their reintegration;
- Coordination between IOM Libya and IOM offices in countries of return.

KIIS WITH IOM

The research team met with **IOM staff who had been involved in RAVL (5)** to collect information about the organization of the work in these missions, along with the level of coordination with IOM Libya. Altai Consulting also gathered feedback about the support provided to beneficiaries after their return to facilitate their reintegration. The team looked in particular at how the IOM offices have helped beneficiaries in developing business plans. Finally, Altai Consulting discussed with the receiving missions the RAVL monitoring process, how it was completed and how it could be further improved.

IDIs WITH BENEFICIARIES

The research team interviewed **10 beneficiaries post-arrival**. Among these 10, 5 were from Ghana and the other 5 were from Togo. Out of the five Ghanaians interviewed, two were living in Accra and three were settled in the Brong Ahafo region, where most of Ghanaian returnees were from. The five interviewed in Lomé were living in the capital, or in a nearby city. All the interviewees were men because female returnees appeared more difficult to reach out to.

These 10 people had benefited from the RAVL initiative and so Altai Consulting asked them about the level of support they received during the pre-departure, transit and post-arrival phases. The interviews also focused on the beneficiaries' level of reintegration. Information about beneficiaries' perceptions of their experience in Libya and their return were also documented.

LIMITATIONS

Because of the short time allocated to this fieldwork, the research team did not have the opportunity to conduct interviews **outside of the capitals**. Altai Consulting did therefore conduct three of the five IDIs for Ghana over the phone, with returnees from the Brong Ahafo region.

It should also be noted that due to the limitations of time and the difficulty in finding beneficiaries without IOM's assistance, **IOM staff selected the returnees** who were interviewed. This may have introduced a slight bias into the selection process as it is not implausible that returnees who accepted to be interviewed following a request by IOM were: (1) returnees who had had a favorable experience upon return or, (2) looking for additional support from IOM and therefore willing to visit again the office. Where migrants spoke some type of local dialect, IOM staff was present in the interviews for the sake of translation, which could have potentially affected the responses of the returnees.

Due to lack of time, the research team was not able to **visit migrants in their workplace** or to meet with their family or other people from their community. Thus, all impressions of the outcomes of the program and the experiences of the returnees were gauged only from the returnees themselves.

2.2.3 REMOTE FIELDWORK

In the third phase of the fieldwork, the research team conducted 5 follow-up interviews with IOM staff from Benin, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia. As in the previous phase, Altai Consulting focused on three main questions:

- Program design and implementation;
- Assistance to returnees after their return;
- Coordination between IOM Libya and other IOM offices in countries of return.

These KIIs complemented the information collected in Ghana and Togo, allowing the research team to base its analysis of RAVL's outcomes on information collected from several countries. This comparison helped contextualize RAVL's results, identify key factors of success and develop recommendations to enhance the reintegration mechanisms.

3. PROGRAM DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

This first section looks at the design of the RAVL program in terms of its relevance to the objectives it aimed to serve, along with the conditions of its implementation. It describes the framework of RAVL's execution, looking at human resources, budget, work plan, coordination with other stakeholders and monitoring. The analysis acknowledges the challenges of designing and implementing an AVRR program, but it also identifies the fields where better planning or a different approach could have improved the outcomes of the program.

3.1 PROGRAM DESIGN

Key findings

- RAVL was relevant to the Libyan environment because it responded to the pressing needs of hundreds of migrants kept in administration detention in detention centers.
 - The program was comprehensive because it included both return and reintegration components. If future initiatives allocated a larger budget, the reintegration part could be strengthened.
 - The program did capitalize on IOM Libya's previous experiences, which provided useful lessons learnt. In the future, the Tripoli office could collaborate more with other IOM offices to ensure that ongoing programs are coordinated.
-

The design phase is crucial because it defines the program's targets, how the team is going to proceed and where the budget is allocated. In an environment as volatile as Libya, it is key to integrate structural constraints into the design of the program to ensure that contingency plans are set up in advance. IOM Libya has solid experience with AVRR and so building on previous lessons learnt, as was done, proved crucial.

3.1.1 RELEVANCE OF PROGRAM DESIGN

RELEVANCE OF THE INTERVENTION WITH RESPECT TO THE LIBYAN ENVIRONMENT

RAVL was part of an effort to resume AVRR activities in Libya and to answer an increasing demand by stranded migrants. IOM Tripoli has been implementing AVRR programs since 2006, however, these programs were interrupted by the Libyan Revolution in 2011 when IOM shifted its focus to the repatriation of third country nationals stranded in Libya. RAVL, along with the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration program for migrants stranded in Egypt and Libya (RAVEL), constituted an attempt to recommence assisted voluntary return programs in Libya and thereby respond to the pressing call of migrants in the country who found that their experience in Libya had deteriorated post-Revolution.

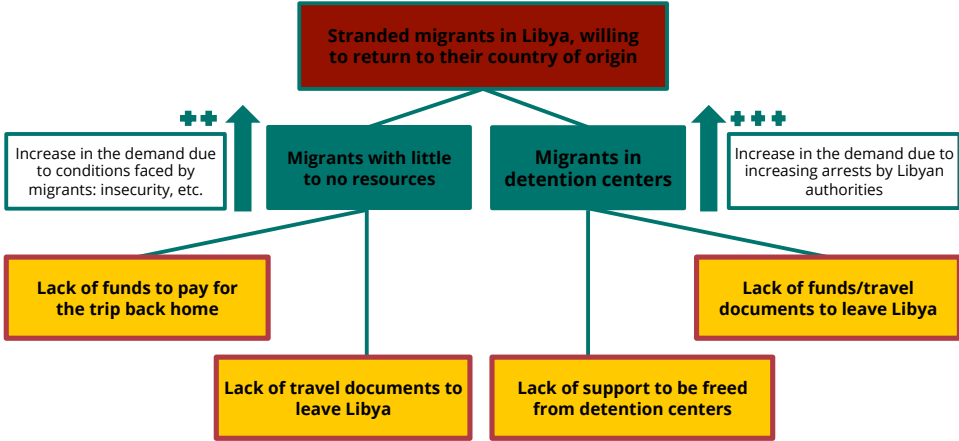
IOM Tripoli developed a thorough analysis of RAVL's relevance to the Libyan context in its proposal, demonstrating the urgent need to assist stranded migrants. First, IOM acknowledged Libya as a major transit and destination country for migrants from West and East Africa. Second, the proposal pointed out that the 2011-Revolution had led to an increase in the flows of migrants, with many trying to cross the Mediterranean sea from Tripoli. The troubles during the Revolution had also made migrants particularly vulnerable, because they were staying in insecure areas or because militias attacked them on the assumption that they were supporting the Gadhafi regime. Finally, the travel to Libya without the required documents and sufficient resources made migrants particularly vulnerable to abuses and exploitation.

For the migrants stranded in Libya, few options were available at the beginning of RAVL. As analyzed by IOM, national authorities and NGOs were trying to support these populations, but their needs exceeded the assistance available. The Libyan state, in particular, was facing new challenges since 2011 and required assistance to counter irregular migration and provide a durable answer to stranded migrants.

Although a full assessment of the Libyan context could not be conducted for the purpose of this evaluation, the assessment made by IOM team in their program proposal and strategic design is generally supported by Altai work on Libyan refugees and mixed migrations in and out of Libya¹, and still very relevant in the current context.

The problems tree below summarizes the needs identified by IOM Tripoli when the program was designed. The main problem is represented at the top of the tree in red, the presence of stranded migrants in Libya who were willing to return to their country of origin. The four yellow boxes below highlight the difficulties faced by this group of migrants, based on their respective situation, whether they were held in detention or not. Finally, the green arrows represent the trends identified by IOM when it designed the program. They indicate that the demand for assistance to return was increasing, which confirms the relevance of RAVL in the Libyan context.

Figure 2: Problems tree for RAVL



Finally, it should be noted that RAVL was part of IOM’s larger strategy for the North Africa region. Indeed, IOM has acknowledged that the Arab Spring and the dismantlement of the administrations in place have also resulted in the dismantlement of the legal framework for migrants in Arab countries, along with the little protection they benefited from in the past. The role of Libya and other North African states, as countries of origin, transit and destination is now better documented and AVRR programs such as RAVL makes up part of IOM’s answer to these multifaceted challenges.

RELEVANCE OF RAVL TO THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

Based on the nature of the program, the development of a program component in each country of return was not only relevant by essence, but also necessary. However, the inclusion of the management team of these different countries did not seem to be sufficient in the design phase and a more frequent coordination among IOM missions could have led to greater synergies from

¹ *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.

the start of the project. Indeed, more regular consultations with IOM teams in receiving missions could have allowed RAVL to better take into consideration their respective situation, whether their operational team was large enough and which other AVRR programs they were already implementing. This would have been very useful to identify whether these missions had some pressing needs, in terms of staffing for instance. IOM offices in countries of return nevertheless reported that **IOM Tripoli was now consulting them more frequently in new program design** and they welcomed this initiative.

⇒ **Recommendation 1: Systematically consult other IOM offices in the region and countries of return.** Although this risks being more time-consuming, it would help identifying other missions’ needs for AVRR programs and give IOM Libya the opportunity to address them in its proposal. These discussions would also build ownership over AVRR programs in the receiving missions.

ADEQUACY OF THE INTERVENTION WITH RESPECT TO THE OBJECTIVES

As defined in RAVL’s logical framework, the objectives for the program were:

- 1) Overall objective: “To support the Libyan Government’s effort to stem irregular migration along the Western and Eastern Migration Routes and assist vulnerable stranded migrants;”
- 2) Specific objectives: “Assist 733 migrants stranded in Libya, by facilitating assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR), in close cooperation with national authorities, civil society and UN agencies.”

The table below associates RAVL’s activities, as defined in the program’s logical framework, and the objectives they sought to achieve. It shows that **RAVL had developed a comprehensive set of activities that addressed all of the program’s goals.** This framework appeared particularly thorough for the activities regarding the return of migrants, which shows that IOM Libya had established a comprehensive procedure to select beneficiaries and organize their travel back to the countries of origin. In the meantime, it could be observed that the program provided little details about the reintegration activities, and so future AVRR initiatives could think about further developing this component in their proposal.

Table 1: RAVL’s activities and objectives

Objectives	Activities ¹
Increase RAVL’s outreach	<u>Activity 1</u> : “Enhance awareness on assistance available under the program;”
Assist stranded migrants by facilitating assisted voluntary return	<u>Activity 2</u> : “Receive prospective beneficiaries, conduct initial interviews, and provide return-related counseling;”
	<u>Activity 3</u> : “Select and register beneficiaries on the existing AVRR database;”
	<u>Activity 4</u> : “Organize pre-departure fitness-for-travel checks in all cases, and provide follow up medical assistance where needed;”
Assist stranded migrants by supporting their reintegration in country of origin	<u>Activity 5</u> : “Organize air, sea and/or land transportation to beneficiaries’ origin countries/communities;”
Assist stranded migrants by supporting their reintegration in country of origin	<u>Activity 6</u> : “Provide reinsertion and reintegration assistance.”

¹ Based on their definition in RAVL’s logical framework.

3.1.2 PRELIMINARY RISK ASSESSMENT

RAVL's proposal contained a comprehensive risk assessment, with an analysis of potential risks and the development of contingency plans. Risk assessment is a key component at the start of any program and it took on a particular importance in Libya, given the major security threats. In its proposal, RAVL had identified three potential risks: (1) "Deterioration in the security situation in Libya or migrants' origin country," (2) "Reluctance of some stakeholders to participate in program activities," and (3) "Obstacles to the identification of AVRR beneficiaries and/or their return." For each of these three risks, RAVL assessed their level ("Moderate," "Minor," etc.), their likelihood ("Minor," "Possible," etc.), and their potential impact on RAVL ("Major," "Moderate," etc.).

IOM Tripoli also developed contingency plans to answer potential challenges. For instance, regarding the second risk, if Libyan authorities were to oppose IOM's visits to migrants in detention, the organization would have to work more closely with other NGOs that can visit these centers, the International Committee of the Red Cross for instance. As for the third risk, "Obstacles to the identification of AVRR beneficiaries and/or their return," the impact of security deterioration on IOM's outreach to vulnerable migrants could have been stressed, since violence in some cities like Benghazi was an obstacle to IOM's intervention (see 4.1). UN security rules prevented IOM staff from traveling to unstable areas and the office could rarely negotiate the transfer of migrants to a center in Tripoli. As a result, the program could not always reach out to migrants detained in insecure regions. There is of course little IOM could do to address this security constraint, but maybe the office in Tripoli could put a further emphasis on negotiating with the Libyan authorities the transfer of detained migrants to Tripoli.

3.2 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Key findings

- IOM staff in both Libya and countries of return were very skilled and engaged. The challenge for RAVL, as for other AVRR initiatives, was to coordinate work in a large number of countries and offices.
 - Despite the tense environment, coordination with other stakeholders in Libya was very good, which is a significant achievement.
 - The collaboration between sending and receiving missions was close but could further be enhanced.
 - Due to the uncertainty on the number and countries of origin of beneficiaries, the nature of AVRR programs makes it difficult to develop timelines and budgets in advance, some aspects of planning could still be modified in order to reduce delays for returnees pre-departure and facilitate reintegration in countries of return.
 - Monitoring processes were in place but they were not systematically enforced because of logistical constraints, lack of time and budget. Systematically communicating the outcomes of the process to offices in countries of return could improve monitoring.
-

3.2.1 ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION AMONG IOM OFFICES

Defining responsibilities and organization for AVRR programs is challenging because a large number of people are working together, in sending missions and countries of return, sometimes without having even met. Responsibilities for RAVL were split across a number of offices, which required a sustained coordination effort. Usually, the office in a host country organized return, and offices in countries of return managed reintegration, but tasks were sometimes shared by the different offices. The figure below summarizes the responsibilities of each office during RAVL, as well as the responsibilities of each team within the offices:

Figure 3: RAVL organizational chart

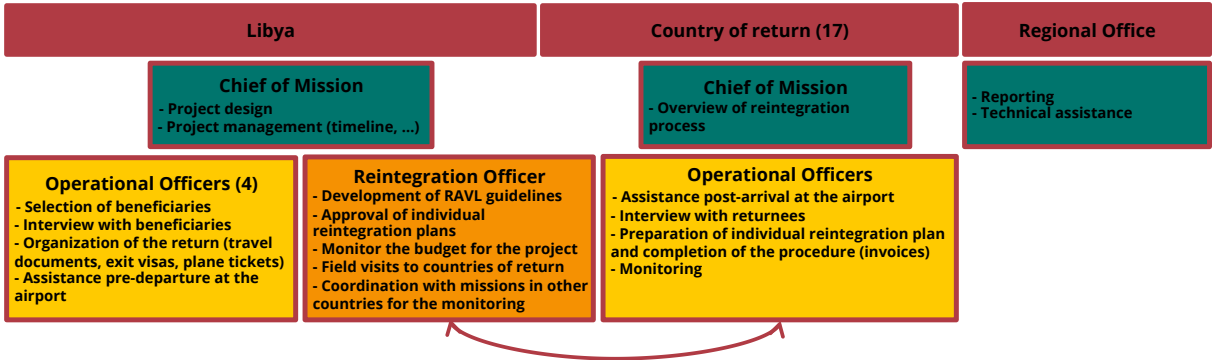


Figure 3 demonstrates that Operational Officers in Libya usually dealt with the selection of beneficiaries and their preparation for return. In countries of return, Operational Officers were responsible for assistance post-arrival, as well as the implementation of the reintegration process. The Reintegration Officer in Libya supported all of the offices in terms of the reintegration process and monitoring, with a foot on each side and regular visits to countries of return.

IN LIBYA

IOM Libya proved to be very experienced, with a good knowledge of AVRR procedures. The operational staff had been engaged in these types of initiatives for several years and the team was accustomed to interacting with migrants in need. They had strong experience with conducting interviews and were accustomed to operating in tense environments such as detention centers. All of them spoke at least three languages, Arabic, English and French.

RAVL was organized around the **Chief of Mission** who developed the proposal and assumed responsibility as the Program Manager. The Chief of Mission was responsible for establishing the program work plan at the program commencement stage, and for regularly updating it in order to support the staff of the bureau in their efforts, and to coordinate with other Chiefs of Mission.

The operational team, **Operational and Movement Assistants**, played a key role in the process. They were the first points of contact with RAVL beneficiaries and conducted interviews with them, either at the IOM office or in detention centers. The operational team shared the information about AVRR with migrants and they started briefing them about the reintegration process. They were also the ones to coordinate with embassies for the delivery of travel documents, to work with Libyan authorities to get exit visas and to book returnees’ tickets back to their countries of origin.

Finally, at IOM Tripoli, the **Reintegration Officer** was in charge of transversal questions regarding the reintegration process. He developed RAVL guidelines related to the

implementation of the reintegration component and shared them with the countries of return. He was also responsible for the approval all of the Individual Reintegration Plans (IRP).¹ This mission might have been challenging to conduct from Tripoli, without comprehensive background information regarding the situation in each of the countries of return. As he was based in Libya, the Reintegration Officer was mostly communicating with other missions through e-mails and phone calls, which were not always ideal to ensure fluid communication flows. The Reintegration Officer did, however, conduct two field visits to Togo and Gambia and developed field reports with recommendations to improve the reintegration component of the program.

A main difficulty for AVRR programs was **staff turnover**. In Tripoli, the IOM mission could not keep its Reintegration Officer until the end of the program because there was no budget to fund this position at the end of RAVL. The officer had been building personal relations with IOM staff in Libya, but also in the countries of return through field visits and regular working relations, and so these relations will have to be developed again when another Reintegration Officer joins the mission in Tripoli. For the offices in countries of return, it may be time-consuming to start again with a new partner at the beginning of each program. This issue is also more entrenched in Libya where the tense security environment makes it difficult to keep staff long-term.

IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN

Operational staff in the countries of return also demonstrated solid experience with, and understanding of, AVRR processes. During RAVL, staff in countries of return were in charge of welcoming returnees at the airport, counseling them on how to use the reintegration grant, developing business plans with them, guiding them throughout the procedure and, finally, organizing the monitoring of their reintegration.

A challenge for receiving missions is that they often worked on different programs at the same time, which had different donor stipulated procedures to follow, and with returnees from different countries. This sometimes made the mission of these offices challenging, all the more as they welcomed migrants who were often fragile and needed time and counseling.

