

### Practice #4

## Support for Returnee Employability and Empowerment Through Vocational Training and Job Search in Mali

Implementing entity: IOM

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

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

### Summary

Through various interventions, IOM in Mali has, so far, developed returning migrants' capacities and competencies and thus improved employment and self-employment opportunities for more than 1,000 Malian returnees. These interventions include job counselling, training or competency certification for returning migrants, as well as provision of equipment and materials to enable them setting up their businesses or referral to job offers.

In order to provide enhanced assistance to returning migrants who often spent many years abroad and face difficulties upon their return to find an economic activity that suits their profile, IOM concluded a partnership with 12 vocational training centres to offer various options to the youths and facilitate their access to vocational training. Individual interviews were conducted to identify returning migrants' competencies and aspirations and offer them training opportunities or employment (for qualified migrants) based on their respective profiles for a better match between their needs, training and/or employment.

After training or competency certification, beneficiaries received support to create a small business (577 have been supported in this way so far) or are better equipped to face the labour market requirements. The benefits of this activity include easier access to training for beneficiaries and better employment and self-employment opportunities.

This approach was deeply discussed with the Malian Government to align reintegration initiatives with the National Migration and Development Policy (PONAM), including the development of returnees' capacities and competencies in national development.

### Operational details

#### ► Description of the activity

This activity aims to offer training or access to employment/self-employment opportunities more adapted to the returning migrants' profiles to better engage

them in their reintegration process and foster sustainable reintegration.



Returnees during a training session  
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To offer a variety of training opportunities, IOM first developed a **mapping of existing vocational training centres** in Bamako and Kayes (the main areas of return in Mali). This mapping was carried out thanks to IOM team members' knowledge, interviews with local authorities and calls for tenders.

After the training centres had been identified, IOM met with their respective management and sometimes with government authorities and conducted inspection visits to assess the quality of the training centres in terms of equipment and teacher qualifications. Twelve (12) centres were selected in Bamako based on the opportunities they offer and their quality, and were then contracted (additional centres are being contracted in Kayes).

Thereafter, **individual interviews** are conducted with the returning migrants to identify their aspirations, skills and qualifications.

Following these interviews, **migrants wishing to follow a training course** are informed of the available opportunities (areas of training, starting date and duration).

In addition, migrants **who claim to be able to exercise a trade** have their skills assessed at training centres matching their profile. If it turns out that the migrant has the required skills to practise their trade, he or she obtains a certification.

**Migrants wishing to start their own businesses** and requiring equipment for this purpose are also referred to an industrial school to assess their ability to use them. The selected persons are then referred to centres for business management training. Persons deemed insufficiently qualified are offered the choice of training with the opportunity to receive the equipment upon successful completion of the training.

When the returnee completes the training or obtains his/her certification, an **equipment and material** kit necessary for the desired economic activity is provided to him/her, allowing him/her to start the microenterprise or access a job. The kit content was developed with the trainers based on the minimum requirements specific to each trade. Migrant representatives are then invited to review the kits and provide feedback to adjust them to the real needs of returnees.

As soon as the beneficiary launches his/her income-generating activity, IOM regularly conducts **monitoring** and identifies potential needs to ensure the profitability of the activity. Additional support can be provided if necessary.



Returnees during a training session  
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This activity has proven to be a good practice in encouraging self-employment, as it is difficult to find enough vacant positions in Malian companies. Expansion of this activity is planned in Gao and Mopti.

#### ► Approach/rationale

Many returning migrants are disoriented upon their return to Mali. Most of them migrated as teenagers and stayed out

of the country for a long time. Once back home, these young people know little about available opportunities, including employment opportunities, and do not know the competencies they can use to find the suitable job. Some migrants then copy down their peers' projects: they ask for the same equipment as their peers without actually knowing how to use it. There have also been several cases of migrants claiming to be experts in a professional field, but it then appeared that their capacities did not meet the needs of employers. These migrants were then dismissed, or they resigned from their jobs.



Returnees during a training session  
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The objective pursued through the process described here is a **better match between migrants' competencies and economic opportunities** to prevent migrants from abandoning the reintegration process and promote sustainable reintegration. With a better knowledge of the competencies, capacities and aspirations of migrants, on the one hand, and a variety of training opportunities, on the other hand, IOM in Mali was able to provide solutions to the multiple challenges associated with economic reintegration.

