

# Evaluation of the Voluntary Return Assistance in Libya

Prepared by Altai Consulting for IOM Libya – August - 2017



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August 2017

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report was written by Hugo Le Blay Laurentina Cizza and Camile Le Coz, with the support of Héloïse Voisin, Youssouph Baro and Kolawole Oluwaseun for the fieldwork.

We are thankful to the following IOM staff for supporting Altai Consulting in organizing the fieldwork and sharing their analysis on the project: Ashraf Hassan and Nadia Khlifi, in Tunisia; Seydina Kane in Senegal; Sarah Fadayomi in Nigeria, Famara Nije in The Gambia, Paul Gitonga in Kenya, Uptal Barua in Bangladesh and Nouhoum Dahou in Mali.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the migrants in Libya and returnees in Senegal and Nigeria who accepted to share their stories with us.

# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>1.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1.	Context .....	6
1.2.	Objectives .....	7
<b>2.</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1.	Research approach .....	8
2.2.	Fieldwork components .....	8
<b>3.</b>	<b>PROJECT DESIGN &amp; IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1.	Project design .....	11
3.2.	Project implementation .....	13
<b>4.</b>	<b>PROJECT OUTCOMES .....</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1.	Return of stranded migrants .....	20
4.2.	Profiles of beneficiaries .....	22
4.3.	Registration process .....	27
4.4.	Pre-departure .....	29
4.5.	Return .....	29
4.6.	Reintegration process .....	30
<b>5.</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>ANNEX: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS .....</b>	<b>39</b>

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>VHR</b>	Voluntary Humanitarian Return
<b>DCIM</b>	Directorate for Combatting Illegal Migration
<b>DTM</b>	Displacement Tracking Matrix
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>IDI</b>	In-Depth Interviews
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>UMC</b>	Unaccompanied Minors Children
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSMIL</b>	United Nations Support Mission in Libya

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. CONTEXT

### 1.1.1. LIBYA

Libya constitutes an essential crossroad for migrants coming from Sub Saharan Africa, and sometimes Asia, to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. As of August 2017, 96,438 migrants arrived by sea in Italy, and 12,420 were rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard (or other entities).<sup>1</sup> 2017 is 17% less deadly than 2016 so far, with fatalities amounting to 2,244 deaths as of August.<sup>2</sup>

Since the 2011 revolution, Libya has suffered from a steady crisis characterized by the collapse of the rule of law and no stable government. Migrants still consider Libya the easiest gate to Europe, but they have become increasingly vulnerable to ill treatment, arbitrary arrests and detention. The Libyan Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) run 39 detention centers but not all are functional. They hold between 4,000 to 7,000 detainees in total, with numbers varying significantly from one centre to the next.<sup>3</sup>

According to a recent Amnesty International report, abuses against migrants and abductions have been increasing.<sup>4</sup> A new report by Oxfam compiles testimonies from migrants and presents stories of various types of abuses including: racism, religious intolerance, sexual violence, torture, detention, beatings, slave labour, or lack of access to washing and sanitary facilities.<sup>5</sup> This means increasing vulnerabilities for migrants, which urge them to leave Libya in the current context. Yet, many remain stranded in the country with no means of departing to Europe or going back to their countries of origin.

Considering these issues, IOM launched the VHR programme with the overall objective to assist stranded migrants who wish to return home but lack the means to do so. It also provides additional support to the most vulnerable ones. The project targets migrants who are in detention centres under the authority the DCIM, the ones rescued or intercepted by the authorities when trying to cross the Mediterranean as well as migrants who are irregularly residing in urban centres and would like to return to their countries of origin.

### Voluntary Humanitarian Return in Libya

The VHR assistance was implemented by IOM Libya from December to April 2017. The project was funded by the United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Office. All the beneficiaries were stranded migrants willing to return to their home country and they were assisted through the provision of Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) assistance. A sustainable reintegration package was offered to 20% of the returnees supported under the VHR programme.