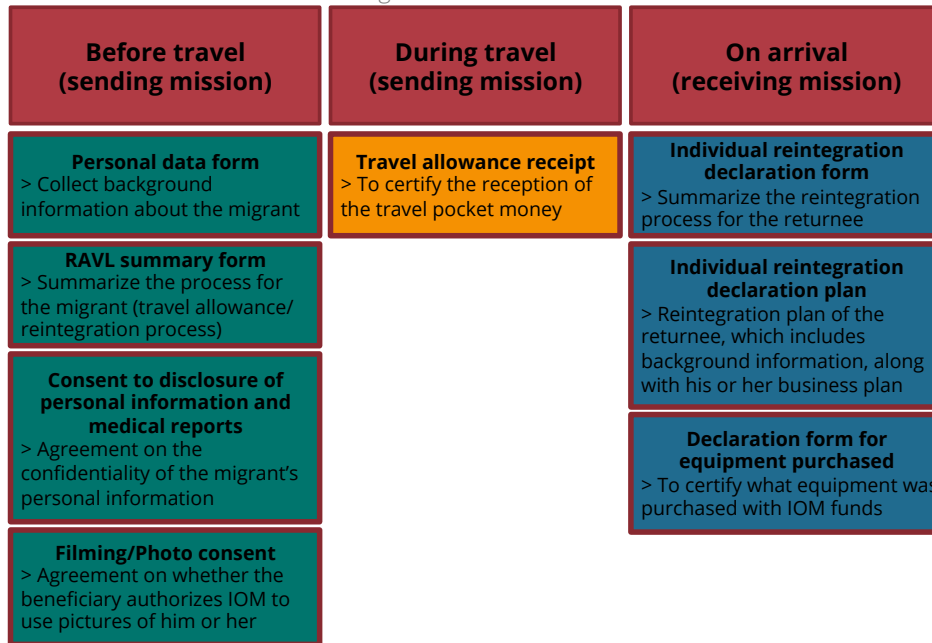
- ⇒ **Recommendation 2: Ensure continuity of the staff.** Experience plays a central role in the quality of the services delivered by IOM for AVRR programs and so it is essential that offices try as much as possible to retain their staff. This is a challenge given that staff and office are funded based on projects, and would need further engagements with donors.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 3: Increase the mobility of the Reintegration Officer at IOM Libya.** In order to create a strengthened relation between the sending and the receiving missions, the mobility of the Reintegration Officer established in Tripoli could be further enhanced, with more regular trips to countries of return for example.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 4: Donors and IOM should organize a kick off meeting at the beginning of each program.** Such gathering would be an opportunity for all of the partners to meet and share their respective experiences of AVRR. It would not only participate to team building, but also make each partner better understand the others' respective constraints.

¹ An IRP is the reintegration plan developed by the returnee, with the support of the IOM office in the country of return. It usually includes the returnee's business plan, along with the required documentation to obtain the disbursement of the reintegration grant.

TOOLS

IOM missions relied both on forms (Figure 4), software and web applications to complete all of the RAVL procedures. These were well designed and functional, and IOM Tripoli was careful to use forms similar to RAVEL ones, in an effort to harmonize the procedure. This was a highly valuable initiative and AVRR programs would gain from extending this practice to other programs.

Figure 4: RAVL forms



The forms used by the IOM team aimed at collecting information about the beneficiaries and documenting the disbursement of travel allowances and reintegration grants. Figure 4 summarizes all of the forms used by IOM staff in Tripoli and the countries of return for RAVL. Apart from the RAVL summary form, the individual reintegration declaration form, the reintegration declaration plan and the declaration form for equipment purchased, the forms were based on IOM institutional tools. The pre-departure phase appeared to be the heaviest in terms of data collection, mainly because it involved the first contact with the returnees and so a lot of details needed to be recorded.

Besides, in terms of content, IOM staff noted that some data they gathered was sometimes redundant, or not very relevant. "We are collecting information we don't use afterwards," commented one of them. It seems that this is mainly related to the way questions are asked and a simple revision could improve the usefulness of the information gathered. For instance, in the personal data form, questions such as "Where have you travelled in the last five years?" were very broad, took time during the initial interview and did not necessarily provide relevant information to improve the assistance. If the question aimed at understanding how the migrant had arrived in Libya, IOM staff could ask him or her about his or her journey to Libya, in which country he or she stopped on the way, for how long and what for.

Finally, if provided the adequate budget, IOM Libya could further explore the opportunity of directly entering data online in order to save time. Under RAVL, personal data forms were completed by hand and then entered into IOM's web application, MiMOSA.¹ Direct data entry into MiMOSA could save some precious time for IOM operational staff. This could prove challenging

¹ Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA), see: <http://www.mimosa.iom.int>

for the interviews conducted in the detention centers as it would require a laptop and an internet connection, but it could at least be done when migrants visit the office. Furthermore, some tools now allow for direct data entry through smartphones or tablets connected to a database, and these could be tested when visiting detention centers.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 5: Harmonize the forms for AVRR programs.** IOM Tripoli has already demonstrated its ability at using IOM's global forms but also similar forms for two different programs, RAVL and RAVEL, both funded by the European Union, and this initiative should be very much welcomed. Given the workload of all of the operational staff, moving further towards standardizing the forms for AVRR programs could have a substantial impact in terms of efficiency. This should make up part of a wider effort of harmonization of the AVRR programs.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 6: Rely on online data entry as much as possible.** IOM staff are very busy and entering data directly in a web application could save them time. IOM could also gain from exploring further the option of direct data entry through smartphones and tablets.

3.2.2 IMPLEMENTATION

TIMELINE AND PLANNING

In general, planning in the context of AVRR programs is challenging at best, especially in a volatile environment such as Libya. Offices have no visibility on the number of requests they will receive for returns, and they do not always have control over when these requests will arrive. Migrants come to IOM Libya on an irregular basis, based on needs, awareness of the project but also the environment in Libya. It is impossible for the IOM office to schedule how many requests they will receive per day or week, and they have to address them as they come.

Besides, the ability to interview beneficiaries is often dependent on the authorization of the Libyan authorities, particularly when beneficiaries are in detention. Finally, the insecure environment in Libya often forces the team to revise or adjust plans at the last minute. On several occasions, the departure of migrants had to be postponed because of political events in Tripoli. These challenges naturally have an adverse effect on the ability of receiving missions to make necessary arrangements for returnees.

Program planning under RAVL was further hampered by other extenuating circumstances in Libya. Firstly, at the time of the Revolution in 2011 all foreign staff were evacuated out of Tripoli. When they started to return to the country in the aftermath of the Revolution, the mission went through a number of Chiefs of Mission – or acting Chiefs of Mission – in a short time frame. This led to a leadership gap at the commencement of the program because there was no continuity in the project's direction.¹ Second, at the time that RAVL was launched, the office in Libya was still recovering from the changes the Revolution had imposed and so the context did not provide for a smooth commencement of the program, or indeed for solid planning. The situation was so volatile that the team could not know under which conditions they would be able to operate, whether they could travel to regions outside of Tripoli and what would be the government's level of cooperation.

¹ Based on interviews with IOM's staff in Tripoli.

As a result, no detailed work plan could be developed, nor were timelines created. A broad program statement did outline three activities that RAVL should focus on. They were:

- 1) "Enhance awareness on the available assistance within the program among referral systems, embassies, donors and migrant communities;"
- 2) "Identify potential AVRR beneficiaries, conduct initial interview and provide return-related counseling;"
- 3) "Facilitate AVRR from Libya to migrants' origin countries."

However, there had been no planning on how the activities should be implemented, their timing or sequencing. The lack of a well-defined timeline seems to have created challenges for the operations team, particularly in terms of ensuring that all program requirements had been met. For example, the original proposal set out two "visibility events," with the EU targeting government officials, other stakeholders and IOM staff in order to promote RAVL activities. Yet, the team was able to organize only one of these two events because it lacked time at the end of the project. IOM Libya invited all of the stakeholders, embassies of Nigeria, Sudan, Togo, Chad, Senegal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Guinea Conakry and Ghana, along with community leaders from Cambodia and Cameroon. The event was due to take place on 27th May 2014, and preparatory meetings were held with stakeholders and the European Union (EU) Delegation. However, the gathering had to be cancelled due to the deterioration of the security situation after 21st May 2014, and the evacuation of IOM Libya, the EU Delegation and several embassies.

CHALLENGE OF ORGANIZING THE LAST RETURNS

Another challenge, common to AVRR programs, was the difficulty to organize the reintegration and monitoring of the last RAVL returnees. The timeline presented in Table 2 below sets out the main milestones of the RAVL program. It shows that the last 11 returns of the program occurred in April 2014, which was one month before the official closing of the program.¹

Table 2: Main milestones of RAVL

Date	Activity
February 2012	Approval of the proposal and start of the program
Till Dec. 2013	Phase of interviews
January 2013	Return of the first 12 migrants
May 2013	Completion of the first reintegration case
July 2013	Reintegration Officer's mission in Gambia
March 2014	Reintegration Officer's mission in Togo
April 2014	Last return of 11 migrants
May 2014	Last reintegration cases Official end of the RAVL program
June 2014	Publication of 'Stories of Return'

Naturally, this leaves little time for receiving missions to organize the reintegration of these returnees and is particularly challenging for missions that are comprised of only one staff member, such as IOM Togo. In fact, IOM Lomé received 31 returnees between 18th and 20th March 2014, and the one Operational Officer in that office had less than two months to complete

¹ It should be noted that 5 out of the 11 returnees have received their reintegration assistance.

reintegration for all returnees. Such short timing is common to AVRR initiatives as the last returns can only happen at the end of the program, when the amount of unspent reintegration grants can be reallocated to fund the return of additional stranded migrants (see 'Unspent reintegration grants'). This also implied that the receiving missions had less time to complete the monitoring before the end of the program and the collection and analysis of all of the monitoring forms. As a result, there were fewer opportunities to gauge best practices or lessons for future interventions.

It should, however, be noted that a lack of time for the monitoring of the final returnees under an AVRR initiative seems to be a common challenge for IOM teams in general and is, no doubt, linked to the demanding nature of the program and the contexts within which they operate. Perhaps a 6-month extension on such programs could automatically be granted at the return of the last returnee, to allow the full reintegration and monitoring of all beneficiaries under the program.

BUDGET

BUDGET REVISION

Travel costs

Developing a budget for an AVRR program is complex given that a number of external factors can impact the activities. In the case of RAVL, two main factors motivated budget revisions. First, the RAVL budget for return was developed based on the market price of flights (€520 on average) as they stood prior to the Revolution, when airline companies still ensured direct connections between Tripoli and a number of African capitals. By the time of the commencement of RAVL (post-Revolution), transportation costs had increased because only indirect flights were available by then (€730). **Consequently, the program's budget for return had to be increased by nearly 25% - reducing the number of migrants that could be served with the budget allocated from 800 to 733.**

Unspent reintegration grants

The number of unused grants also impacted RAVL's budget. Out of the 790 returnees under RAVL, 219 did not use their unclaimed grant, which meant that **additional funds (nearly €175,000) could be allocated to the return and reintegration of other stranded migrants from Tripoli.** This is the reason why the program was finally able to support **790 returnees.** This change reflects the difficulty of defining targets for AVRR initiatives but also demonstrates the responsiveness of the program team who was able to quickly reallocate funds to assist more people.

No-cost extension

As of 2013, IOM Libya had to ask for **a no-cost extension** because the program had not spent all of its funding. As explained by the IOM Chief of Mission, this type of procedure is not uncommon for programs implemented in Libya because the volatile situation sometimes delays activities. This is a challenge for IOM Libya and maybe, for better efficiency, this factor should be integrated into the planning of future programs – to avoid creating an additional burden for IOM staff that might also be launching other programs at the same time.

SERVICE FEE AGAINST BUDGET IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN

While IOM Ghana was granted a budget¹ for the reintegration process they were implementing, all of the other IOM offices in countries of return received a service fee² for their work. All of the receiving missions interviewed shared that working with service fees was difficult because they were never able to predict how many migrants would be coming and which budget they could rely on.

RAVL had granted a budget to IOM Ghana because the mission was expected to receive more migrants. It was also an opportunity to test what a receiving mission could achieve with secured funding. Whilst this initiative is very interesting and should certainly be further explored considering it led to worthy results (see 4.3.4), the discrepancies in terms of budget were high among the IOM offices: **IOM Ghana received \$673 to support each migrant, against \$105 for the other IOM missions.**³ As developed in the recommendation below, one option could be to grant budget to one to three countries per program, in coordination with other initiatives and sending missions. This would ensure that all of the IOM offices in countries of return benefit from secured funding for their staff at any given time.

Focus box 1: Target of 250 Ghanaian migrants

In its proposal, RAVL intended to support 250 Ghanaians in their return and reintegration to home country. By the end of the programs, 93 Ghanaians had been assisted accordingly. This discrepancy sheds light on **the difficulty to predict the composition of a target group and how to translate this in terms of budget for offices in countries of return.** Proposals for AVRR programs are usually based on statistics from past programs and current waiting lists of migrants in need, which builds a reasonable forecast of likely demand. However, three to six months usually pass between the time the proposal is built and when the program actually commences, and sometimes the composition of potential beneficiaries shifts in that time.

REINTEGRATION GRANT

Another key element of the budget structure was the €800 sum that forms RAVL's reintegration grant. IOM deliberately raised its amount compared to RAVEL (€485), because the RAVEL grant was found to be too low. It was still below the average amount offered to returnees through IOM voluntary return programs from Europe (the average is above €1,000), which follow different schemes. These disparities have sometimes generated tensions between returnees and IOM offices, creating an additional obstacle to an already complex process, as explained in the Focus box below.

Focus box 2: Amount of the reintegration grant

As already reported in previous studies about AVRR, **harmonizing reintegration grants** would facilitate the implementation of AVRR programs. The present discrepancies often constitute sources of frustrations when migrants realize that others who come from the same country of origin and have been through the same kind of hardship benefit from a higher stipend. It also further complicates the work of receiving missions that have to juggle with many different reintegration grants. This amount does depend on each donor and so this adjustment could only

¹ A budget can be allocated to receiving missions when they expect to receive a large number of returnees (250 Ghanaians from Tripoli for RAVL) so that they can hire additional staff to support the office's needs.

² A service fee is the compensation allocated to a receiving mission to process the reintegration of a returnee.

³ Calculations based on Annex III – Budget from November 29th, 2013. It should yet be noted that IOM Ghana also supported the reintegration process in Benin and Togo.

be conducted in close collaboration with the donor community.

Ideally, the grant would be defined **based on the country of return**, since the costs of living widely differ among states in Asia, West and East Africa. This would of course require an in-depth effort to assess economic conditions in all of the countries of return, but it could be relevant to ensure that all of the returnees benefit from the same opportunity.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 7: Have a Program Manager in charge from the start**, to take responsibility for the timeline and to verify the budget and the targets to achieve. This would ensure that all of the activities are specified and scheduled at the beginning of the program, and none are forgotten. It would also allow a better tracking of the budget.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 8: Systematically share program documents with the operational staff** at the beginning of the program (logical framework, budget, timeline, etc.). It builds ownership and helps the team to complete its mission.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 9: Grant budget for all receiving missions through AVR programs**, in coordination with other IOM offices. Ideally, all of the receiving missions should receive at least one or two budgets from AVR programs in order to ensure a minimum capacity. While this would be very challenging, and requires cooperation among all of the missions and regular updates based on program timelines, a better coordination between sending missions in Europe and North Africa could ensure regular funding flows for IOM offices in countries of return, at least for West and East Africa. This would considerably help receiving missions in their planning and human resources management, and consequently improve the quality of their services.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 10: Reintegration grants should be harmonized across IOM programs for each country of return**. This would be fairer to migrants who sometimes come from the same country, have been through the same difficulties but go back with IOM grants of different amounts. Ideally, the grant would be defined based on countries of origin, not on donors.

3.2.3 COORDINATION WITH OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS

IN LIBYA

LIBYAN AUTHORITIES

IOM Tripoli has achieved good relations with the Libyan government, a significant achievement given the political instability and the difficulty to operate in Libya. This cooperation results from IOM's lobbying efforts and also the Libyan authorities' interest in voluntary return initiatives. It relies on three main pillars: the referral of detained migrants, the facilitation of IOM staff visits to detention centers and the issuance of free exit visas.

The Libyan authorities, through the Department for Combating Irregular Migration (DCIM), while not systematically, have been known to refer detained migrants to IOM and sometimes to embassies. IOM then has the opportunity to visit them in detention centers and inform them of the possibility to join a voluntary return and reintegration program (see 4.1 for further details).

Libyan authorities have also authorized IOM staff to go to detention centers, so that they can regularly visit migrants. As a result, Operational Officers did not face administrative obstacles to meet with detained migrants and the Libyan police also allocated them a room to conduct the interviews.

Finally, IOM Tripoli was able to negotiate the issuance of free exit visas for stranded migrants supported by AVRR programs. This important accomplishment means that Libyan authorities waive the usual LYD525 (\$400) for all beneficiaries of voluntary return and reintegration programs such as RAVL.

CONSULATES OF THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

IOM has also developed excellent relations with embassies of countries of return and they cooperate closely with consulates. IOM officers are in contact with most of the embassies in Tripoli. All of the staff of the embassies interviewed¹ were aware of IOM's AVRR initiatives and thankful for this support. Consulates usually have little leverage to support stranded migrants, in particular the ones detained by the Libyan authorities, and so they greatly welcome IOM's assistance.

The cooperation between IOM and embassies is usually based on:

- 1) Embassies referring to IOM migrants who have decided that they would like to return home;
- 2) Embassies issuing travel documents for migrants that have decided to return home and confirming identity;
- 3) The exchange of information between IOM and embassies on how to best assist migrants.

⇒ **Recommendation 11: Lobby for better conditions in detention centers.** Migrants are kept in dire conditions in Libyan detention centers and IOM could participate to lobbying efforts to improve their situation, as the organization gets involved in helping migrants return home. This should be done in collaboration with other programs and organizations focusing on detention centers. It could also negotiate with Libyan authorities to get an easier access to migrants in the process of being repatriated, securing a specific location where IOM can provide them assistance and counseling.

⇒ **Recommendation 12: Send a brief to embassies at the beginning of each program,** so consulate staff know what to expect in terms of program scope, process and reintegration packages.

IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

IOM OFFICES IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN

Communication between IOM Tripoli and IOM offices in countries of return is regular and consistent. However it tends to be related to **operational matters** and remains **quite functional in nature.** **Greater communication and information exchange on the situation of migrants** could be beneficial in terms of program improvement.

¹ Consulate staff from Togo, Guinea, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Pakistan and Sierra Leone were interviewed for this study.

IOM Tripoli shared the RAVL program guidelines with IOM offices in countries of return at the outset of the program and all of the receiving missions interviewed convened that these were very clear and straightforward.