### ► Partnership/Synergy

As vocational training centres are affiliated with different government institutions, approval from different departments and ministries was required before engaging in a collaboration with IOM.

In the Kayes Region in Western Mali, agreements were also concluded with the Regional Directorates of Social

Development and Livestock (*Directions régionales du développement social et de l'élevage*) to provide beneficiaries with training in business management and cattle fattening.

Since these partnerships were successful, it is planned to replicate them in Northern and Central Mali.

It should be noted that training entails a cost, whether it is a public or private training centre. Training costs in Mali are high compared to the living cost.

### ► Useful contacts and references

For more information: [jointinitiative@iom.int](mailto:jointinitiative@iom.int).

## Evidence base

### ► Outcome and Evidence

This activity contributed to a **better match between returning migrants' needs and the reintegration assistance activities**. Indeed, a considerable **drop in cases of abandonment** of the reintegration process and **greater motivation** among training beneficiaries, have been observed.

More than 1200 migrants completed their training in business management (150), tailoring (127), construction (masonry: 96, tiling: 92, welding: 74, plumbing: 55, and carpentry: 27), fattening cattle, sheep and poultry (381), driving and transport (203). This has thus increased their employability. It is not possible at this early stage to assess the sustainability of these interventions, but it is already possible to make the following observations:

- Several beneficiaries obtained either **internship**, full-time **jobs** or started their own **businesses** as a result of the training.
- Even though it is difficult to find a long-term employment in the construction sector, beneficiaries trained in this sector (344) reported at various meetings that they were able to **find jobs more quickly and frequently** than before.
- Some of them still collaborate with the centres' trainers to work on sites. Some beneficiaries are



even mobilising to create legalised associations in their different sectors in order to win larger tenders.

- Of the 120 beneficiaries who attended a truck driving training, a quarter told IOM that they had **job offers**.
- The beneficiaries who received training in business management, cattle fattening, poultry farming, tailoring, motorcycle riding (577 in total) all received a starting kit and are now working on their own account.



Returnees during a training session © IOM

In addition, 12 institutions have concluded an agreement with IOM to provide training to returning migrants. This support **revitalised many of these centres** that have been “dormant” for some time.

For the follow-up, IOM visited the training centres during the courses to ensure that they are running smoothly. Attendance lists indicate how many beneficiaries attend the training, while post-training examinations assess the skills acquired by the beneficiaries. Certificates are issued to all participants who have passed their exam. Then, when a kit is provided to a beneficiary, follow-up visits are made to check whether their business is profitable and whether additional support is needed.

### ► Recommendations

One of the challenges encountered was **the tendency of beneficiaries to overestimate their ability to use equipment or practise a trade** during interviews. One

hypothesis put forward was that beneficiaries feared not receiving assistance if they admitted their lack of knowledge and skills. This had created a situation in which many migrants received equipment or were offered employment but did not know how to use the equipment or practise the trade, resulting in loss of resources and failure of reintegration assistance. To remedy this situation, the process described above was developed. Thus, when a migrant claims to know how to use equipment or exercise a trade, he or she is brought before certified experts to validate that he or she has the declared skills. If these are considered insufficient, training is provided.

Another important element is the **encouragement of training**. Training improves employability in the long term, but in the short term it represents an economic “loss”, since during the training period the beneficiary cannot work. Returning migrants who have difficulties making ends meet therefore tend to reject this type of option. To address this difficulty, an **allowance** is provided for each beneficiary.

This is slightly higher than the legal minimum wage per month. It allows the beneficiary to follow the training without any economic constraints. Another challenge was women’s participation, who often have dependent children. To release them during the training period, day-care centres were identified, and their cost was covered by IOM.



A returnee working in his business  
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### ► Conditions for replicability

One condition that contributed to successfully implement this initiative was the existence in Mali of vocational training centres approved by the Malian State, in different sectors with high employment rates.



Returns on certification day  
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### Knowledge Management Hub

Factsheet developed under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in December 2019  
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This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets on good and promising practices in reintegration assistance. It aims at disseminating good and promising practices on reintegration assistance to reintegration practitioners worldwide.

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



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