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<sup>1</sup> International Organization for Migration (2017), Maritime Update Lybian Coast (21 July – 6 August)

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2016) “Detained and Dehumanised”, Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International (2015), ‘Libya is full of cruelty’, *Stories of abduction, sexual violence and abuse from migrants and refugees*. [PDF] Available at: <https://doc.es.amnesty.org/cgi-bin/ai/BRSCGI/MDE1915782015ENGLISH?CMD=VEROBJ&MLKOB=33253431111> [Accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>5</sup> Oxfam (2017), ‘You aren’t human any more’: Migrants expose the harrowing situation in Libya and the impact of European policies

Overall, the VHR offered support to 1,246 migrants who were stranded so that they go home in a voluntary and humane way. All VHR's beneficiaries benefited from logistical assistance, liaison with consular services, exit visas, counselling interview, fit-to-travel medical check-up, clothing, hygiene materials and medical pre-departure assistance as well as transit/reception assistance and facilitation of onward transportation to their final destination. Furthermore, 20% of the most vulnerable received a socio-economic reintegration package. This assistance was in-kind and included diverse options: small business start-ups, education, medical assistance or housing.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES

This final evaluation is the result of the cooperation between IOM Libya and Altai Consulting in 2017. The intended audience includes the United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Office, IOM Libya, other IOM missions and the IOM Office of the Inspector General.

The assessment aims to measure **the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcomes and sustainability** of the VHR in Libya, as well as the tools used for this support (forms and databases).

The following objectives have been established to meet IOM evaluation guidelines:

- 1) Pre-departure: to analyze the relevance and effectiveness of the process:
  - Referral system: Does the referral system reach all potential beneficiaries?
  - Candidate screening: Are the questions relevant and do they allow a selection of the most vulnerable candidates such as trafficked persons and unaccompanied minors? Is the reintegration assistance process in the country of origin well explained?
  - Medical clearance: Are the criteria for medical fitness to travel adequate?
  - Logistics: Is the operational procedure (interview - travel arrangements - departure) timely and efficient? Is the quality of the travel assistance sufficient?
- 2) Post-Departure (Nigeria and Senegal): to analyze the quality and impact of the return as well as the reintegration process in the country of origin:
  - Travel assistance: Was the travel assistance provided post-departure (airport assistance upon arrival and, where applicable, accompanied travel) sufficient and efficient?
  - Communication: Did the migrant understand the information given pre-departure?
  - Reception at IOM office: Is the returning migrant well received by the IOM office?
  - Reintegration plan: Does the IOM staff provide guidance on the chosen reintegration activity of the returning migrant?
  - Disbursement procedures: Are the procedures efficient and adapted to the local financial infrastructure?
  - Outcome / perceived impact: Does the assistance facilitate the reintegration of the returnee? Does it have an impact on his/her living condition and is it sustainable based on the experience of returnees? Has it addressed some of the push factors that may have driven the beneficiary to migrate in the first place?
  - Is there a risk of failed integration? What would be the impact, including on renewed migratory aspirations?
- 3) Project tools (forms, database and Project M&E tools): Whether in the departure and on arrival/later assessment is suitable for the purposes of evaluating the efficacy of the VHR?
- 4) Make recommendations for improving the scope and depth of IOM Libya's M&E responses.
- 5) Make recommendations for future phases of voluntary repatriation programmes in Libya.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