As for the **return process**, IOM Libya was sending the notifications of return¹ well in advance and receiving missions usually had enough time to organize the reception of RAVL beneficiaries. To further improve the cooperation mechanisms, IOM Libya could communicate further on the number of returnees to expect, along with their respective situation, which is something that was mentioned by receiving missions.

Focus box 3: Return of beneficiaries in IOM Ethiopia

IOM Ethiopia received 84 returnees from Libya in February 2014, a few months before the closure of the program. In Tripoli, the absence of an Ethiopian embassy had resulted in delays to procure the required travel documents. IOM had to wait for staff from the Ethiopian embassy in Cairo to visit Tripoli and, as a result, the mission could not schedule the travel before. In Addis Ababa, the office was not prepared to receive so many returnees at the same time, and to process their reintegration in such a short time.

In the end, 49 returnees were able to receive their reintegration grant but the 35 others did not, either because they were not interested in receiving IOM's support, or because the program was already closed when they visited the IOM office. In a number of cases, IOM Ethiopia directly distributed cash, because it did not have the time to develop business plans with the returnees. IOM Ethiopia could not complete any monitoring forms for these RAVL cases.

Such a situation is very telling of the challenges faced by IOM in both sending and receiving missions. IOM Tripoli had to go through the Ethiopian embassy in Egypt to verify the returnees' identity and this took longer than they had planned. Being able to do so and thus secure the return of these migrants was quite an achievement even if time did not allow the reintegration component to be fulfilled. In Addis, the IOM office received an important and unexpected influx of Ethiopians deported from Saudi Arabia, which put pressure on the office's resources and affected its ability to process the RAVL cases as fast as they usually do.

Reintegration processes could have also been further strengthened through greater identification and communication about **vulnerable cases**. While IOM has clear guidelines for victims of trafficking and minors – which require additional procedures before return – some IOM receiving missions commented that when returnees arrived, they did not know which of them had been in detention prior to their departure and which had not. This kind of information could have allowed them to more systematically care for those who may have required greater psychological care.

Schedule loophole

Working across offices that have different workweek schedules can be challenging and poses obstacles that are sometimes difficult to deal with. While IOM Tripoli takes its weekend on Fridays and Saturdays, most of the receiving missions had their weekends on Saturdays and Sundays. This means that there is often three days of “weekend” between them so that if a request is sent

¹ The notification of return is the message sent by the sending mission to the receiving one to notify the arrival of returnees. In the case of RAVL, all of the receiving missions interviewed convened that IOM Libya was sending it three to seven days in advance, which was enough time to get them organized.

on a Thursday afternoon to Tripoli, a response will not necessarily be received until Monday morning when the team in country of return is back in the office. This sometimes affected the situation of migrants awaiting return. A simple solution to such an unavoidable complication may be to create schedule where all demands are submitted by Wednesday of each week and IOM Libya commits to responding by close of business Thursday.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 13: Share estimates of the number of returnees to expect** as early as possible in the process, to ensure that the offices have the time to prepare their arrival in the best possible conditions.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 14: Share information about the background of the returnees**, highlighting any vulnerabilities or possible trauma, either through MiMOSA or direct contact. IOM already has Internal Guidance Notes detailing actions needed for vulnerable cases, and this follow-up would allow IOM receiving missions to assist vulnerable migrants in the best possible way.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 15: Share environment briefings about Libya.** Staff in countries of return have rarely been to Libya and some missions appear to have little understanding of the situation in Tripoli. The Libyan office could take some time at the beginning of each program to share a brief on the conditions in the country, and send regular updates on the economic, social and security situation. This would be particularly useful given the volatility of the Libyan environment and it would allow the receiving missions to better understand the experience of returnees.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 16: At the end of a program, resort to cash distributions.** When returns are organized just before the closure of an AVRR program, it is unlikely that the receiving mission will have the time to develop a business plan with the returnee and collect all of the required documents. In these very specific cases, IOM could allow the distribution of the grant in cash, to ensure that the returnee receives at least a form of assistance. This would require donors' prior approval and could be discussed during the design phase of any projects.

3.2.4 MONITORING

While the RAVL team did develop monitoring mechanisms, IOM offices in countries of return could not systematically enforce them and the missions did not receive feedback on the information they gathered. This summarizes the main challenge with AVRR monitoring procedures: the framework exists, but IOM staff in countries of return faced many difficulties to apply it, mainly due to a lack of time and budget, and they did not receive feedback on the forms they sent back, because time and funding often fell short at the end of an AVRR initiative. In terms of monitoring throughout the program, RAVL developed regular activity reports, and the Reintegration Officer conducted two field missions and his reports were shared with the rest of the IOM offices.

IOM Libya developed the methodology of its monitoring from the beginning of RAVL, which was a very positive accomplishment. The team in Tripoli developed a monitoring form and shared it with the teams in countries of return. In almost all of the missions in countries of return, IOM staff conducted the monitoring. In Ghana, the IOM team contracted its local partner to conduct the monitoring (see 4.3.4). The mechanism ensured a larger number of face-to-face interviews in the region where the NGO was located, compared to IOM staff based in the capital and who does not systematically has the time to travel to the remote regions to conduct interviews. The weak

capacity of the partner, however, meant that IOM Ghana had to train them and regularly monitor the monitoring process. According to IOM staff in Accra, the results were successful.

As for the **tools for the monitoring**, RAVL used **two different monitoring forms**, one longer than the other, meaning that the IOM missions in the countries of return did not use the same forms to assess the program as the team in Libya. While offices in countries of return did their best to collect data for the monitoring, this difference in forms makes it difficult to compare the results among the missions. Finally, the questionnaire used for the monitoring could be improved, as explained in Focus box 4.

Focus box 4: RAVL Monitoring Form

Based on interviews with IOM staff and the results of RAVL monitoring forms, it appears that a number of questions could be reviewed because they did not provide very useful answers to understand the effects of the program.

For instance, questions 2 and 3, “Did IOM Libya provide you with adequate information on the RETURN procedure?” and “Were the modalities of REINTEGRATION clear before returning?” did not provide very interesting information because all of the interviewees answered “yes.” Instead, the interviewer could ask the returnees what IOM told them about the return and reintegration procedures prior to their departure, to compare what they remember from this interview with what IOM Libya should have told them. Whilst the returnees may not recall all the details one year after, it is likely that they will precisely evoke the pieces of information they were missing, if any.

The same is true of question 22, “Did you receive counseling from IOM office regarding your business?” All of the respondents answered “yes,” without specifying further, whereas it would be interesting to understand what assistance IOM provided them, how returnees perceived it and what else they would have needed.

MONITORING PROCESS

Although receiving missions worked hard to conduct the monitoring process, they were not able to reach out to more than 15% of the RAVL returnees who had been through a reintegration process, due to both logistical and budget reasons. First of all, missions can rarely keep in contact with the returnees who have received their assistance because they sometimes change their phone number, or move to a region where the cell phone coverage is not good. As explained by IOM staff in Ghana, people are often suspicious of IOM getting back to them and worry that the mission will want to deduct taxes from them. “Many people change their phone numbers after dealing with us,” he explained. This situation makes it challenging to get in touch with returnees three to six months after the disbursement of the grant. Unless these returnees live nearby other migrants IOM have assisted, it is very difficult for IOM to locate them.¹

Second, IOM does not have the resources to visit all of the returnees who often live outside of the capital. Not only is the travel involved costly, but it also requires IOM staff to go on missions for several days while other programs are ongoing. For instance, IOM Senegal explained that most of the RAVL returnees lived 450km away from Dakar, in areas where cell phone coverage

¹ Besides, IOM can only reach out to returnees with their consent, as per IOM Data Protection Principles.

did not always work. Given the mission's limited capacity at the time of RAVL (2 operational staff), it had made the monitoring extremely challenging and IOM Dakar could only interview 5 out of the 21 returnees having been assisted.

DATA ANALYSIS OF THE MONITORING PROCESS

Finally, IOM Libya did not systematically collect, enter or analyze the monitoring forms, for lack of time and budget. When the Tripoli office received these forms, it did not have a mechanism or the funding to enter them into a database, and so the RAVL team did not have the opportunity to benefit from the data collected by the receiving missions. This information is very difficult to gather and therefore more funds should be allocated to data analysis in the future so that the monitoring forms can be used to draw conclusions and recommendations for future programs. The results of this process should also be systematically shared with IOM offices in countries of return, as this would show them the value of the efforts they are deploying to complete the monitoring process.

Analyzing the results of the monitoring forms is important because it supports IOM's efforts to build on lessons learnt for future programs. IOM Libya has been implementing AVRR initiatives for nearly seven years and the office has already identified some good practices thanks to feedback from receiving missions. For example, before the Revolution, the Tripoli office would assist migrants awaiting return to prepare business plans in anticipation of their arrival in their home country. However, since IOM staff in Tripoli was not fully aware of the economic environment in the countries of return, this system was not functioning in an ideal manner. On this realization, IOM Libya shifted the reintegration component to the receiving missions.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 17: Allocate resources to organize data entry and analysis of the monitoring forms.** The program team should appoint one person at the beginning of each program to be in charge of sending and collecting all of the monitoring forms. Any program should also have a budget (and time) to fund data entry and analysis of the information collected. Ideally, the sending mission should conduct a reintegration assessment and the receiving mission would be responsible for the assessment plan. Whilst IOM operational staff does not necessarily have the time or the skills to do so, one option could be to systematically externalize it to a third party, contracted at the beginning of the program. This organization would also be in charge of the fieldwork. Such a system would ensure an external and objective view on the program's outcomes.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 18: Train program staff on basic notions of monitoring and evaluation** so that they know what a logical framework is, what objectives and indicators consist of and why it is important to systematically assess indicators at the end of a program.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 19: Develop brief activity reports every quarter**, to be shared with IOM Libya, IOM offices in the countries of return and the donor.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 20: Adopt a single monitoring form for the program**, and develop the questions based on lessons learnt from previous AVRR programs. This questionnaire would be developed in close collaboration with the third-party in charge of the monitoring.

4. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Return and reintegration constitute two complementary activities of an AVRR initiative like RAVL. Such programs provide stranded migrants with the opportunity to return home in a dignified manner and to restart their lives at origin with a small grant that, it is hoped, will allow them to address the factors that caused them to migrate in the first place. In order to assess the outcomes of RAVL, the three main phases of the program are analyzed in the following section: outreach, return and reintegration; and for each, RAVL's successes and areas of opportunities are highlighted.

4.1 OUTREACH TO MIGRANTS IN NEED

Key findings

- Visits to Libyan detention centers constituted a key and effective outreach mechanism whereby IOM Tripoli was able to make contact with vulnerable migrants.
 - The second most effective means of outreach involved connecting with migrants indirectly, through cooperation with embassies of countries of return, other UN agencies and NGOs.
 - A communication plan was developed under RAVL that involved the development of a booklet titled, "Stories of Return," to advertise IOM's activities. The booklet's main audience was donors and embassies, rather than migrants themselves.
-

Outreach activities are central to informing stranded migrants of all of the options available to them if they wish to return to their home country. It is particularly important for stranded migrants in Libya as some choose to go home using the same smuggling routes that brought them to Libya, thereby risking their lives once more. Others decide to attempt the dangerous journey to Europe because they do not want to return home empty handed. IOM informs migrants about its AVRR initiatives through direct outreach (visits to the detention centers) and through embassies of countries of return. In the case of RAVL, IOM also released a specific communication support, with the publication of a booklet about successful stories of returnees.

INSTITUTIONAL OUTREACH

In the case of RAVL, IOM's institutional outreach mainly relied on visits to the detention centers and the publication of a booklet, "Stories of Return." IOM operational staff often visited detention centers and let detained migrants know about the possibility to return home with IOM. These visits took place at a regular frequency, but depended on needs and the security conditions in Libya. They were central to informing migrants about the possibility of being released from detention and returning to their country. IOM Libya however noted that its access to detention centers had been narrowed because of insecurity and the resulting restricted movements for UN agencies. This was a constraint as migrants detained in centers outside of Tripoli were less likely to receive information.

In addition to visits to detention centers, RAVL released a booklet entitled "Stories of return." IOM programs often create such publications to advertise their activities. The target audience for this publication usually ranges from stranded migrants to institutional partners – to raise their awareness about this type of program in the hope that they will share the information with

potential beneficiaries – and donors. The following Focus box below presents the booklet developed by RAVL.

Focus box 5: RAVL Stories of Return

The booklet “Stories of Return” gathers nine stories from migrants, introduced by a note about the RAVL program and the stakes of AVRR initiatives. The male returnees came from nine different countries, six from West Africa, one from East Africa and two from Asia.

Each story told the migrant’s journey to Tripoli, why he had chosen to go back and how he or she had used the reintegration grant. These case studies were balanced with a focus on returnees’ opportunities, but also on the difficulties they were facing back to their country. In that sense, the booklet did not pretend to paint an idyllic picture of the return, but a realistic view of the returnees’ accomplishments and hardships.

The booklet was well designed and constituted a relevant support mechanism to disseminate information to donors and IOM’s institutional partners. However, the publication did not appear to fully meet its goal of spreading awareness about AVRR among migrants. The booklet was only released in English, whereas many migrants only speak Arabic or French and, in any case, many of the RAVL beneficiaries were illiterate. It could also be noted that the sample of returnee case studies in “Stories of Return” was representative of the main countries of origin under RAVL, but it may have benefited from also including the case of a woman or a family. Finally, RAVL’s publication was only available at the very end of the program, and the IOM team did not seem to have a strategy to distribute it to migrants in Libya.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 21: Rely on the most appropriate communication supports to advertise reintegration activities.** Migrants are often illiterate and so booklets might not be the best ways to share information with them. To advertise the existence of AVRR initiatives among communities of irregular migrants, IOM Libya could try to develop other supports, leaflets with comics for instance. Booklets such as “Stories of Return” could be distributed to the migrants who have already decided to join the AVRR process and have been interviewed by IOM staff in order to share some examples with them. As some other offices did in the past, IOM Tripoli could also develop awareness supports with the production of short clips, to be shown to the migrants. These communication supports will aim at giving some examples to migrants about the possibilities of reintegration.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 22: Develop a strategy to disseminate outreach supports.** In the case of RAVL, it appears that the program team did not have a plan to distribute its booklets and so the impact of the publication is likely to be limited. Any program that produces outreach supports should also plan, from the start, the means for distribution in order to ensure that they are capitalized in the best way possible.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 23: Share outreach supports with other IOM offices, in sending missions and countries of return.** A booklet such as RAVL’s “Stories of Return” could be of great help for other sending missions and countries of return, to support their reintegration efforts. Even though RAVL’s booklet only deals with migrants coming from Libya, it is clear that these examples could inspire other cases.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 24: Share RAVL’s booklet with IOM’s partners, UN agencies, NGOs and embassies.** RAVL’s “Stories of Return” could be very helpful for embassies to share examples of reintegration with migrants when they come to seek assistance.

INDIRECT OUTREACH

IOM’s second most effective outreach mechanism is through **embassies, other UN agencies and NGOs**. In Libya, IOM has established good relations with embassies of countries of return

and all of the consulates interviewed¹ were aware of IOM's AVRR initiatives and were well informed about the components of these programs. However, it seemed that IOM could work more closely with them to share details about each program, the amount of the reintegration fee in particular. Consuls did not all seem aware that IOM was working on a program-by-program basis and that the amount of the grant was different for each program. This might lead them to share inaccurate information with migrants, and raise their expectations.

"I was thinking trying to get back home through the Sahara but the embassy told me that IOM helped people."

– Guinean migrant in Tripoli

In cases where consulates were not represented in Libya, for Sri Lanka and Ethiopia for instance, IOM worked with community leaders who were willing to disseminate information about AVRR to migrants. For instance, Cameroon does not have an embassy in Tripoli but an active community leader is in charge of sending all the cases of Cameroonians in need to IOM.

Finally, it should be noted that the consulate staff were under the same external constraints as IOM officers in that they were not allowed to travel to notoriously insecure areas. As for IOM officers, it was challenging for them to reach migrants stranded in these regions, a situation they all deplored given that the most vulnerable cases were likely to be there. In these types of situations, consulates are often not even aware that some of their nationals are detained. Indeed, migrants rarely have the opportunity to reach out to their embassy because they do not have a phone and the Libyan police rarely report their cases to embassies. "Sometimes, it takes months before the embassy becomes aware that it has nationals in a detention center," shared the Beninese Consul.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 25: Strengthen relations with consulates.** Relations with consulates of countries of return are already very good but more could be done to regularly update them on AVRR initiatives. For instance, IOM staff could let them know about the components of each new program at the beginning, so that the consulate staff is aware of the process in place and nature of the reintegration package.

4.2 RETURN OF STRANDED MIGRANTS

Key findings

- RAVL successfully assisted 790 migrants in returning to their country of origin.
 - Most of the beneficiaries were in detention centers prior to their departure, in a very vulnerable situation and requiring administrative assistance.
 - Most of the RAVL beneficiaries were economic migrants who had come to Libya irregularly to work for a few years and save money. They all appeared very disappointed with the situation in Libya and denounced working conditions, violence and racism.
 - The registration process took place accordingly and IOM staff shared all the relevant information with RAVL beneficiaries during the initial interviews.
 - The pre-departure period was particularly difficult for RAVL beneficiaries, because of their
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¹ Altai Consulting interviewed the consulate staff from Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo, Guinea, Ghana, Pakistan, Mali and Sierra Leone.

vulnerable situation and uncertainty regarding the date of their departure.

- RAVL beneficiaries' return to their country of origin took place accordingly and the IOM mission welcomed the migrants at their arrival.
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4.2.1 SELECTION OF RAVL BENEFICIARIES

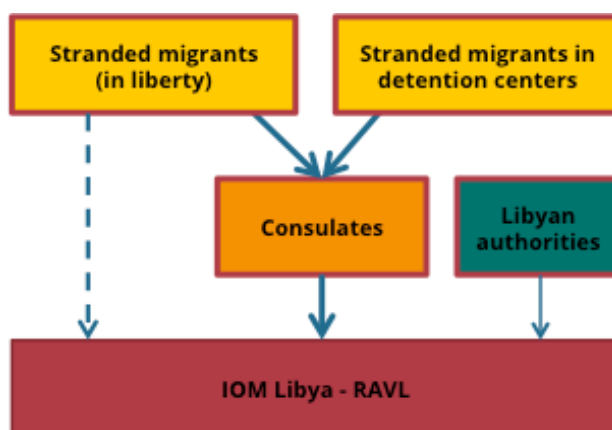
FIRST CONTACTS WITH MIGRANTS

Embassies of countries of return played a central role in referring migrants to IOM, because they were usually the first ones stranded migrants got in touch with. It rarely happened that migrants went directly to IOM because they hardly knew about the existence of the organization before. It did sometimes occur that migrants heard about IOM through friends but this was unusual.