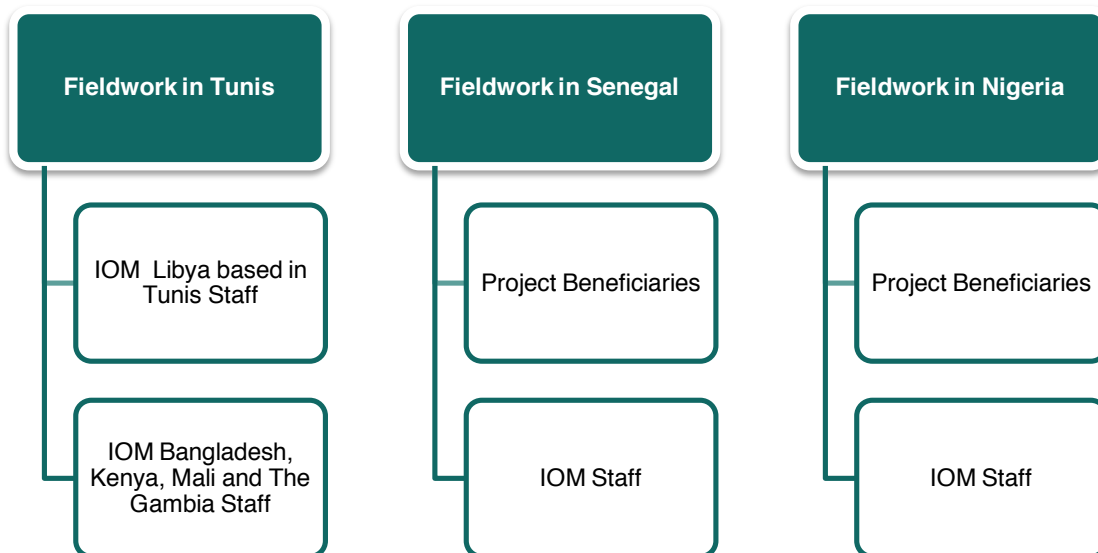
Altai engaged in a multi-country approach (three countries) for this assessment. The research team first interviewed IOM Libya staff in Tunis to assess the pre-departure procedures, as well as the project's design and implementation. This enabled Altai to evaluate the level of collaboration between the stakeholders involved in the return process, along with the changes in the systems since the degradation of the security context in Libya after 2014.

The team also managed fieldwork in two countries of origin and return (Senegal and Nigeria) to meet former migrants that benefited from the VHR. Thanks to these interviews, a clearer picture of migrants' motivations to attempt the journey, their experience in Libya, their perception of IOM's support at pre-departure, in transit and post-arrival stages could be drawn. The ones who were entitled to the reintegration package were also interviewed about their thoughts on the conditions of their return and IOM's support.

Furthermore, Altai conducted interviews with IOM staff in the countries of origin to evaluate the implementation of the reintegration projects, the level of cooperation between the missions, as well as the collaboration with other organizations facilitating the reintegration of migrants.

Finally, this qualitative data was crossed with Personal Data Forms from a larger sample of VHR's beneficiaries (131 returnees). It enabled the team to determine trends in demographics, experiences and motivations of migrants who attempted the journey to Libya / Europe.

Figure 1: Fieldwork components



### 2.2. FIELDWORK COMPONENTS

#### 2.2.1. LIBYAN FIELDWORK

Altai Consulting started its fieldwork analysing the following four themes:



- Project design and implementation;
- Selection of beneficiaries and outreach mechanisms;
- Assistance to beneficiaries at pre-departure stage;
- Coordination between IOM Libya and the other stakeholders involved (IOM missions in countries of origin, diplomatic missions, local partners).

### Desk review

First of all, the research team conducted an exhaustive desk review to conceive the framework of analysis and get knowledge of the project design and its modalities of implementation. It reviewed the project documents, including the proposal, the guidelines for IOM missions in countries of origin and the various forms used for the implementation of the project. Moreover, the project's operations and field reports as well as pre-and post-arrival forms provided data about the nature of IOM's support at various stages of the project.

### KIIs with IOM Libya staff

The research teams interviewed focal points at IOM Libya, to understand better the project design and gather information about the project's outcomes. These Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) concentrated on the pre-departure processes and procedures as well as the level of cooperation between the stakeholders involved in this phase.

## 2.2.2. FIELDWORK IN COUNTRIES OF RETURN

In the second part of the fieldwork, the team interviewed VHR beneficiaries as well as IOM teams in countries of return. In this phase, the team focused on five main themes:

- Assistance to beneficiaries during their travel;
- Support to beneficiaries after their arrival in their home country;
- Project's results and the returnees' views on their reintegration;
- Coordination between IOM Libya and IOM offices in countries of return;
- Coordination between IOM offices and other organizations involved in the reintegration process.

Eleven interviews with returnees were conducted in Senegal and Nigeria. The team completed interviews in Dakar as well in Kaolack, Kolda and Manecounda. In Nigeria, the researcher interviewed returnees in Lagos, the Delta State and the Edo State. Altai also interviewed focal points in IOM missions in Libya, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Bangladesh, Kenya and The Gambia.

### KIIs with beneficiaries

11 returnees in Senegal and Nigeria were interviewed. These KIIs aimed to evaluate the assistance they received from IOM pre-departure, in transit and post-arrival. As these migrants also received grant for reintegration, Altai also collected qualitative information on the reintegration process, its results and the perception of migrants on this package.

### KIIs with IOM missions in countries of return

The team conducted interviews with focal points for the VHR in the IOM mission in the countries of return. This aimed at getting insights on the level cooperation between those offices and IOM Libya, on the processes and procedures in the countries of return and the main outputs and outcomes of the

reintegration program. The latter allowed the research team to collect information regarding the support provided to the most vulnerable beneficiaries after their return to facilitate their reintegration. Altai also assessed the level of cooperation with other stakeholders involved in the reintegration process (such as partnerships with medical facilities or educational institutions and also other non-governmental organizations involved with returnees).

### **2.2.3. LIMITATIONS**

Because of budget and time constraints, the research team could not interview a significant sample of VHR's beneficiaries, nor could discuss with the IOM offices in every country of return. Indeed, only 11 KIs were conducted with returnees, in two countries of return, and six VHR focal points were interviewed. Altai's access to returnees was also hampered by the fact that IOM staff in main countries of return often lose contacts with returnees, especially with the ones who were not entitled to the reintegration grant. The small sample size limits the accuracy of the qualitative data collected, but the latter could be crossed with the information collected in the Personal Data forms. Yet, these forms were filled in detention centres, where conditions are not ideal and some bias due to the presence of guards could occur.

## 3. PROJECT DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION

This first section focuses on assessing the design of the VHR in Libya in terms of its relevance and efficiency to the objectives identified.

### KEY FINDINGS

- The VHR programme was relevant considering the Libyan environment because it offered a solution to hundreds of migrants stranded in detention centres, in desperate need of assistance.
- The VHR was comprehensive since it comprised both return and reintegration components.
- In spite of the Libyan constraining context, coordination with the authorities was good. Yet, IOM's interventions and operations were affected by the conflict over the appointment of a new Director at DCIM.
- Monitoring processes were designed but not always enforced because of security issues, logistical constraints or lack of time.
- Another problem for the implementation of the project was to coordinate work in a large number of countries and offices.

### 3.1. PROJECT DESIGN

#### 3.1.1. RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

##### Relevance of the VHR to the Libyan environment

IOM delivered a detailed analysis of the project's relevance in the Libyan context in its proposal. First of all, it recognizes Libya as a major transit and destination country for migrants from Sub Saharan Africa, as well as for some migrants coming from Asia. Second, it estimates the number of migrants currently held in DCIM centres between 4,500 and 6,000 people, which is the target population for the VHR. Third, it acknowledges the existence of prisons out of the scope of the project, as well as that of migrants unable to reach, living outside the urban centres and having no knowledge of the solutions offered by IOM.

Libya did not sign the Geneva Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Per Article 6 of Law No 19 of 2010 on Combating Irregular Migration, *illegal migrants will be put in jail and condemned to forced labour in jail or a fine of 1,000 Libyan dinars and expelled from the Libyan territory after serving their sentence.*<sup>6</sup> The vast majority of nationalities are not legally entitled to asylum in Libya and the Libyan Law allows for the indefinite detention, followed by the deportation, of those considered to be irregular migrants.

Even if international organization such as IOM and UNHCR have advocated to change the regulations, the Libyan legal framework still does not differentiate irregular migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. All foreigners who are caught without proper documentation are likely to be sent to jail. Thus, IOM has focused on rescuing migrants stranded in detention centres the needs of which were identified as the most pressing.