In Libya, and for the RAVL program, migrants in detention centers constituted the vast majority of the beneficiaries. In these instances, either the embassy let IOM know that it had some nationals detained in a center, either the Libyan authorities got in touch with IOM, or IOM staff identified them during a visit to a detention center. In a few cases, IOM could negotiate with the Libyan authorities to organize the transfer of migrants from a far away detention center to a center in Tripoli, where IOM staff were allowed to go under UN security restrictions. In the case of RAVL – and other AVRR initiatives recently implemented in Libya – it appeared that the number of beneficiaries from detention centers had increased, which suggests that the Libyan authorities have been arresting a growing number of irregular migrants.

The figure below represents the typical paths of referral for stranded migrants to IOM. It shows that most of the migrants first went to their consulates, which then put them in touch with IOM Libya, whereas Libyan authorities only referred a few cases.

Figure 5: First contacts with IOM Libya – RAVL



SELECTION OF RAVL BENEFICIARIES

IOM Libya greatly relied on consulate made assessments of vulnerabilities and selected beneficiaries based on their nationality. First of all, IOM Libya systematically paid attention to the most vulnerable cases referred to its office, such as unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, disabled persons and pregnant women. The mission then selected beneficiaries based on their country of origin. At the beginning of the RAVL program, the team split its target of beneficiaries into the main nationalities represented in Libya, with 250 spots originally granted to Ghanaians (see

Focus box 1). This system had two main advantages: first, it ensured that all nationalities benefited from IOM's assistance; second, it made it easier to interact with embassies, specifying how many migrants RAVL/IOM would be able to support. On the other hand, this mechanism needs to remain flexible enough to ensure that the most vulnerable migrants are always targeted in priority.

For the vulnerability assessment, IOM Libya relied in great part on embassy made analysis of the situation of their nationals.

For instance, the Togolese Consul in Libya explained that he would first refer women with children, then single women and then men in great poverty to IOM because these ones had the greatest needs. Migrants in detention centers were also prioritized. This system worked well because consulate staff usually spent more time with the migrants, and they knew well their personal situation. Compared to IOM staff who had a lot of cases to address, consulates usually had more opportunities to discuss individual issues and so their understanding of migrants' difficulties could be more comprehensive than IOM's.

"A lot of Malians return through their own needs. The ones who are referred to IOM are the most pressing cases."

- Malian Consul

- ⇒ **Recommendation 26: Develop a database to assess how migrants are referred to IOM.** Whilst most RAVL beneficiaries were apparently referred to IOM by their embassies, IOM Libya did not have data to back this claim. It would be useful to track the sources of referrals to better evaluate the current mechanisms and potentially identify ways to improve the system. It would also be useful to keep better track of the situation of migrants pre departure, in order to ensure that those who were in detention for example, are better assisted.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 27: Develop further awareness about the concept of vulnerability among embassy staff.** IOM Libya's relations with consulates of countries of return constitute a key asset. In the future, the office could organize information meetings to review signs of vulnerability with consulate staff. This would be helpful to ensure that consulates' preliminary assessments are in line with IOM's principles.

4.2.2 PROFILES OF RAVL BENEFICIARIES

Whilst RAVL beneficiaries represented a great diversity of profiles, **they were all migrants having come to Libya for economic reasons.** The vast majority had traveled to Libya without any documentation and had grown disillusioned with the living conditions, racism and insecurity in Libya.

DEMOGRAPHICS

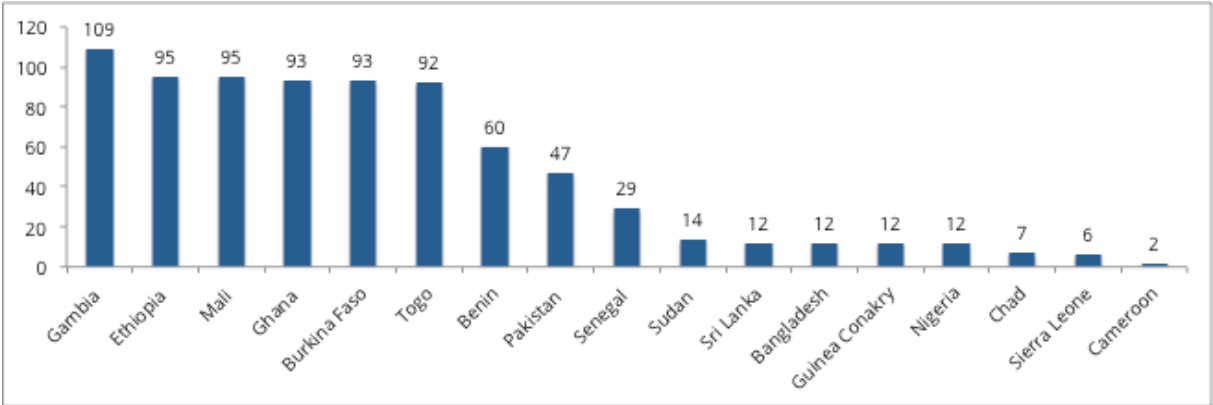
The great majority of RAVL beneficiaries were young men and the program assisted only a few women,¹ which is not surprising given the fact that the vast majority of migrants that travel to Libya are men. The average age of the migrants was 27, with 35 minors and the majority (58%) were between the ages of 20 and 30. Many of the returnees were illiterate and the average education level was low. Migrants rarely came from the capital and were usually from the

¹ Due to incomplete data from the program, the evaluation team could not precisely assess the gender ratio of RAVL beneficiaries.

poorest and most rural areas, the Northern regions in Togo and Benin for instance. These demographics reflect the general demographics of migrants entering the country.¹

The figure below represents RAVL beneficiaries per nationality. Unsurprisingly, **almost all of them were from African countries (91%)**. Nearly three quarters of the returnees were from **West Africa**, and the East African country the most represented was Ethiopia.² East Africans appear under-represented among RAVL beneficiaries, but this is probably because many East African migrants from Eritrea, Somalia, and Darfur are asylum seekers and are therefore referred to UNHCR. The migrants from Asian countries were apparently more prone to human trafficking. In the case of RAVL, the 12 Sri Lankans who were assisted had been victims of trafficking and received a special assistance upon arrival thanks to the Department for Human Trafficking at IOM Sri Lanka. The Pakistani Consul confirmed this trend and explained that most of his nationals were tricked into coming to Libya for a job that did not exist.

Figure 6: RAVL beneficiaries, per nationality (790)



MOTIVATIONS TO TRAVEL TO LIBYA

PUSH FACTORS

All of the migrants encountered had decided to leave their country because they were struggling to meet their needs, and so this was the major problem that RAVL had to address to prevent them from leaving again. Either they had a family they could not afford to support, or they wanted to start a family but did not have enough money to marry and have children. For instance, a migrant from Cameroon interviewed in Tripoli explained that after the loss of his older brother, he had had to take care of his family and he thought of Libya as the only way to make enough money to feed his enlarged household. Another one in Lomé shared that he had borrowed money and was struggling to pay back his debt. His creditors were harassing his family so he had decided to go to Libya to earn more and be able to pay them back. It is only by providing an adequate answer to these type of difficulties that programs like RAVL will address the root causes of migration and ensure that the returnees do not leave again.

Families of the migrants were not always aware of the migrants' decisions and several returnees reported that they left without telling their wives or their parents. This was often the case for young migrants from rural areas who had already moved to the capital alone. For the ones who did tell their family, they were often supportive because relatives felt they had no other options. This

“My wife encouraged me, it's good for the family and that's what the man has to do.”

- Malian migrant in Tripoli

¹ See *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.
² For further information about the nationalities of migrants represented in Libya, see *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.

reflects the need for AVRR programs such as RAVL to integrate the reintegration activities into a larger framework in which **families are also made more aware of the risks of migration.**

PULL FACTORS

For these migrants, Libya appeared to be a country where job opportunities were abundant. Returnees often said that they intended to stay in Libya for two to three years to save some money, and go back when they would have enough savings to settle down and start their business. Prior to their departure, these migrants often thought that it was easy to travel to Tripoli because there were limited controls at the border and many smuggling networks could facilitate their journey. Many migrants also felt that the post-Revolution chaos in Libya lent itself to fewer controls at borders, which would make it easier to enter the country.

In addition to easy access, **Libya has had the reputation of offering a good job market with relatively high salaries.** “My friend told me there were many job opportunities after the war, to reconstruct the country,” shared a returnee from Togo who chose to move to Tripoli because he thought it would be easy to find employment. As previously documented by Altai Consulting, salaries do tend to be higher in Libya than in the countries of return: the minimum wage in Benin revolves around \$63 per month, \$61 in Senegal and \$22 in Ethiopia whereas a daily laborer can hope to make between \$140 and \$600 a month in Libya.¹

“As a Ghanaian, you can get a job with a better salary.”

– Ghanaian returnee

None of the migrants encountered mentioned an intention to travel to Europe and they often explained that it was either too dangerous or too expensive. Several Ghanaians thus explained that they did not have enough money to travel to Italy. This result could also be due to the nature of the sample since most of the interviews were conducted with migrants from West Africa and it seems that migrants from East African countries are more likely to try the journey to Europe in the search for some form of international protection.²

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Migrants had gathered information about Libya and the journey to get there through informal networks, mainly through friends or acquaintances who had been to Tripoli and returned. Overall, it seemed that **migrants had a good idea on how to travel to Libya but knew little about the actual situation there.** Migration routes seemed to be common knowledge and all of the returnees said that it had been easy to find smugglers to drive them to Tripoli. Prior to their departure, migrants usually knew how much the journey would cost, where to start the journey, how long it would last and where they were going to stop on the way.

“One of my friends had already been to Libya and he put me in touch with his smuggler.”

– Ghanaian returnee

On the contrary, RAVL beneficiaries had received little information about the situation in Libya itself before leaving. Their main sources of information were informal talks in their villages, and some friends who had gone to Libya and told them about their experience. A returnee from Togo thus explained that a man from his neighborhood had worked in Libya for a few years and made enough money to buy his own shop. This friend had explained to him how to get to Tripoli, but he had not warned him about the risks of detainment or the difficult living conditions in Libya.

¹ See *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.

² See *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.

TRAVEL TO LIBYA¹

RAVL beneficiaries usually used their own savings to pay for the trip, selling everything they had or working on their way to Libya. A returnee from Togo said that he had borrowed money to finance the journey and this had made his decision to return very complicated because he was worried about not being able to pay back his debt. This type of concern is widespread among returnees and should be taken into consideration when preparing reintegration.

Depending on the country of departure and the initial resources of the migrants, the travel could take from a few days to several months. For instance, a Guinean migrant reported that he spent four months in Mali after his departure, to make enough money to pay for his trip to Algeria where he spent another two months to earn enough for the final leg of his journey. Returnees always described the trip as **exhausting and dangerous**. "I felt I almost died," reported one of the Togolese interviewees. Several shared that they saw people dying in the desert, and that they were very weak themselves when they arrived in Libya. A number of them stopped in Sabah where they often faced ill treatment. This experience was definitely traumatic for a number of the returnees and this confirms the importance of providing psychological support and, sometimes, emergency medical assistance in AVRR programs such as RAVL.

MOTIVATIONS TO RETURN

In most cases, one of three reasons motivating migrants to return home is that (1) they were detained, and seeing no end to their detention preferred to return home; (2) they were fed up with the harassment and exploitation they experienced in Libya; or (3) they had been injured and wished to return home as a result. The specificity of RAVL compared to other AVRR programs implemented in North African transit countries (Morocco, Egypt) was that most of the beneficiaries were in immigration detention centers before their return.

It is also of note that most of the migrants interviewed had been in Libya for less than a year before choosing to return home, which suggests either a rapid disillusion with the situation or the lack of other options. In a few cases, RAVL returnees had been in Libya for a longer period, they had secured a relatively good situation but had lost everything during the war.

RELEASE FROM DETENTION

Choosing to return home rather than remain in detention constituted the main motivation for most RAVL beneficiaries to join the program. The police had usually arrested them in their house or at work, and detained them till the intervention of their consulate or of IOM. Migrants were kept without an opportunity to contest their detention; they were not told how long their detention would last and what they could do to be released from detention. Besides, several returnees talked about the police's repeated abuses. One recalled that police officers would stop their abuse when IOM visited the center, but that they would resume after they left. In such a context, migrants were relieved to receive IOM's assistance because they did not have access to other forms of support.

"In the jail, I had no other choice but to go back to my country."

- Ghanaian returnee

LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES

In other cases, RAVL returnees chose to leave because they could not stand the poor working conditions in Libya. Several explained that they were not making as much money as they thought they would, that the work was too hard and that the employer did not always pay them. A migrant from Kenya reported, for example, that she worked for three months as a

¹ For more information regarding migration routes to Libya, see *Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads* (2013) Altai Consulting/UNHCR Libya.

housekeeper and received only a month of salary. As migrants are in an irregular situation in Libya, they have no avenues for redress when they are exploited or when their employer refuses to pay them.

Some returnees explained that they did not find employment as easily as they expected. They would go out in the morning to look for work as a daily laborer and were not able to find anything. In the meantime, migrants complained that the costs of life had increased. A Guinean migrant who had been there before the Revolution explained that a room used to be 20LYD a month (\$17), against 85LYD (\$70) now. This situation made it very difficult for some migrants to meet their needs and even more, to send money back home. "I understood that the more I stayed here, the more likely I was to become homeless," said a migrant from Mali.

It should however be noted that not all of the migrants were dissatisfied with the job market in Libya. A Ghanaian returnee explained that he was making 1,000LYD a month (\$830), which constituted a very good source of revenue for him and his family. In fact, the financial situation of migrants in Libya depends mainly on luck, their networks and also their skills.

INSECURITY

All of the RAVL returnees spoke of high levels of instability and insecurity in Libya. Militia often targeted migrants from West and East Africa because they thought of them as supporters of the previous regime. Some migrants were also caught in fighting in volatile regions in the South and the East. But this insecurity was also due to criminality. Irregular migrants constituted an easy target for criminal groups who knew that the migrants had cash and would not be able to report the offense to the police. For RAVL returnees, the environment in Libya appeared as volatile and stressful. "Everybody has a gun there," summarized a returnee from Togo.

The reintegration grant is precisely addressing these kinds of challenges and limitations, and it is **often what is required to finally encourage a migrant to make the decision to return.** All the returnees interviewed welcomed this support and considered it as a golden opportunity given their dire situation. Several said that they did not know what would have happened without the support of IOM. "Even before I met with IOM, I wanted to return, but I did not know how," shared a Malian interviewed in Tripoli.

FAMILY

Whilst family was never a determining factor in the choice of the RAVL beneficiaries interviewed, it was still very present in returnees' discourse. In Libya, they were often isolated from their family because they could not afford to call them regularly or their family lived outside of a coverage area. Sometimes, families were trying to convince the migrant to come home because they heard about insecurity in Libya in the local news.

"They see what is happening in Libya on the television and they're very worried."

– Guinean migrant in Tripoli

All of the beneficiaries seemed aware that it would be difficult, but they seemed ready to commit to it. As such, almost all the migrants interviewed in Tripoli were already talking about what they would do with the grant, from mechanics to photography and farming. Several acknowledged that starting a business at this stage would require another long-term effort but a number said that their migration experience had taught them that they needed to work for themselves in their own country. "With the grant, IOM provided the best it could and now, I need to work as hard as I can," stated a migrant from Mali.

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATIONS

The experience of racism was also not a defining factor, but it definitely played in the returnees' perceptions of their living conditions in Libya. The migrants interviewed shared that Libyans were calling them slaves and humiliated them at work. "Here, you work like a donkey, you are treated like a donkey," lamented a Malian migrant. Another one explained that he preferred to pray at home because going to the mosque was too degrading.

HEALTH CONDITIONS

Some migrants were injured during their journey to Libya or while in Libya, and they could not work anymore. In this situation, they had no other choice but to seek assistance and try to go back home to receive treatment. For example, a Cameroonian migrant interviewed in Tripoli explained that he broke his leg while he was doing construction work. He had seen a doctor but the doctor was not able to treat him and the young man was now disabled. He sought IOM's assistance to return home where his family could support him.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE RETURN

Migrants' expectations prior to their return were ambiguous: they were happy to go home but worried to have failed in making a living in Libya. RAVL returnees who had been in detention prior to coming into contact with IOM explained that their only objective was to find a way out of their detention and to leave Libya. Yet, many talked about the shame of returning home without having "succeeded" in their migration. That is, without having made enough money to improve their family's situation at origin, or without having made enough money to pay back all those who had invested in them. Altai Consulting's "Mixed Migration: Libya at the Crossroads" report found that in many cases migrants in Libya had been supported financially by their families, and sometimes their entire village, who considered it an investment as they expected the migrant to send money back to them when they found a job in their country of destination. This creates further pressure on migrants to remain in situations that render them vulnerable in order to not disappoint those back home. Finally, for the migrants who had left their country for a long period of time, there was also the concern of no longer having a life to return to at origin, and the hassle of having to rebuild from scratch.

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"My courage gave me the strength to get here and now, I'm going to show even more strength to succeed at home."

– Malian migrant in Tripoli

4.2.3 REGISTRATION PROCESS

The application process to join the RAVL program took place as it should have and the beneficiaries received enough information about the nature of the process. The two limitations were the lack of time for systematic in-depth counseling, along with the lack of information regarding the delay prior to the departure. These two points are not, however, specific to RAVL and constitute challenges common to AVRR programs in Libya.

INITIAL INTERVIEWS

The purpose of the first meeting with a migrant is to introduce the program and, if the migrant is willing to join, record his or her personal data to start his or her return and reintegration process.

INFORMATION SHARED DURING THE INITIAL INTERVIEW

The meetings usually lasted 20 to 30 minutes, during which the Operational Officer explained to the migrant the notion of voluntary return, how he or she would go back to his or her country and what the reintegration process consisted of. In a second part, the officer collected demographic information about the migrant (age, gender, education levels, etc.) and explored why he or she had chosen to come to Libya, how he or she got to Libya, what his or her current situation was and why he or she wanted to return.

All of the returnees interviewed confirmed that they had received comprehensive information regarding IOM's program prior to their return, and that they had understood all what IOM staff had explained to them. The migrants interviewed by IOM for RAVL's own internal monitoring process also expressed positive feelings about the quality of the information provided in Tripoli. The level of understanding, however, varied based on the level of education of the migrant and their psychological state. As noted by IOM staff, most migrants did not ask questions because they were worried that they would lose IOM's assistance. Moreover, the migrants who were literate could easily read the forms they had to sign and were usually keener on asking questions.

In some cases, embassies or friends constituted additional sources of information. The Togolese Consul explained that he usually reviewed the process of return with the migrants. The staff of the Burkinabe embassy also followed up with the migrant after his or her interview to ensure he or she had understood the process.

LOCATION OF THE INTERVIEWS

The majority of RAVL beneficiaries were in detention centers when IOM intervened and so the interviews often took place in these centers. An IOM staff member usually gathered all of the detained migrants in the yard of the center and explained what type of assistance IOM could provide them. After that, the migrants who were interested in joining RAVL asked to be interviewed and IOM staff recorded their names. The IOM team then spent the day interviewing one on one the migrants willing to return.

Libyan authorities usually allocated a room for the interviews and while the conditions varied among the centers, IOM staff acknowledged that they had at least a separate space to meet with the migrants. As previously mentioned, Libyan authorities generally facilitated IOM's visits to detention centers, allowing them easy access. In a few cases, IOM staff were unable to conduct the interviews they had scheduled because UN security restrictions prevented them from visiting a center located in an unstable neighborhood. In these cases, a new visit had to be scheduled, which could occasionally cause further delays when the IOM team was already very busy with other tasks of the project.

For RAVL, only a few beneficiaries were interviewed at the IOM office. These meetings were usually scheduled through the embassies and staff from the consulate often brought the migrants to IOM. Although the IOM officers are very professional, the conditions for the interviews were not ideal: as the IOM office does not have a separate room for interviews, the interviews were usually conducted in an open space where the migrant did not have the best conditions of privacy.

COUNSELING

The IOM team in Libya has a great deal of experience with stranded migrants and it is well prepared to cater to the needs of vulnerable migrants that come to them in Libya. IOM officers acknowledge the great vulnerability of some of the migrants they meet and so they are careful to spend as much time as possible to have them share their personal stories and provide them the emotional support they can.

However, as a result of the time constraints experienced by the IOM team, due to the many tasks they have to complete and their limited capacity (3 people¹), it is likely that the Tripoli staff did not always have enough time to spend with a migrant because they had many other interviews to complete the same day.

When IOM Tripoli received more demands from stranded migrants than they were able to address, they sometimes relied on external staff that they hired for a few days to conduct interviews. While IOM officers carefully trained them, these interviewers were not as experienced as the Operational Officers and so it is possible that their counseling skills were not as developed. Nonetheless, this mechanism is still the best possible answer to a sudden influx of demands from returnees and it guarantees an answer to their requests with the shortest possible delays.

TRANSLATION

Although IOM staff speak excellent Arabic, French and English, the team sometimes faced difficulties with migrants who only spoke local dialects. These cases were relatively common given that migrants often came from rural areas and had not been to school. The Togolese Consul reported that he regularly assisted migrants during interviews with IOM staff. IOM officers also faced difficulties with Ethiopian migrants since no one in the team spoke Amharic.

These difficulties had three main consequences: (1) interviews were sometimes delayed because the IOM team could not find anyone to conduct the translation; (2) the confidentiality of the information shared by the migrant was not always guaranteed due to the presence of a third person during the interview; (3) because of the language barriers and the possible presence of a third person during the interview, the quality of the information collected might not have always been comprehensive. These challenges are likely to persist, as there is little more that the IOM staff can do at the moment to overcome them.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 28: Establish a separate room to hold the interviews with migrants** at the IOM office, to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the information they share.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 29: Translate all the relevant documents in all the dialects.** Whilst migrants are likely to be illiterate, they could at least share these documents with friends or co-workers.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 30: Develop support materials for illiterate migrants** (videos, comics, etc.). Whilst this might require a longer-term effort, it would be very helpful for

¹ The IOM operational team in Libya counts four people but only three are in charge of conducting the interviews.

people who do not know how to read. It could be done in coordination with the other sending missions.

MEDICAL VISITS

Under the requirements of the RAVL program, all beneficiaries had to go through a medical examination before being returned, and this was conducted accordingly. This is a common procedure in all AVRR programs and is due to assess whether a beneficiary is fit for traveling. This examination usually happened just after the initial interview with a migrant. A doctor contracted by IOM led the consultation in a specific room at the IOM office. This medical check was usually quick and migrants only expressed their relief to be qualified to travel.

The only two limitations noted by IOM staff were: (1) the availability of the doctor – as the doctor is not a permanent staff member they were sometimes not available for an examination and migrants had to be told to come back another time; (2) the basic nature of the medical visit – the doctor only checked the returnees' fitness for travel and did not provide them with prescriptions for medicine even if they were found to have conditions that required medication. For instance, a female migrant who was interviewed in Tripoli was suffering from a heart disease and was found to be fit to travel but weak, and she lamented that the doctor did not give her medication to improve her condition and did not provide further support to her current condition.

It could also be observed that the pre-embarkation check recommended in RAVEL's AVRR Handbook is not conducted in Libya for lack of capacity. This check could be useful to identify signs of torture and coordinate special assistance with missions in the countries of return.

ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The good collaboration between IOM Libya, Libyan authorities and consulates of countries of return has resulted in an efficient system for the delivery of administrative papers; namely, the exit visa to authorize the migrant to exit the Libyan territory and the laissez-passer, which is the travel document issued to identify a migrant and allow his entrance in his country of origin.¹ As for the exit visa, IOM Tripoli obtained them from the Libyan government for free and in a short period of time. Regarding the laissez-passer, the consulates issued it rapidly and the procedure did not seem to raise any difficulties. This procedure was more time-consuming for migrants from countries that did not have embassies in Libya. In these cases, IOM Tripoli had to coordinate with IOM in Cairo to invite representatives from the embassy in Cairo to visit Tripoli. Despite all of the efforts of the IOM offices, this often resulted in delays for migrants, already in a precarious situation (see for example Focus box 3).

4.2.4 PRE-DEPARTURE

RAVL beneficiaries often described the pre-departure period as the most difficult. This phase was particularly trying because migrants were in a precarious situation in Libya, vulnerable to harassment and arbitrary arrest, and eager to leave the country; however, they often did not know how long it would take for them to be able to leave. The period between the first interview with IOM and the departure could be long and often lasted more than a month.

¹ The laissez-passer is a travel document issued under special circumstances by the consulate of a country. In the cases of stranded migrants in Libya, they often lack documentation and need this laissez-passer to be able to leave Tripoli and enter their country of origin.

DELAYS

The length of the pre-departure phase varied greatly, depending on when IOM got in touch with the migrant and at which stage of the program this meeting took place. Among the 47 monitoring forms, 29 migrants answered that they had waited more than a month prior to their departure. Some of the returnees interviewed in Togo and Ghana stated that it took less than two weeks, but others said that they were not sure, as they were in a detention center and had lost track of time.

Delays mainly depended on the number of migrants from a certain nationality IOM was able to select and interview, along with the capacity of the staff to process the applications. The office usually waited to gather at least 10 migrants from the same nationality to organize their return altogether. In some cases, IOM Tripoli faced additional delays because of events happening in Libya. A Ghanaian returnee reported for example that his return was delayed because some members of the Gadhafi family had been brought to court and the situation was too tense to organize the return.

GREAT VULNERABILITY

This period was particularly difficult for migrants, whether in detention or not, and IOM did not have the opportunity to provide them assistance. For the ones who were detained, this delay meant staying longer in a detention center where they were held in poor conditions, received hardly anything to eat and drink, were often beaten, had no access to a doctor and could not communicate with their family. This wait was particularly tough as the detained migrants did not know when they would be able to leave and some, sometimes, started doubting that IOM would actually provide them assistance. In a few cases, the relevant embassies or IOM could distribute soap and clothes but this did not systematically happen, mainly for lack of funding.

The other migrants also faced hardships because they continued to face poverty, harassment and the threat of being arrested by the police. Several explained that they were barely going out because they were too worried of being caught by militias or police officers. IOM did not have the opportunity to provide pre-departure financial assistance and so beneficiaries had to rely on themselves to sustain their needs during this phase. This often proved challenging as not all of them were apt to work, and they could rarely rely on existing solidarity networks. Based on interviews in Tripoli, Accra and Lomé, it appears that migrants supported themselves through:

- 1) Small work: Men usually kept working as before, but they were very worried about getting caught by the police and sent to a detention center. They often had to hide, avoided going out and were living in very precarious conditions.
- 2) Living on savings: For the migrants who had succeeded in gathering some savings, they relied on this money while waiting for their departure. A Ghanaian migrant thus used his small savings to pay for his expenses in his last weeks in Tripoli.
- 3) Support from the embassy: Embassies rarely provided support to stranded migrants but they did so in emergency situations. For instance, a Kenyan woman had recently escaped from a Libyan household where she was apparently exploited, and the embassy staff was hosting her because she had nothing and was not in a position to work.
- 4) Support from the community: When the embassy did not have any way to assist a migrant in difficulties, embassy staff sometimes referred him or her to other people in the community. Consuls however acknowledged that this situation was not ideal because migrants had often gone through trauma and were not easy to take care of.

- 5) Support from a friend: Migrants could sometimes rely on a friend to meet their needs for a few weeks but these cases were rare. First, migrants were usually very lonely and it was rare, in particular for women, to have developed close relations with other migrants. Second, the general deprived situation among migrants made it difficult to share revenues.

As for RAVL, IOM Libya had little leverage to provide assistance to beneficiaries prior to their departure and the organization could only fund limited initiatives, such as distribution of hygiene kits in detention centers. This situation contrasts with IOM's former ability to support migrants before the Revolution, when the office could rely on a transit center where it hosted up to 60 people. This center was welcoming the most vulnerable cases prior to their return. It was also used to conduct interviews with migrants and to provide them basic assistance. This center was however destroyed in 2011 and funding has been falling short to re-establish it.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 31: Assist migrants in detention centers.** As already included in the programming, IOM Libya will dedicate a small budget to the provision of hygiene kits and food for migrants held in detention centers. To avoid IOM operational staff having to go back to the centers after the interviews, they can distribute this kit during the initial meetings with migrants.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 32: Re-establish the transit center.** This center does not need to be very large but it could at least provide short-term assistance for the most vulnerable migrants. Such an initiative could be implemented in partnership with other NGOs and UN agencies that would also need temporary shelters.

WAIT AND DOUBTS

The pre-departure period was particularly difficult also because migrants received no information on when they would be able to leave. IOM thoroughly informed all the migrants on the procedure prior to their departure, and why it could be delayed. However, all of the interviewees still complained about not being informed on their date of departure during this period, as IOM staff did not specify when they would leave, whether they should be prepared to return soon and when to expect to hear from the program again. IOM was also not keeping them regularly updated on the process and so they were not receiving any information from the office in Tripoli. Most of them expected to leave soon after their first meeting with IOM because they were so eager to return, and the wait led some to question the process. The Consul of Sierra Leone and the Cameroonian community leader in Tripoli reported for example that some migrants grew so desperate that they tried to go to Europe, or to return by their own means. A returnee from Togo recalled that he was staying all day in the house of a friend, doing nothing but waiting for IOM's call. Migrants became very eager to leave and several Consuls reported that IOM beneficiaries were calling them every day to ask when they would leave. All in all, it appears that migrants need to know more about delays before their departure, at least to manage their expectations.

4.2.5 RETURN

The return to the home countries went well and RAVL beneficiaries received assistance at the beginning and the end of their journey. At their arrival, migrants could often rely on a friend or a relative to find a place to stay, but this was not always the case.

JOURNEY BACK TO THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

The travel back to the country of origin took place without difficulties. IOM usually called the returnees one to three days prior to their departure, which gave them enough time to prepare themselves to leave. A returnee from Ghana explained that this delay had allowed him to finish packing and pay his rent. As for the migrants in detention, IOM usually went to the center a day before to distribute soap and sometimes clothes. Migrants did not seem to face any difficulties to go to the airport. In the case of migrants in detention centers, a bus with an escort drove them to the airport. As for the others, they usually found a friend or someone from the embassy to take them and then handed the cases to IOM's care.

Once at the airport, they easily found the IOM staff who distributed them the pocket money, a meaningful support as explained in the Focus box below. IOM sometimes gave hygienic kits (soap, toothbrush, etc.) but these distributions were not systematic, for lack of budget. The transit, usually in Casablanca, took place accordingly and the migrants said that they faced no difficulties finding the gate to change flight.

Focus box 6: Pocket money

The pocket money (\$40) distributed by IOM staff at the airport constituted a very significant support for the migrants. All of the returnees interviewed remembered it distinctly and they all expressed gratitude for this help. Several shared that they used it to buy food at the Casablanca airport, and one said that he bought clothes because he did not have anything decent to wear. In most cases, this money was spent on paying for the migrant's trip back home, or to meet his or her needs in his or her first days in the capital. One returnee also explained that he gave the money to his wife when he arrived. As such, this pocket money could be very meaningful for the migrant back home, to show that he did not come back with empty hands.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 33: Distribute hygiene kits to migrants from detention centers.** RAVL did organize a few distributions and returnees greatly welcome this initiative. In the future, a specific budget could be dedicated to this form of assistance in AVRR programs.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 34: Increase the amount of pocket money.** This stipend constitutes a considerable support for returnees and raising its amount by only \$20 to \$40 would not be too costly in terms of budget and provide a critical support to the migrants in their first days back home.

ARRIVAL

IOM staff was present at the airport to welcome the returnees and this assistance was highly valued. IOM officers were at the airport when RAVL beneficiaries landed and they always told the returnees to visit the IOM office as soon as possible to start their reintegration process. This presence was important because some migrants doubted that IOM would really help them and so this first interaction reassured them. IOM Togo also explained that his presence at the airport was much needed to help migrants in filling the immigration papers – as some of them were illiterate. This first meeting was therefore central to start establishing a trust relation with the returnees.

Upon arrival, the situation of the beneficiaries depended on whether they knew anyone in the capital – where they needed to stay for a few days if they wished to complete their reintegration procedure right away. In Togo, the IOM officer explained that migrants did not face too many difficulties to find a place to stay for a few days, thanks to family or friends. However, in Senegal, IOM observed that returnees were struggling because their family was often hundreds of kilometers away and they did not know anyone in Dakar. In these cases either they found a way

to stay, often in very precarious conditions, or they headed back home without getting their reintegration grant.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 35: Establish a transit center for the most vulnerable cases in countries of return.** As for the pre-departure period, returnees find themselves extremely vulnerable after their return, and IOM does not have the opportunity to provide them assistance. Receiving missions could look for NGOs in the capital that offer temporary shelters and organize assistance to returnees with them. Another option could be to invite the returnees in great difficulties to a hotel for a few days, the time for their reintegration grant to be processed. A way could be to pay for their travel to their village and distribute additional funding to pay for the trip back to the capital, once they are ready to visit the IOM office. Finally, donors and IOM could agree on the possibility to disburse part of the reintegration grant (15-20%) in cash for the most vulnerable cases upon arrival.

4.3 REINTEGRATION PROCESS

Key findings

- 571 of the 790 assisted migrants used their reintegration grant.
 - IOM Libya could not significantly engage in the preparation of reintegration pre-departure because most of the RAVL beneficiaries were in detention centers (80%–90%). This is a specificity of AVR programs in Libya, where getting ready for reintegration is not possible before the return, due to the migrants' detention.
 - The majority of the RAVL returnees interviewed were in a better situation than before their departure.
 - The success of the reintegration process depended on the returnee's motivation, his/her skills and his/her environment, along with the IOM office's capacity and experience in the country of return. Logistical issues such as distance to the IOM office could have the potential to create major obstacles to reintegration.
 - Most of the RAVL beneficiaries chose to set up a micro-business over other forms of reintegration (training or medical assistance). IOM offices were able to assist them to complete the procedure accordingly, but the missions did not always have the time and the capacity to deliver in-depth support and follow-ups for the establishment of businesses.
 - What RAVL returnees tell other members of their community about their migration experience can have a very significant impact on aspiring migrants' decision to leave to Libya.
 - IOM faces the challenge of balancing donors' requirements in terms of transparency and the reality of informal economies in the countries of return. The reintegration procedure could be long and this delay was sometimes detrimental to returnees who had very limited resources in the first weeks after their return.
 - Partnerships with NGOs, government institutions and private firms in countries of return are now limited, but IOM missions expressed interest in expanding them.
-

At the start of the process, IOM supported RAVL returnees in developing a personal reintegration plan, often a business plan, for the amount of the reintegration grant (€800). The returnee then had to gather three invoices from equipment suppliers and the receiving mission was sending the entire plan for approval to IOM Libya. When the Tripoli office had reviewed the plan, the returnee was authorized to get his or her equipment. Here, it should be reminded that reintegration constitutes a complex and multidimensional process, which encompasses economic, social and psychological components. Its effects can only be measured in the long term and the effective impact of a program like RAVL can only be assessed a few years after it is completed.

4.3.1 PREPARATION FOR THE REINTEGRATION FROM LIBYA

The first steps of the reintegration process took place in Tripoli, but it was limited because the majority of RAVL returnees were in a detention center prior to their departure. During the initial interview with migrants, IOM staff explained to them the modalities of RAVL assistance and the allocation of an €800-grant to facilitate their reintegration. Migrants often shared ideas about their reintegration with IOM officers, but this rarely triggered a discussion on the best way to make this program successful.

The main constraint to the preparation of reintegration was the situation of migrants prior to their departure. Indeed, **most of the RAVL beneficiaries were in detention centers** before receiving IOM's assistance and so the operational team could not organize further support to prepare their reintegration, training or in-depth counseling about micro-business for instance. The second limitation was the lack of capacity and time of the IOM staff. First, operational officers in Tripoli often lacked information about the economic environment in the countries of return, which made it difficult for them to share recommendations on the best activities to engage in. Besides, IOM staff were often overwhelmed by work and did not always have the time to sit longer than 20 to 30 minutes with a migrant, and initiate an in-depth discussion about reintegration options.

As a result, the degree of preparation prior to departure largely depended on the migrant himself or herself and the external support he or she received. The RAVL beneficiaries who started thinking about what they would do on return and who prepared a plan for their arrival, were usually the most educated. Some consulates, such as the Togolese one, also advised migrants on what to do with the grant. This counseling was generally through an informal discussion, it rarely led to tangible outcomes such as the design of a business plan, but it motivated the migrants to start thinking about all of the options available to them.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 36: Share basic information on how to develop a micro-business**, with guidelines adapted to migrants with a low educational level. These simple supports could be used to compel beneficiaries to start to think about their reintegration plan. Educational tools could be developed in cooperation with other IOM offices in North Africa.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 37: Collect basic information about countries of return**, to be shared with migrants to prepare them for their return. IOM Libya could build on previous initiatives such as the publication of "Country Fact Sheets" by IOM Germany,¹ which could be adapted to counseling returnees. This could also include feedback and lessons learned from previous returnees' experience to share ideas of successful business models per country.