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<sup>6</sup> ACAPS (2015). *Secondary Data Review: Libya*. [PDF] Available at: [https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/libya\\_sdr.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/libya_sdr.pdf) [Accessed 30 August 2017].

The deteriorating security situation produced a number of militias that run detention centres in military camps and hangars. The Ministry of Interior issued a decree as early as 2011, to prohibit the arrests and interrogations of migrants by “revolutionary brigades”, but the enforcement of this law is weak.<sup>7</sup> IOM only operates in the DCIM-run centres, and the multiplication of these informal jails means that an important number of stranded migrants do not have access to IOM’s assistance.

On the other hand, IOM still managed to assist migrants living irregularly in urban centres. Most of these migrants came to Libya to find a job and often ended up forced into diverse types of exploitation including slavery, prostitution and child labor. Their employers often do not have enough cash to pay their employees, because of the poor economic situation and the lack of liquidity in the country. The precarious working and living conditions that irregular migrants experience leave them with limited, or even nonexistent, access to legal or social protection.

Under the VHR, 20% of the beneficiaries considered the most vulnerable were selected to receive a grant of 1,000 GBP to facilitate their reintegration in their country. Nevertheless, due to the limited fund, IOM had to exclude the remaining 80% of the beneficiaries from the reintegration process although some high vulnerability was reported.

### Relevance of the project in the countries of return

As the VHR focused on the process of return, the receiving missions had to execute the arrival tasks to assist the returnees: welcoming them at the airport and distributing the transportation stipends so the returnees could go home. The most vulnerable also received a reintegration package. IOM missions could still strengthen their efforts in exchanging more comprehensive descriptions of the migrants’ situations, so to offer them the most appropriate assistance possible.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Improve the information exchange about every case and particularly, about the very vulnerable ones.** This will allow the receiving missions to have a clearer picture of the profiles of the migrants and identify their vulnerabilities.

### Adequacy of the intervention with respect to the objectives

According to the VHR’s documents, the project’s main objectives were:

- 1) Overall objective: “To provide alternatives to irregular migration through voluntary repatriation and the provision of reintegration support for 20% of the most vulnerable among returnees”.<sup>8</sup>
- 2) Specific target: Humanitarian repatriation assistance for 850 migrants stranded in Libya under the project. 20% of these beneficiaries, considered the most vulnerable, received a reintegration grant to facilitate their socio-economic reinsertion.<sup>9</sup>

The table below associated these goals with the VHR’s operations, as defined in the project’s proposal. It indicates that the project established a complete set of actions and tools to evaluate the achievement of the project. This framework is very thorough for the return of migrants, and shows that IOM Libya has developed a comprehensive procedure to select beneficiaries based on forms filled by the returnees and arrange their trip back to their home countries.

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<sup>7</sup> Amnesty International (2012). “We are foreigners, we have no rights”. *The plight of refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants in Libya*. [PDF] Available at: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/full%20report\\_168.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/full%20report_168.pdf) [Accessed 30 November 2016].

<sup>8</sup> IOM (2017). Support and Provide Assistance to Authorities and Migrants in Detention Centres and Contribute to Addressing the Migration Flow through Voluntary Repatriation in Libya. Project Proposal

<sup>9</sup> ibid

Table 1: VHR’s activities and objectives

Objectives	Activities <sup>10</sup>
Up to 850 cases assisted by the project through voluntary repatriation, broken down by age, gender, tier; including 170 provided reintegration assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reach out to migrant communities and the ones in detention centres, informing them about the possibility to be assisted to return back to their country of origin</li> <li>▪ Provide individual counselling to potential evacuees through trained local partner organizations</li> <li>▪ Register/profile persons in need of assistance</li> <li>▪ Forward data on the returnees to their embassies in order to issue travel documents</li> <li>▪ Identify special needs for disembarkation (e.g. wheelchairs) or if medical escorts are needed</li> <li>▪ Organize in-country travel (Libya) as well as transportation to the designated port of departure</li> <li>▪ Seek approval for exiting Libya (exit visa), and also entering and transiting through Tunisia, if departure point is Tunisia</li> </ul>
At least 850 migrants interview on the irregular migration and smuggling experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide reintegration assistance, if feasible, to 20% of the proposed caseload</li> <li>▪ Monitor the progress of reintegration projects through follow-up with returnees in order to track and assess the reintegration process</li> </ul>

## 3.2. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

### 3.2.1. ORGANIZATION

#### Organization among IOM offices

Responsibilities were shared across the sending and receiving missions and it called for a strong coordination effort, a common element for VHR projects. IOM Libya organized the returns (pre-departure and in-transit stages), and offices in countries of return managed the reception of the returnees and their reintegration.

#### In Libya

Despite the relocation of IOM office in Tunisia, IOM demonstrated its capacity to reconstruct and readjust to the new context. The Operations Officer’s role was that of the Project Manager for the VHR. He produced the project’s proposal, planned and monitored activities on a daily basis and supervised the monitoring of the financial aspects of the project.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> IOM (2017). Support and Provide Assistance to Authorities and Migrants in Detention Centres and Contribute to Addressing the Migration Flow through Voluntary Repatriation in Libya. Project proposal.

<sup>11</sup> IOM (2017). Support and Provide Assistance to Authorities and Migrants in Detention Centres and Contribute to Addressing the Migration Flow through Voluntary Repatriation in Libya. Project proposal.

22 staff members based in Tripoli constitute IOM Libya staff, comprising five doctors. The team was divided into four operational groups, supporting the main phases of the return process:

1. Team 1: The Documentation Team is composed of three staff members and is responsible for:
  - Visiting the detention centers and identifying beneficiaries
  - Reaching out to migrants and explaining them the return and reintegration process
  - Facilitating the documentation process by putting the migrants in contact with the embassies, and getting pictures of them for their travel documents
2. Team 2: The Charter Team is composed of 11 staff members and is responsible for:
  - Organizing the flights for large caseloads of migrants
  - Taking care of the administrative procedures to get the migrants ready for the flight. These procedures include:
    - A visit from the medical unit for the migrants
    - Filling out the following forms: personal data form, voluntary return declaration form, reintegration form and the photo consent form
3. Team 3: The Commercial Flight Team is composed of three staff members and is responsible for:
  - Dealing with small caseloads, carrying the same tasks as team 2, but for a smaller number of migrants
4. Team 4: The Medical Unit or “Fit-To-Travel” Team is composed of five doctors and is responsible for:
  - Working closely with teams 2 and 3
  - Conducting fit-to-travel interviews and vulnerability assessments of the migrants
  - Performing medical check-ups before departure and stabilize migrants in need of medical treatment

Based in Tunis, three project assistants are in charge of developing the manifest of returnees from Libya to keep track of the migrants supported under the project, following up with reintegration in countries of return and supporting project reporting and visibility. They also shared data with their counterparts in the receiving missions regarding the returnees’ needs upon arrival and their reintegration plans for the ones entitled to the reintegration grant.

### **In countries of return**

The VHR team also included focal points in the receiving missions. They were responsible for welcoming returnees at the airport and giving them the transport stipend. This assistance facilitated returnee’s onward transportation, as often returnees live far away from the capital. The staff in countries of origin were also in charge of making the migrants entitled to the reintegration assistance go through the procedure to get their grants. Finally, they were responsible for coordinating their reintegration.

Yet, as for other VHR projects, IOM receiving missions often work on different projects at the same time, with different donors’ procedures and returnees from different host countries. This constitutes a challenge to manage various initiatives at the same time. In some countries, the mission is still small and does not have the in-house capacity to complete the reintegration process quickly. For instance, in the Gambia, there is no finance department, which is constraining to coordinate the disbursement of the grants. This sometimes made the missions of these offices challenging, all the more as they welcomed migrants who were vulnerable and needed time and counselling.