¹ About ZIRF program: <http://irrico.belgium.iom.int/other-programs/germany-zirf-program.html>

4.3.2 REINTEGRATION PROCESS IN THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

Reintegration in the country of return is a two-pronged process, which depends both on the returnee's individual situation and the capacity of the IOM office. The first factor for a positive reintegration is the migrant's motivation to participate in the process and effectively resettle. As reported by several IOM offices, some migrants decided to leave again after their return because they did not believe they could make it in their country. This sometimes happened when the migrant returned to a difficult situation at home, with a sick parent for instance. The process also depended on the migrant's ability to reach out to the IOM office for help, along with his or her capacity to comply with IOM's procedures. On the other side, the process was based on IOM's ability to reach out to the beneficiaries, along with its capacity to handle the reintegration plans in a timely manner.

FIRST CONTACT WITH THE IOM OFFICE IN THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

After a RAVL beneficiary arrived in his or her country, **the delay before the start of the reintegration process varied a lot, from one day to more than a month, depending on the motivation and personal situation of the returnee.**

DELAY BEFORE FIRST CONTACT

Some returnees came to the IOM office straight from the airport because they already knew what they wanted to do, and also because they did not have any resources and needed IOM's assistance as soon as possible. Whilst this was effective in terms of grant disbursement, it did not always allow returnees to fully think over their reintegration plan and carry out some research into whether their business plan was relevant to the local economy. These cases often concerned migrants who had an activity prior to their migration and wanted to resume the same business.

"IOM called me after a week but if they had not, I don't think I would have gone."

– Ghanaian returnee

The majority of the returnees took between one week and a month to go back to IOM because they first wanted to assess the situation and discuss their plan with family and friends. Some also had to rest before engaging in a full-time activity because they had suffered from mistreatment in detention and needed to recover. If the migrant had this option and could be supported by relatives or friends, this delay might have been beneficial as it gave him or her time to mull over the activity he or she wanted to engage in.

In a number of cases, IOM had to reach out to the migrants to remind them to come. Several RAVL returnees explained that they had lost IOM's phone number and did not know how to get in touch with the office. Some did not call IOM at the beginning because they did not believe they were going to be assisted.

DISTANCE TO IOM OFFICE

Because most migrants came from rural areas, distance to the IOM office often constituted a difficulty in the reintegration process. RAVL beneficiaries were usually from regions one to two days away from the capital and so visiting the main city, where the IOM office was located, could be challenging. For instance, in Ghana, most of the RAVL returnees were from the Brong Ahafo region, located at a one-day travel from Accra. In Togo and Benin, most of the beneficiaries were from the Northern regions and traveling to the capital was costly (\$20 to \$30). Several IOM offices acknowledged that distance had sometimes discouraged migrants to seek their grant.

The difficulty went beyond establishing a first contact and also raised challenges for the implementation of the reintegration. Indeed, it made it more difficult to buy the equipment needed by the migrants, especially if they wanted to buy it in their own region. When they bought it in the capital, it made the administrative process easier but the returnees still had to go back home with equipment not necessarily fit for long travels. It is also possible that the products they got in the capital were more expensive than the ones they could have found in their village.

When funding allowed it, IOM offices proved creative in finding solutions to this challenge.

IOM Benin hired a consultant based in the Northern region to directly assist the returnees. In Ghana, IOM established a sub-office to ensure cooperation closer to the beneficiaries (see 4.3.4). But in offices with narrow resources such as Togo and Burkina Faso, the returnees had to travel to the capital to get their reintegration grant and interact with the IOM team.

CLOSED CASES

In some cases, RAVL beneficiaries did not get in touch with IOM mission and IOM staff were not able to reach out to them either. Usually, the IOM officers tried to call the returnees one week after their arrival but this did not always prove successful: as many as **219 RAVL returnees (28%) did not use their reintegration grant**. The Focus box below summarizes the key factors for these “closed cases,” which refers to the migrants who have returned to their country thanks to IOM, but have not participated in the reintegration process.

Focus box 7: RAVL closed cases

Out of 790 migrants having received IOM's assistance to return to their country of origin under RAVL, 219 did not use their reintegration grant. The exact reason for this cannot be identified, but it is likely linked to a number of factors:

- 1) Logistical constraints: the migrant has lost IOM's phone number and address; the number he or she gave to IOM is not working or is out of coverage area.
- 2) Financial constraints: the migrant lives far from the IOM office, and he or she does not have enough resources to travel back to the capital.
- 3) Personal choice: the migrant has found another way to reintegrate (found a job, started a business already) and does not have time or motivation to work with IOM; the migrant does not believe that IOM really wants to help him or her; the returnee wants to migrate again.

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- ⇒ **Recommendation 38**: Deploy further efforts to **ensure beneficiaries pre departure and at the arrival that IOM is going to assist them**. While sending and receiving missions already do so, IOM has clear guidelines on AVRR from detention centers, and IOM has counseling measures in place, it appears that returnees often remain skeptical about the reality of IOM's support and it is possible that some migrants do not seek assistance after their return because they do not believe it exists.

MANAGING RETURNEES

Some RAVL beneficiaries were very vulnerable after their return; IOM staff provided them with a suitable support but a psychological assistance could further improve the conditions of the reintegration process. Many of RAVL beneficiaries came back very anxious, hurt by their experience and worried about their future. Most appeared happy to head back home, but a large number had to go over their experience in Libyan detention centers. In

addition to this traumatic experience, RAVL returnees were facing an uncertain future and often needed to start their activities from scratch.

This high level of anxiety often resulted in distrust in the reintegration process and, sometimes, violent behavior towards the IOM staff. This conduct was more widespread among returnees who were not educated and could not read IOM's documents. Operational Officers proved adept at handling these situations, reading the documents to the migrants and carefully explaining the procedure. A staff from IOM Ghana thus recalled the case of a returnee who was very aggressive because he wanted to receive the money in cash. "Give me my money," he was telling the IOM officer. The IOM staff was able to calm him down and to process his reintegration file, and IOM officers spent a considerable amount of time engaging with him and supporting his reintegration effort. "Now, he always calls to apologize about his behavior," shared the IOM officer. All in all, IOM staff agreed that establishing **a trust relation with the returnee** was central to the success of the process.

Another initiative by IOM Ghana was to have previous returnees who benefited from IOM's assistance call other migrants to explain to them that the support was real and that IOM did not expect compensation. In another case in Accra, a Ghanaian returnee was saying that he did not want the assistance because he did not believe this kind of support existed. IOM talked to a previous migrant who had already completed his reintegration and this second one convinced the other to take part in the process.

PROCEDURE OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS

The reintegration procedure was prepared in the country of return and IOM Tripoli had to give its approval to the plan. First, the returnee developed a business plan with the receiving mission and he or she had to provide invoices to IOM. The Tripoli office then had to approve the plan before the returnee could buy their equipment.

THREE INVOICES

Due to donor procedures, all of the RAVL beneficiaries had to provide three invoices to IOM prior to buying any equipment with the money of their reintegration grant and this procedure generated delays and some frustrations among returnees. The main difficulty was due to the informal economy in the countries of return. In all of these developing countries, it was challenging to get companies to deliver invoices because the owner did not always have the capacity to do so, or was suspicious that the migrant would use such documents against him. In

Ethiopia, IOM explains that shopkeepers sometimes refused to give invoices because prices change so often that they do not want to risk pricing a good that will be more expensive a few days later. In some cases, the shopkeepers charged the migrants to do the invoices. In Ghana, a number of RAVL returnees paid up to GH 80 (\$23.5) for an invoice. At least one returnee reported that he had to borrow money to pay for the document. When migrants could not get an invoice, they sometimes went to a notary to certify the act, a procedure that was also costly.

"It took me two months to complete the process because I couldn't get the right papers."

– Ghanaian returnee

This procedure was particularly complex when the returnees came from a faraway region. In some cases, migrants did not have a place to stay in the capital and receiving missions had to process their cases as soon as possible, sometimes to the detriment of the formal administrative requirements. It could therefore occur that a returnee's reintegration plan was quickly treated, without having gathered all the documentation needed or waiting for IOM Libya's approval, to

avoid migrants returning home without receiving any assistance. While the intentions were pure, this was not ideal, but was sometimes the only way to ensure the delivery of the grant. On this same matter, IOM Ethiopia developed an interesting mechanism and works directly with the local authorities. When a migrant wanted to buy equipment in his village, in a rural area where IOM could not easily go, the local government certified the purchase of the equipment agreed upon, for free.

APPROVAL BY IOM LIBYA

The approval of the reintegration plans by IOM Libya did not appear to raise difficulties. The plan was usually validated between one to three days after the receiving mission sent it. The content of the plans were rarely modified and the Reintegration Officer mostly focused on the administrative side of the applications, and whether all of the requirements had been filled. For some countries like Sri Lanka, verifying the bills proved challenging due to the language barrier. This interaction was yet an opportunity for IOM Libya and IOM in the country of return to discuss the conditions of the reintegration, and keep in place IOM and donor accountability structures.

ON THE OPPORTUNITY TO SIMPLIFY THE PROCEDURE

IOM's procedures could result in delays for the disbursement of the reintegration grant, from one week to several months, whereas the returnees had little to no resources upon their arrival. The process also constituted a burden for IOM staff, who had to focus on the procedure, sometimes at the expense of counseling. It is clear that there needs to be **a balance between IOM's responsibility in front of its donors and the reality in the field**, but this mechanism did not even guarantee that the RAVL returnees always conformed to the plan they had developed with IOM and some found a way to resell the equipment they had bought with the grant. For instance, one of RAVL beneficiaries initially wanted to buy a truck but when he developed the plan with IOM Togo, he said he wanted to start as a taxi driver. The plan was validated, the returnee bought his car and he resold it a month after in Burkina Faso because he knew he could get a better price for it there. With the money, he bought a truck and started his other activities. This example was representative of a practice observed by several missions and it reflects IOM's limited power to ensure that its reintegration plans will effectively be enforced. Ultimately, the organization could try to simplify the existing procedures, with the view to decrease the time its staff spends on administrative tasks, for the benefit of other activities such as psychological counseling.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 39: Simplify the procedures** on the donors' side, so that IOM staff can spend less time on administrative work, and focus on counseling returnees.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 40: Develop a network of beneficiaries.** Whilst this network is now informal, it has proved helpful to convince returnees to engage in the reintegration process. This type of efforts could be enhanced, with an updated database for all of the migrants having been assisted by IOM.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 41:** To go further, receiving missions could start thinking of **a sponsorship initiative** in which returnees who have succeeded provide support to recent returnees. This would require identifying these successful returnees, training them, monitoring their work and giving them a small compensation for their activities. This mechanism could be tested in a few missions in the next AVRR program, and carefully monitored to assess whether it could be extended.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 42: Identify companies that deliver invoices** easily and refer the returnees to them. While this list would be regularly modified to ensure that the same

firms do not always benefit from this market, it would greatly ease the process to work with providers who understand IOM's requirements.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 43:** When migrants come from far away areas, explore the possibility of **working with local authorities to certify the purchase of equipment.**

4.3.3 FORMS OF REINTEGRATION

The great majority of RAVL returnees opted for starting a small business because their priority was to quickly earn an income to support their family. Migrants were usually men with a wife and children, and so they felt the responsibility to meet the needs of their household.

Almost all of the returnees interviewed shared that they would have wanted a larger grant, but all were still able to start their activities. 30 out of the 47 interviewees in IOM's monitoring process reported that they had to find additional funds to launch their micro-business and they were usually able to do so, either because they had savings from Libya or because they received assistance from family and friends. Sometimes, a member of their family lent them money or some migrants reached a partnership with a friend or a relative. Overall, the amount of €800 was just sufficient to have the returnee start a micro-business.

SETTING UP A MICRO-BUSINESS

The great majority of RAVL returnees (at least 529)¹ decided to start a small business at their arrival, and many chose to go back to their former activity. Most of the returnees had a previous work experience and they often decided to engage in the same field, like mechanics or farming (see Case Study 1). Several explained that they had gone to Libya to earn some cash and be able to open their own shop. Either they could not find a job and secure savings, either they were detained and could not work, but they finally used the reintegration grant to effectively start their own business.

Case Study 1: Ghanaian returnee, farming and looking forward to opening his grocery shop

A Ghanaian farmer had been to Libya because his brother had told him he could earn a lot of money there. He was arrested on the way, and benefited from IOM's assistance to return home to the Brong Ahafo region.

He started again working on his land and used IOM's reintegration grant to develop his agriculture activities. The returnee acknowledges that it is not an easy process but he has succeeded in earning nearly \$170 a month, a decent salary for the region. He can save a bit every month and is now planning to open a grocery shop in his village. He believes that there is a great potential in this field and hopes to double his revenues.

When the migrant left Ghana, he paid \$880 for the trip to Tripoli with his personal savings. He is pleased with his situation now, but admits that the money could have been used to develop his farm in the first place. He told his brother about IOM's assistance and encouraged him to come back too.

RAVL beneficiaries were involved in a great diversity of activities, depending on their level of education and where they lived. In the cities, returnees often opted for working as a moto taxi or

¹ Because RAVL records were incomplete, Altai Consulting could not determine the final number of returnees who had used their reintegration grant to start a micro-business.

selling scratch cards, two activities that guaranteed quick cash entries. Several migrants also worked as mechanics, near large highways.

Case Study 2 presents another example of a small business established in the Ghanaian capital. In rural areas, many returnees were involved in agriculture activities, horticulture or livestock. This usually implied that the beneficiary already had a land and that he could get support from his relatives during the first year. RAVL returnees involved in this field seemed aware that they would need a few years before really getting the benefits of their work. Seasonal activities often appeared the most challenging because they required returnees to save money for the months when they will have no cash entries.

Case Study 2: Ghanaian returnee, selling smoked fish and saving money

A Ghanaian returnee chose to start with a small business of smoked fish until he could save enough money to take over his father-in-law's farm. His mother used to sell fish and he sometimes helped her, so he felt he knew the business. In addition, one of his cousins had a shop of smoked fish at the market and so he could easily start as her business partner. The returnee buys the smoked fish in a village outside of Accra and delivers it to his cousin. The main challenge is the weather during the raining season. Last year, he lost all his stock because of the rain.

The returnee earns only \$50 a month, which is not always enough to support his wife and two daughters. He is yet pleased to be back and insists he will not return to Libya. "My family is my main program now," he said. The returnee hopes to save more money to build agriculture tools, work at his father-in-law's farm and grow coconuts. As of now, he had to take his younger daughter out of school because he could not afford the expenses (\$35 a term).

By comparison, the returnee spent \$50 on a visa and \$470 on the travel to Tripoli.

Returnees' success in running a business largely depended on **their motivation** to make their enterprise work, **the economic environment and their level of education**. For migrants who were literate and had basic notions in calculations, it was always easier to develop business plans, compare providers' offers and calculate margins of profit. For instance, a Togolese returnee was able to start a small freight business between Burkina Faso and Togo because he was educated, knew how to read and could easily draft contracts for providers and clients.

The returnees' capacity to launch their business depended on two other factors, for how long they had been out of the country – which affected their level of understanding of the local economy – and their psychological state. For some, being in a Libyan detention center and suffering from mistreatment and humiliations had been so difficult that it took them time to heal and prepare themselves to work again. This often translated in the returnee taking a few weeks off after his or her arrival to recover.

IOM'S ASSISTANCE WITH THE BUSINESS PLAN

All of the RAVL beneficiaries interviewed were satisfied with IOM's assistance with their business plan, but it seems that receiving missions could explore further options to provide more in-depth support to the returnees. At the beginning of the reintegration process, IOM staff sat with the beneficiaries to discuss their ideas for starting a business, and developed a plan step by step. In some cases, the IOM officers advised returnees against engaging in an activity, because it would not be profitable, or explained them the constraints associated with investing in a certain sector. For instance, in Togo, the IOM staff always insisted on the difficulty to work as a moto taxi, along with the risk of significant losses in the case of an accident.

To complete a returnee's Individual Reintegration Plan (IRP), the document that summarizes all of the components of a beneficiary's reintegration, IOM staff and the returnee also went over the marketing strategy, the risks and the future plans the returnee envisioned for his or her business. The last section of that plan was an "expected profitability analysis summary," in which the monthly sales and expenses expected by the returnee were detailed. As explained by the receiving missions, these calculations were often based on broad estimates since IOM staff and the migrants did not have precise data regarding micro-businesses (transportation costs, prices of inputs, etc.) in the different regions of the return country.

In the future, IOM could think further on how to improve its support in developing business plans and better informing the returnees about the business environment. Indeed, beneficiaries sometimes missed information about the economic sector in which they wanted to engage, or lacked data regarding operating costs for their micro-company. For instance, in Lomé, a returnee started an electric mill for wheat. His revenues have been limited because his costs have increased, due to the increase in electricity prices, and the volume of his activities has been limited, because of competition.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

RAVL beneficiaries almost never chose to invest in training or education (8), except for their children. In a few cases of families heading back to their country, the parents used the reintegration grant as a school package for their children – as required by RAVL. IOM Togo explained that the families usually reached an agreement with a school so that the school provided them with food, transportation, and stationary. A returnee from Ghana did use the reintegration grant to follow computer training, but he was an old man who was supported by his family and so he was not under the same financial constraints as most of the RAVL returnees.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

RAVL counted very few cases of medical assistance (6), which followed IOM's guidelines on medical AVRR cases. In these instances, €800 was not always enough to fund a medical treatment and the returnee was not guaranteed to find quality health services in his or her country of return. Medical assistance could take on different forms, from a skin infection (widespread among returnees kept in detention centers) to a fracture in need of treatment.

NEED OF EMERGENCY CASH

In some cases, RAVL returnees faced difficulties because they needed cash quickly and could not use their grant to address these emergency needs. For instance, a beneficiary from Togo found his mother sick when he got back and he had to pay for her medical treatment. She was suffering from malaria and stayed in the hospital for several days. The returnee had to borrow money to pay for the medical fees because he could not use his grant to this end. In these cases, the amount dedicated for the reintegration activity was left untouched, but it puts more pressure on the returnee to reimburse his creditor and his debt might even constitute an incentive to resell the equipment bought thanks to IOM.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 44: Create a fund at the beginning of each AVRR program for emergency needs** (pregnancy, diseases, deaths). This fund would be allocated to the most urgent cases and would avoid migrants borrowing money right after their return. It would allow a greater flexibility than the current one, by involving fewer stakeholders in the decision to allocate funds to emergency needs: the donor would initially agree on

broad guidelines, and the IOM office would then use the fund based on these pre-agreed rules, instead of systematically asking the donor's authorization.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 45:** IOM could further improve its support in **developing business plans** through: (1) a more in-depth understanding of the economic situation, and therefore more thorough research about very small businesses in the countries of return (which sectors are the most profitable, under which conditions, what are the entry costs, etc.). This could rely on a series of micro-studies conducted by local or international research firms, which would deliver regular studies about the local markets and identify opportunities for economic development and job creation. (2) spending more time with the returnee to prepare a full business plan, going through all of the different steps of launching the activity (operating costs, depreciation costs, profit margin, etc.) and accompanying him or her during their first months of work. This would of course require more resources for the receiving missions, in terms of research capacity and staff.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 46:** For medical cases, IOM could consider **delivering the assistance prior to departure** – when the health system is comparatively better in Libya than in the country of return. Furthermore, in these specific cases, IOM could double the support to the returnee, fund the medical assistance in Libya and still deliver the full grant upon arrival to ensure that the returnee has the opportunity to reintegrate. These cases are relatively rare and so it would not constitute a financial burden for the program.

4.3.4 DIFFERENCES IN CAPACITY AMONG COUNTRIES OF RETURN

EXPERIENCE AND FUNDING

The quality of the reintegration process largely depends on the capacity of the receiving missions, their experience and their budget. First of all, the process depends on IOM offices' experience in implementing reintegration programs. Although AVRR initiatives have been implemented for nearly thirty-five years, some countries have established more experience in the field. For instance, two of the four staff in charge of AVRR at IOM Ghana have been involved in these activities for more than five years. They have developed solid skills and are used not only to the procedures, but also to providing counseling to returnees. By comparison, a number of offices were only recently established in West Africa, in Togo, Benin and Burkina Faso for instance (see Focus box 8) and so their staff had less experience when RAVL started.

Focus box 8: New IOM offices in countries of return

For a number of countries of return, RAVL coincided with the establishment of a full office with the recruitment of new staff. This development was very positive as it now allows returnees to have access to reintegration assistance in their own country. Before that, returnees from Togo, for instance, had to travel to Accra to receive their grant, which discouraged a number of them.

This new development, however, meant that the IOM staff had to spend more time on understanding and establishing procedures, and had no prior experience in AVRR programs. For example, IOM Burkina Faso was really established in September 2012, with a Chief of Mission and additional staff, and this change implied that some time had to be spent on building the mission while other offices could focus on strengthening mechanisms already in place.

Although this development creates some limitations in the immediate term, it remains a very positive move for the future of reintegration initiatives.

The second factor in the quality of the support to returnees regards the funds available for the mission. As explained previously (cf. 'Budget'), IOM offices usually rely on service fees for the reintegration and this does not always allow them to recruit and train permanent staff. As shown in the table below, the capacity of IOM missions greatly vary among the countries of return, whereas they might receive similar number of returnees. In the cases of one-man missions such as Benin and Togo, the pressure on the single Operational Officer can be high.

Table 3: Number of operational staff for RAVL, along with number of returnees, per countries of origin

County	Benin	Togo	Burkina Faso	Ghana	Ethiopia	Senegal
Op. staff	1 (+1 consultant)	1	1 (recently 2)	2 + 1 Reintegration Officer	2	2
RAVL	60	92	93	93	95	29

RAVL OUTCOMES, PER RECEIVING MISSION

The two figures below represent the results of the reintegration rates per countries of return. Figure 7 shows the number of migrants who have reintegrated and Figure 8 presents the proportion of returnees who were reintegrated. As such, it appears that the largest number of returnees to reintegrate were in Gambia, Togo, Ghana and Mali, which make up for more than 50% of the reintegration cases.

Figure 7: Number of cases having been reintegrated (568)

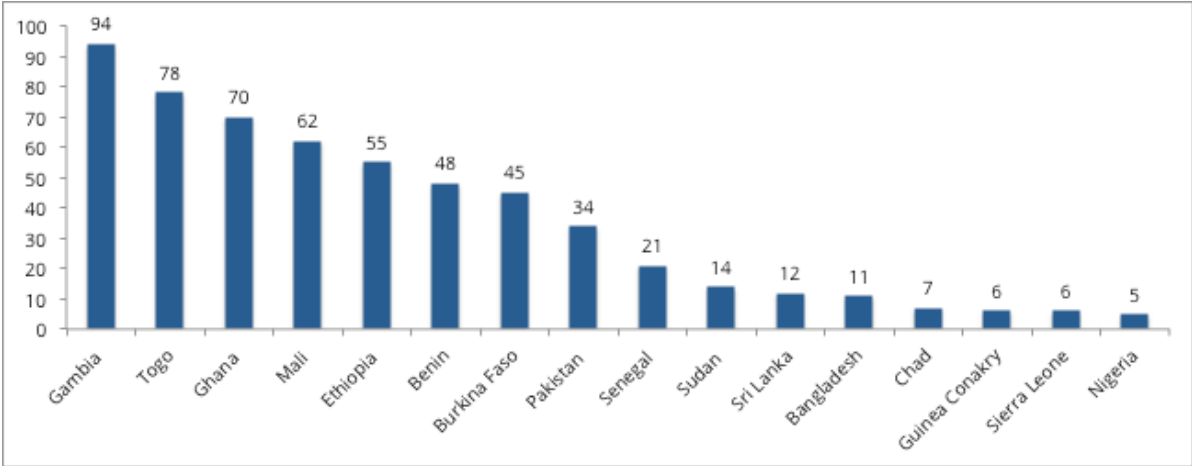
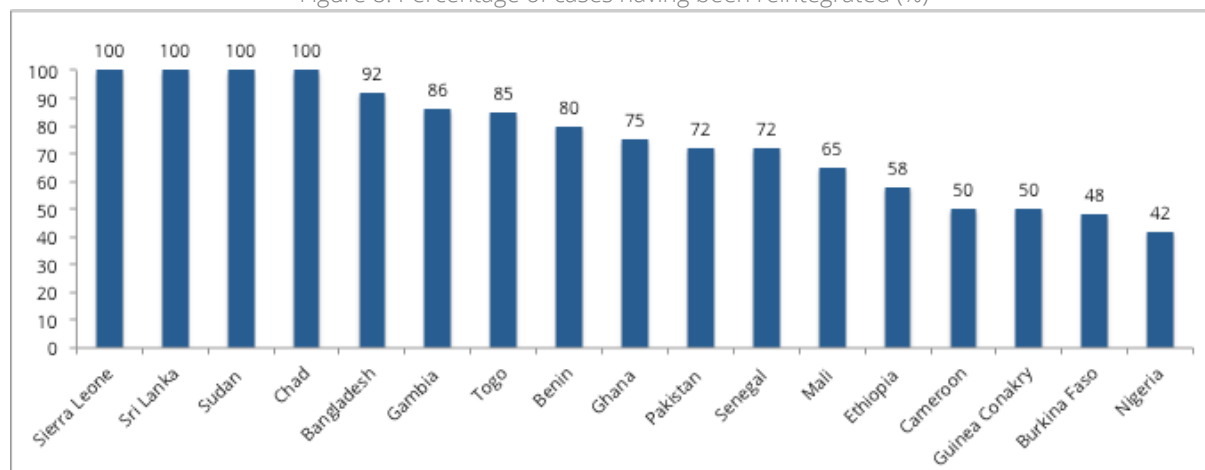


Figure 8 presents a different perspective as it shows the locations where the greatest proportion of returnees went through a reintegration process. The locations where 100% of the returnees completed this process were also the ones that received the smallest number of migrants, respectively Sierra Leone, Chad, Sri Lanka and Sudan. In these cases, the smaller effectives may have made the case load more manageable.

It should however be noted that Gambia and Togo, both of which are very small missions, received the highest number of returnees and achieved very high rates of reintegration, respectively 86% and 85% each. The results in Benin are also notable given that the mission counted only one permanent staff member who was receiving returnees till the very end of the program.

Figure 8: Percentage of cases having been reintegrated (%)



These figures paint a generally positive and encouraging picture in terms of the outcomes of the program. For the countries with lower rates, it should be borne in mind that the proportion of returnees reintegrated also depended on the returnees' will to engage in such a process once they returned home, and so the relevant office can hardly be held accountable for such an outcome. It should also be noted that the disbursement of reintegration grants represented in the two figures above says little about the nature of the reintegration and whether this one is sustainable. As such, a mission might have achieved fewer reintegration cases, but very sustainable ones.

IOM GHANA AND THE EXPERIENCE OF A SUB-OFFICE

On this last point, it is likely that the support delivered by IOM Accra was more sustainable because the office could provide more counseling and follow-up assistance.¹ Because IOM Ghana benefited from a budget, it was able to set up a sub-office in the Brong Ahafo region, from where 53 out of the 93 Ghanaian returnees were from. IOM had identified this area as a main region of return for several years and the staff knew that RAVL returnees would head back there. In the past, processing reintegration cases had been challenging because of the distance between Brong Ahafo and Accra, and so the establishment of the sub-office was expected to permit a closer assistance and monitoring. As explained by the Reintegration Officer in Ghana, this office allowed the team to follow returnees' progress in person and to see what the outcomes had actually been. The IOM officer at the head of the sub-office also had more time to build personal relations with the migrants. In general, IOM staff stated that the establishment of a sub-office allowed them to work faster and more efficiently.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 47: Establish a few additional sub-offices, as a test.** The IOM missions all expressed the difficulties to conduct the reintegration process and monitoring when the migrants were coming from regions far away from the capital. The Ghanaian experience could therefore be reiterated in other countries and carefully assessed, to then discuss the opportunity with donors in order to extend it further.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 48: Hire a consultant based there when no capacity.** As experienced in Benin, deploying a short-term consultant in a region of return can prove successful to conduct reintegration closer to the returnees.

¹ This evaluation was however not able to assess the situation on the ground as time and budget constraints did not allow the research team to visit the region.

4.3.5 PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Some receiving missions worked with NGOs during RAVL, but these initiatives were limited in terms of geographical scope and the nature of the cooperation. IOM could explore further this opportunity since **partnering with other institutions could precisely help mitigate its weakness in terms of presence in the regions of return and development of business plans**. Not only do Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) know the field very well, but supporting them would also participate to strengthening local capacities. In addition to collaboration with NGOs, IOM could study the possibility of working with the private sector, large companies interested in social responsibility initiatives in particular. Whilst the IOM missions all appeared aware of this stake, they rarely had the time to even start identifying organizations to work with.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

A few IOM offices have started working with local CSOs but these partnerships were limited and could be further expanded, in scope and geographically. For instance, IOM Ghana was working with the local organization Scholars in Transit (SIT), based in the Brong Ahafo region – where most of the RAVL returnees were from. Its scope of work was limited to the conduct of the RAVL monitoring, with SIT staff visiting or calling a total of 56 RAVL beneficiaries and interviewing them with the RAVL monitoring form.¹ Although SIT's scope of work was narrow, it still constituted a successful partnership. It remains however that IOM needs to monitor very closely its local partners, before their capacity is strong enough and a trust relation is established. This implies that the cooperation could require an extensive engagement from receiving missions, at least in the first years.

The cooperation in Gambia went one step further with the organization of training by the Gambia Women Finance Association (GAWFA) regarding business development, along with advice on the reintegration plans. The NGO staff were used to this type of training and were also skilled at developing a course adapted to returnees with a low educational level. The impact of this session and the quality of counseling could, however, not be assessed throughout this evaluation, but this type of initiative could be further developed and monitored. In any case, training regarding basic business skills seems particularly welcome for migrants who are usually quite uneducated.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 49:** In the short-term, IOM offices in countries of return could dedicate more time to identify CSOs with the capacity to help them with **monitoring and punctual cooperation, such as training**. This would require some engagement from IOM staff who are often already overwhelmed. A short-term mission by a university, a NGO or a research firm could be organized to identify potential actors and fields of cooperation in the main countries of return.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 50: Partnerships with micro-finance institutions could be further developed.** This type of organization, both local and international, has flourished in Africa over the years, they have a good experience with the establishment of small businesses and they could offer their expertise to the returnees. These institutions usually have branches in several locations in the same country and they would ensure a support closer

¹ Out of 56 monitoring interviews conducted by SIT, 8 were done in person and 48 were conducted over the phone. Altai Consulting did not have the opportunity to interview SIT but this split suggests that even the CSO faced difficulties in traveling to where RAVL returnees were living, either for financial or logistical reasons.

to the returnees' needs. Either the migrants could visit these offices to receive assistance for their business plans, or they could use the reintegration grant as a starting point for a business and borrow some more funds.

This partnership would of course be **a long-term objective** and the first difficulty would be **to identify relevant NGOs in each country**. This would require time and potentially some staff dedicated to this mission. It is also very possible that reliable micro-finance organizations do not exist in all of the countries of return. But, if a structure is identified, a framework of cooperation with IOM could be established. The receiving mission should yet ensure that this collaboration does not lead to further delays in the delivery of the reintegration grant, by adding an intermediary to the chain. Some IOM missions like IOM Ethiopia have already started working with micro-finance NGOs¹ and so their experience could be further analyzed.

The difficulty will always be the uncertainty regarding the number of returnees, and their place of origin. To mitigate these risks, more could be done to collect data on the returnees supported by IOM in the last years, in order to start identifying trends. In terms of budget, it would either require the IOM offices to share their service fees or their budget with a local NGO, or to ask for a larger budget from the donor. Finally, IOM would have to be very engaged to build the capacity of the NGO, closely monitor its activities and develop a very rigorous reporting framework. Such cooperation could therefore require important efforts in its early years.

In the short-term, two or three IOM offices in countries of return could start working with micro-finance organizations, as a test. IOM Ghana and IOM Togo would be interesting case studies because they have very different capacity. The two offices could identify a micro-finance institution to work with (based on IOM Libya Reintegration Officer's previous recommendations in the case of Togo²) and study possible cooperation. The lessons of this partnership could then be generalized to other missions, with the ambition to work more closely with micro-finance NGOs.

GOVERNMENTS IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN

IOM offices appeared to have good relations with governments in countries of return, but these have not proven to be partners to actually facilitate the return of migrants from Libya. This is mainly due to the limited government resources available to them, and it does not seem that IOM missions should expect receiving more support in the short term. Actually, governments might precisely avoid supporting returnees, to avoid favoring them over other nationals in difficulties. For instance, in Ethiopia, when IOM started working with a local micro-finance organization, the government insisted that returnees receive assistance under the same conditions as their countrymen. In any cases, receiving missions should continue to liaise with Ministries of Social Affairs and leaders of diaspora groups in order to identify potential programs returnees could benefit from.

PRIVATE SECTOR

IOM offices have rarely developed **partnerships with the private sector**, whereas companies could provide sustainable jobs to migrants.³ For a returnee, the prospect of starting an entire business could be associated with a lot of pressure, especially if the migrant has had no previous

¹ IOM Ethiopia did not however associate the micro-finance organization to the reintegration process with RAVL returnees (see Focus box 3).

² See Report from Field visit to Lomé in 2013.

³ Of note, this was specific to this project. In other AVRR projects supported by offices in the Middle East and North Africa region, synergies with the private sector are usually established.

experience in the field. On the contrary, migrants could welcome the opportunity of being recruited by a company that would ensure them a stable salary.

Receiving missions could work to identify these firms and negotiate with them so that they hire returnees. In particular, IOM could try to partner with international firms with local branches that would be interested in supporting social responsibility initiatives. These companies are likely to be well established and able to secure funding for a medium-term job. IOM offices could also look for job opportunities in local firms, in the countries where the private sector is sufficiently developed.

In these cases, IOM could use the amount of the reintegration grants to fund a series of training for the returnees, to ensure that they get the needed skills to be proficient. Such initiative would of course require a great flexibility from the private firms, as IOM cannot ensure in advance when returnees will arrive, with which skills and how many will be willing to work for these companies.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 51: Study the possibility to work with the private sector in the countries of return.** Local companies could be an option, but IOM could also try to develop partnerships with larger international firms interested in investing in **social responsibility initiatives**. This revealed very successful in Iraq where IOM developed a full job placement program to support returnees from Europe to enter the job market (MAGNET program) through the provision of pre-departure information, CV design and referral, with the development of a job platform with strong networks created by IOM officers with local companies in the regions of return. This also integrated the fact that not all returnees were real entrepreneurs, and that many companies were interested to hire returnees for their dynamic profile and exposure to other cultures.

4.3.6 EFFECTS OF THE REINTEGRATION PROCESS

Assessing the effects of the reintegration process is complex because a successful reintegration can take on several meanings for IOM and the returnee. It may mean that the RAVL beneficiary does not intend to leave again, that he or she has achieved a better, or at least stable, economic situation or that he or she is now fully integrated into his or her community. The effects of reintegration also go beyond the migrant him or herself and can impact their family, community and other aspiring migrants. Finally, the level of reintegration is likely to evolve and, theoretically, increase over time and any assessment of the success of a reintegration process would need to be made over time, considering short, medium and long term aspects.

NOTION OF A SUCCESSFUL REINTEGRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE SUCCESS

From the program perspective, a successful reintegration involves **the completion of an administrative procedure**, the development of a business plan and the disbursement of the totality of the reintegration grant. This is the sphere in which IOM has the most direct impact since its staff is in charge of the process. In the case of RAVL, 571 out of 790 returnees completed their reintegration plan, which represents a success rate of 72%.

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE MIGRATION

One step further, a successful reintegration process would address the root causes of the migration, or the factors that pushed the migrants out in the first place, thereby preventing them from re-attempting their migration.

Assessing this would require a tracking of the returnees over time, over a few years at least, meaning that such an assessment falls out of the scope of this current research.

In any case, qualitative interviews with returnees provided good information on their perceptions of migration, at least to Libya. All of the RAVL beneficiaries interviewed – who had been back from one year to a year and a half – were still convinced that they made the right choice in returning and almost all of them (9) shared that they would not want to go back to Libya. All insisted on the hardships they went through, on their way to Libya, in Libya and in the detention centers. A few still considered leaving again one day, but they insisted that they would not go to Libya and would only move somewhere if they could get a visa. While the openness to migrating again could imply that the root causes of the migration have not been addressed, it could also mean that returnees' experience in Libya has convinced them to migrate only through a regular path.

It should yet be noted that the research team could not meet any of the migrants who had emigrated again, and several IOM missions confirmed that they knew some had tried to go to Libya irregularly again. As explained by an IOM officer, the ones who returned were usually the young men, with no family and who felt they had nothing to lose. These cases were maybe even more widespread among migrants who had returned from Libya than among returnees from other countries as the Libyan cases usually had few other options but to return because they were in detention centers. The challenge for IOM would be to identify these cases and provide them strengthened counseling and follow-up. Finally, IOM does not aim to prevent repeat migration, but works to ensure safe, humane, and regular migration.

ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION

Another good indicator of a successful reintegration is the economic situation of the returnee, whether he or she is better off than before the migration or, at least, if his or her economic situation is stable. **The majority of the RAVL returnees interviewed were in a better situation than before their departure** because they used the reintegration grant to buy their own shop. Some however faced persisting difficulties because of their family situation or pending debts. The case study below presents the example of a returnee whose situation is now stable, but who still faces difficulties due to his debts.

“Although life is not very easy in Ghana, it is far better here than going to another country.”

– Ghanaian returnee

“When you come back, it's easy. You have some money in your pocket. It's a few months after that it gets difficult.”

– Togolese returnee

“Before I travelled, I was relying on my parents to meet the needs of my family. But now, I am self-sufficient and I can take care of my wife and children.”

– Ghanaian returnee

Case Study 3: Togolese returnee paying back a debt

A returnee from Togo had decided to go to Libya because he had a debt and he needed to earn money quickly to pay it back. He sold everything he had, borrowed more money to pay for the \$1,000-travel and left to Tripoli in 2012. In Libya, he was arrested and then released, and he finally decided to go back to Togo because he could not stand the living conditions in Tripoli. He was however very anxious to go back because he knew he owed a lot of money and did not know how he would be able to pay back.

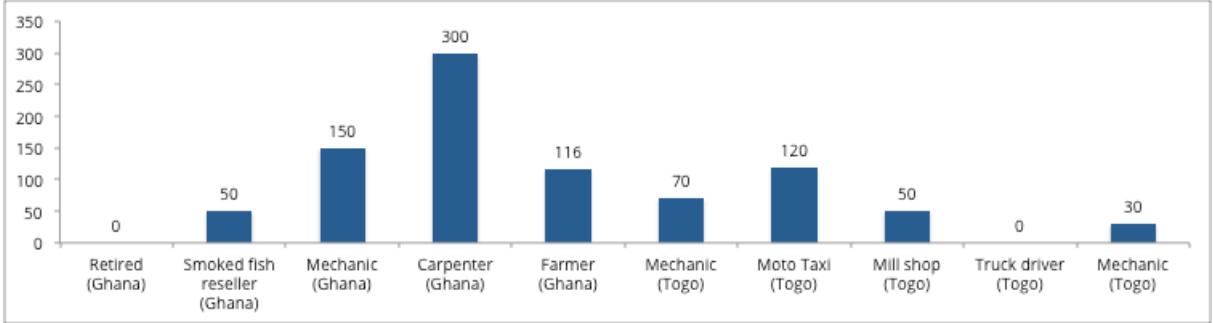
IOM supported him in returning to Lomé and he used the reintegration grant to go back to his previous activities as a mechanic. He bought some equipment and opened his own shop. He now tries to buy the tools he needs, step by step. Whilst the returnee is relieved to be back, his financial situation is still problematic. He was making \$125 a month before leaving, and now earns only \$70 because the competition has increased. Being back home was also difficult because his neighbors were making fun of him. "They tell me I'm a loser," he said.

The returnee was however hopeful. He has started reimbursing his debt and he heard a major road was being build near his shop so he hopes to get more business in the next years. He complained that nothing has gotten better since he left, but he insists that he would never go back to Libya.

Thus, although the situation of the returnees interviewed was not always better than before, it was at least stabilized. Based on KIIs and RAVL monitoring forms, it appears that most of the returnees' businesses were still operational one year after their return. Their business activity was not always enough to meet their needs but some had started another business or benefited from the support of their family. Once again, however, any true analysis of improvements in economic situation would have to be assessed **on a larger sample and over time**, using a trajectory of at least a few years, which was outside of the scope of this evaluation.

In any case, the figure below represents the earnings of the 10 returnees interviewed in Ghana and Togo. First of all, it should be noted that the reliability of this data is not granted given that it is based on estimates by the returnees. It is possible that RAVL beneficiaries do not exactly know how much they make, and it may also be that they intentionally under estimated their revenues in the hope of receiving additional support from IOM. Second, two of the ten returnees encountered did not have any revenues ("Retired" in Ghana and "Truck driver" in Togo). The first one was a retired man, he had gone back to Accra after more than thirty years in Tripoli and he was not working but relying on his younger brother for his needs. The second one had bought a truck but had had an accident and was not working anymore.

Figure 9: Revenues of 10 RAVL beneficiaries in Ghana and Togo (in \$)



As shown in Figure 9, revenues in Togo were usually lower than the ones in Ghana, which is coherent with the level of development in these two countries. It does not mean, however, that the Togolese returnees were struggling more than the ones in Ghana because the standards of living in Lomé tend to be lower than in Accra, and the same may be true in rural areas. Thus, it should be noted that a returnee's level of income always needs to be put in perspective with the costs of living in the area where they live, how many people they have to support and whether

their wife, husband or other relatives were helping. For instance, the two mechanics in Togo were earning nearly the same amount as the owner of a mill shop, but this one was in a more difficult financial situation because his mother was sick and he had just had a baby.

SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

Assessing returnees' reintegration into the society is another good sign of the effect of the program. All of the RAVL interviewees shared that coming home empty handed had been difficult but their family was generally pleased to have them back and proved supportive.

"When I came, I was very sad. I was thinking about all the money I had spent and it made me cry."

– Ghanaian returnee

Having failed to find a job and send money back home was mostly felt as a humiliation. Several returnees were particularly sorrowful as they had been quickly detained and deprived of the ability to find a job and make any income at all. These migrants generally felt guilty of having spent their resources for a travel that had proved unsuccessful. Some also reported pressures from their family when they got back, because their relatives were expecting them to have earned money. For others, it is the teasing by other villagers that was the most painful.

Focus box 9: On the shame to return empty handed

A returnee from Togo explained that he waited for three months before going back to his village where his wife lives with his three children. He explained that he did not want to return before receiving the IOM grant and having secured a business. According to him, coming back empty handed was too shameful.

Most of the RAVL returnees had not been away for more than two years and they shared that it had not been too difficult to reunite with their families. Most of them expressed their happiness to be back. Several explained that their wife was simply relieved to see them out of jail. Among the RAVL beneficiaries interviewed, one had gotten married and just had a baby while another one was about to get married. This suggests that these returnees had reintegrated into the social fabric.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

An under-estimated dimension in RAVL, and many other AVRR initiatives, is the **psychological impact of the migration on the returnees**. Migrants traveled to Libya in very tough conditions; they have often been physically affected by the journey and have come across violence and death. In Libya, returnees have also suffered from ill treatment, abuse, exploitation and humiliation. Receiving missions agreed that the RAVL returnees were fragile when they got back. "Returnees from Libya are really not in a good condition," commented a staff from IOM Ethiopia. Yet, **because most of the returnees were young men, they were often more reluctant to admit their weaknesses.**

"The last thing people think is that they – the young men – might have deep vulnerabilities as well."

– IOM staff

Addressing the impact of such psychological trauma should be an integral part of any AVRR program assisting migrants from administrative detention. While such assistance was not written into the RAVL program design, some IOM staff in countries of return did attempt to provide support and counseling, under their own time constraints. IOM Ghana recalled the case of a returnee who had lost his ability to talk. The IOM officer was told that the migrant had resisted against Libyan policemen in the detention center and he had been extensively beaten. Despite all of the office's efforts, the returnee did not express any willingness to receive his grant and

disappeared. More extensive psychological counseling could perhaps be a component for consideration in future development of AVRR programs.

EFFECT ON THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Beyond the effect on the returnee as an individual, RAVL has had an effect on his or her relatives, his or her community, but these ones are more difficult to assess and beyond the scope of this research. On the one hand, the return of economic migrants to their countries of return may mean a decrease in remittances, a potential issue for countries that highly depend on it.

On the other hand, the migrants who chose to return from Libya were mainly held in detention centers where they could not send money back home anyway. On the contrary, their return back to their country with a reintegration grant can mean that they will **support the development of small businesses**, raise the level of revenues in their village, generate more activities and potentially create jobs. This could have a longer-term impact by, for example, enabling families to send their children to school.

But in the regions where the migrants are from, business opportunities are scarce and it is not granted that **the local markets are large enough to absorb all of the small businesses supported by IOM**. For example, nearly 40 RAVL beneficiaries from North Benin returned around the same time and many chose to engage in the same sector, moto taxi. It would be interesting to study whether the market was large enough for them and what was the impact of RAVL on the existing moto taxi sector. So far, there has been little to no research to analyze this phenomenon and it would be key to further document it in order to better apprehend the impact of IOM's AVRR programs on local economies.

MIGRATION STORY TELLING

Finally, what returnees say about their migration experience can have a major impact on aspiring migrants in their community. Indeed, most migrants decided to go to Libya because they heard or met a migrant who told them about the opportunity to make a living in Tripoli. Therefore, the story RAVL returnees share when they get back can have a key impact on aspiring migrants' decision to leave. Almost all of the returnees interviewed shared that they systematically recommended against moving to Libya. For instance, a returnee from Togo shared that a few people in his village came to see him when he returned to ask him about Libya. He told them about his suffering during the travel to Tripoli and all of the money he lost to police officers and criminal gangs. In the end, he was confident he had discouraged them from going to Libya. Whilst pride may sometimes prevent returnees from talking about their bad experiences, all of the interviewees seemed willing to do so in order to avoid the same fate happening to their peers. In the future, IOM offices in countries of return could rely further on this network to support communications awareness initiatives about the risks of migrations.

"I always tell people about all the troubles I went through, and the torture in the detention center. I don't recommend this trip to anyone."

- Togolese returnee

- ⇒ **Recommendation 52: Make psychological counseling available for the most vulnerable migrants.** This dimension is often underestimated whereas returnees like the RAVL cases are likely to have been through traumatic experiences, on the road to Libya or in a detention center. Migrants who have been in an administrative detention centers could receive specific services, in complement to regular counseling.

- ⇒ **Recommendation 53: Collect data and analysis on the impact of IOM's support to small businesses at the local level.** Such study would be crucial to learn more about the conditions of local businesses – and so to improve IOM's business counseling – and identify the impact of IOM's activities on the existing business environment – in order to revise IOM's intervention if this impact was deemed negative.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 54: Follow the returnees identified as likely to leave again.** IOM staff could try to identify migrants as likely to re-migrate to understand their motivations and whether this would be repeated irregular migration. If so, provide them further assistance to set up their business, along with regular counseling on the risks of irregular migration.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 55: Establish a network of returnees willing to deliver talks about the risks of migrations.** Returnees are naturally solicited to talk about their experience but IOM could further support the dissemination of this type of information.

4.3.7 CONCLUSION: DEVELOPMENT OR SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE?

Programs like RAVL raise the question of the end goal of AVRR initiatives: **does RAVL aim at supporting development or is it providing short-term assistance?** If the objective is development, the amount of the reintegration grant and the means allocated to IOM missions, both in sending and receiving missions, make it challenging to guarantee long-term results. As reported by several IOM offices, returnees from Europe receive grants as high as €5,000 and they still struggle to start a business. Although Altai Consulting could not compare the effects of different reintegration grants in the field, along with the long-term impact of this assistance, it seems possible that a higher grant provides returnees with a better capacity to set up a sustainable business.

Besides, while IOM offices do a wonderful job and deliver the best support possible to returnees, these missions seem to lack the capacity to conduct regular follow-ups with migrants, and also to provide in-depth business counseling. Receiving missions are often overwhelmed with work and do not have all the information they would need about very small businesses in far away regions of the country of return. Despite their motivation, the operational officers also lack time to develop partnerships with other local stakeholders and, as a result, they cannot inscribe their action into a larger development framework.

If the objective was to shift to short-term assistance, or without due funding from donors to allow for the needed time, IOM could explore further the possibility to reinforce its support when returnees are the most vulnerable, in the pre-departure and post-arrival phases. AVRR programs could also rethink how their assistance is delivered, simplify the reintegration procedure so that the time spent on administrative work is spent on other activities, such as psychological counseling. If IOM sending missions acknowledge that without sufficient resources, they are not able to support development activities, they could even agree to deliver cash assistance to the returnees because this would be a form of emergency and short-term support. This would effectively shorten the administrative process and it would not, of course, prevent the IOM staff from encouraging returnees to invest this stipend into a small business, counsel them for the establishment of a micro-enterprise and refer them to its local partners.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

RAVL was part of an effort to resume AVRR activities in Libya, after their interruption during the 2011-Revolution, in order to answer **an increasing need from stranded migrants**, often kept in detention centers. The program was also part of **IOM's effort to answer the regional challenges** resulting from the position of the Arab states as countries of origin, transit and return, along with the impact of the Arab Spring on the situation of irregular migrants.

Despite all of the challenges common to AVRR initiatives, RAVL was implemented accordingly. The program did face some issues in terms of planning and management, often due to factors not under the control of the RAVL team. For instance, it was difficult for IOM to plan how many migrants it would be able to assist, from which country they would be and when they would seek IOM's assistance. RAVL was also a challenge in terms of management because it relied on staff from 18 countries, which had often never met.

Beyond distance, a main difficulty for IOM staff was due to **the lack of harmonization** among AVRR programs. If all these initiatives were unified in terms of design and implementation, IOM operational officers could spend less time on administrative procedures, and more on counseling.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

RAVL supported the return of 790 migrants from 17 countries, and the program assisted 571 in their reintegration. Most of the RAVL beneficiaries were in detention centers when IOM came to assist them, in very vulnerable conditions and, often, with no better options available but to return.

The Tripoli office organized the travel back to the country of origin in good conditions, with enough information at the departure and sufficient support throughout the journey. **The lack of assistance during the pre-departure phase**, along with uncertainty regarding the date of return, yet constituted major difficulties for the migrants.

In the countries of return, 571 returnees received an €800-grant and most chose to start a micro-business. The sectors in which they engaged greatly varied, from mechanics to farming and trading, depending on their skills and where they lived. **The effect of the support program was assessed positively in the majority of the cases interviewed. Distance to the IOM office** often constituted a critical barrier to the reintegration process, along with **a procedure not always adapted to the informal economy** prevailing in the countries of return.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITIES

The main challenge for RAVL was to achieve reintegration, a multi-faceted and long-term objective, with its limited means. IOM staff in both sending and receiving missions fully engaged in the program and were able to provide full assistance to the returnees, but it remains that this support could have been further enhanced with more resources allocated to IOM offices, along with a higher reintegration grant.

Indeed, if the reintegration was only about disbursing grants, the program achieved honorable results (74%). But reintegration understood as **a longer and more in-depth process**, as a development initiative, goes further: IOM staff should not be limited by time constraints when

meeting with returnees, migrants should systematically be offered psychological support, operational teams should be better prepared for counseling on the establishment of micro-businesses, IOM staff should have the opportunity to follow the development of the micro-enterprises established by beneficiaries and, finally, the office should be closely cooperating with all the other relevant stakeholders in the countries of return.

If it is acknowledged that donors cannot commit to this level of funding for a program like RAVL, future AVRR initiatives may consider shifting their focus to short-term assistance, ensuring that migrants receive support when they are the most vulnerable, during the pre-departure and post-arrival phases, provide them with cash stipend upon arrival and, if funding allows, establish units of psychological counseling in transit centers, both in countries of origin and return.

5.1 MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.1 SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- ⇒ **Lobbying to improve conditions in Libyan detention centers** (IOM);
- ⇒ **Simplify the procedure for the disbursement of the reintegration grants** (IOM/donors);
- ⇒ **Increase information sharing between sending and receiving missions**, for a better preparation of the returns (IOM);
- ⇒ **Externalize monitoring mechanisms**, to collect regular data and ensure it is analyzed (IOM/donors);
- ⇒ **Enhance returnees' networks and try to establish a sponsorship initiative** (IOM).

5.1.2 LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- ⇒ **Continue efforts to harmonize all AVRR programs** (reintegration grants, procedures, etc.) (IOM/donors);
- ⇒ **Open transit centers**, in countries of origin for the pre-departure phase and in the countries of return for the post-arrival period. These centers could also provide psychological counseling to the returnees (IOM/donors);
- ⇒ **Explore opportunities for partnerships with local stakeholders**, with NGOs, in particular micro-finance organizations, and the private sector to multiply the impact of the program (IOM);
- ⇒ **Set up offices in the regions where most returnees are from**, to ensure a reintegration process closer to the returnees' needs (IOM/donors).

ANNEX: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- ⇒ **Need for harmonization:** IOM Tripoli has already started working towards harmonizing tools for AVRR initiatives, and this type of initiative could be further extended to agree on a stable framework for programs with donors. In the short term, the office in Tripoli could try to ensure that programs funded by the same donor follow the same format.
- ⇒ **Need for coordination:** IOM Tripoli would benefit from working more closely with the receiving missions in the design phase of a program, but also after, in order to share all the relevant information regarding returnees' arrival and vulnerabilities.
- ⇒ **Need for better monitoring:** The monitoring could be improved by more funding allocated to the process and the externalization of the process. The results should then be shared and used for the conception of future AVRR initiatives.
- ⇒ **Need for better planning:** Whilst planning AVRR programs is always very challenging, more could be done in the future to better organize the activities and ensure that the entire budget is spent accordingly.

2. PROGRAM OUTCOMES

2.1. RETURN OF STRANDED MIGRANTS

- ⇒ **Manage expectations:** AVRR programs such as RAVL could think of ways to better manage delays prior to departure, especially in terms of communication with migrants.
- ⇒ **Explore the possibilities for filling the gap in assistance in the pre-departure and post-arrival periods,** at least for the most vulnerable cases. In particular, IOM Tripoli could try to provide a more regular assistance to migrants kept in detention centers.

2.2. REINTEGRATION PROCESS IN THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

- ⇒ **Facilitate the procedure:** The current process does not seem ideal because it is time consuming and does not guarantee that the beneficiaries really follow IOM's recommendations. If the procedure were simplified, it would give more time to the mission to focus on other dimensions of assistance, such as support during the pre-departure and post-arrival periods.
- ⇒ **Develop psychological counseling:** This dimension was absent from RAVL whereas returnees from Libya have been through traumatic experiences and could greatly benefit from this type of support.
- ⇒ **Develop partnerships with micro-finance institutions and the private sector in a few countries, as experimentations:** NGOs are likely to have a more in-depth experience in the establishment of small businesses and could maybe offer additional funding to returnees, through micro-loans. As for companies, they could secure regular revenues to the returnees and keep them from the pressure of starting their own business.

- ⇒ **Establish local branches** in the regions where returnees usually come from. This could allow a reintegration process closer to migrants' needs.
- ⇒ **Research the local business environment and the impact of IOM-supported micro-enterprises** in the regions where returnees come from. This would enhance the quality of IOM's counseling and ensure that the organization's activities do not disturb the local economy.