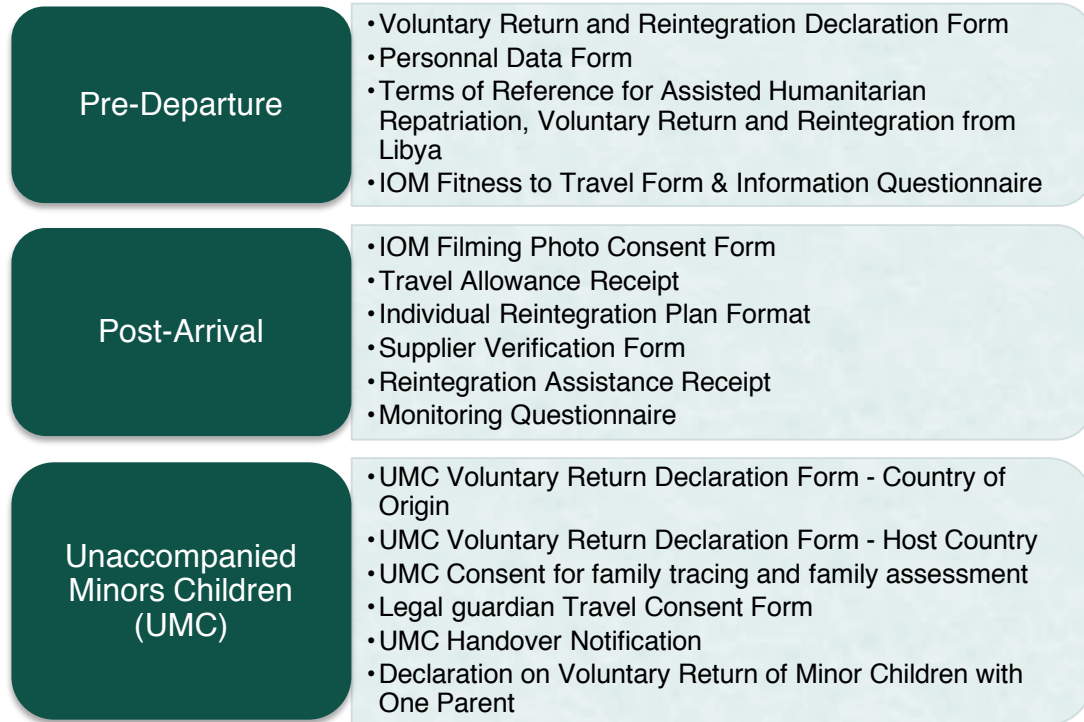
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Enhance the mobility of the Operations Officer.** Such an increased mobility would help to create a stronger tie between the sending and receiving missions. This could be implemented with trips to the countries of return at key stages, for example at arrival of charter flights and three months later, to monitor the reintegration process.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Improve the payment/finance systems in the small missions.** These missions should have more signatories in the office that can approve payments so they do not have to go through the regional office. This could reduce the delays in payments of vendors and thus, increase the success rate of the reintegration process.

## Tools

The following figure presents the forms used by IOM in Libya and the countries of origin under the VHR.

Figure 4: VHR's forms



The purposes of these forms were to gather information about beneficiaries, and more specifically about the most vulnerable ones like the UMCs. It was also to document the expenditures of travel allowances and reintegration grants.

### Pre-departure forms

The forms utilized in the pre-departure phase comprised the Declaration Form for Voluntary Return and the Terms of Reference for the project. These two documents aimed at ensuring that migrants fully understood and agreed with the procedures of their repatriation. The Personal Data Form and the Fitness to Travel Form permitted to gather information on returnees, and especially on their level of vulnerability. The Fitness to Travel Form looked into the physical conditions of the potential returnees, and the Personal Data Form was meant to collect more extensive information.

For instance, the Personal Data Form enabled to collect data on the key demographics and more general information on the motives that pushed the migrants to leave their country of origin, their initial desired destination, if they experienced trafficking, abuse or violence, their education level and language skills, in addition to their previous living conditions before emigrating and upon arriving in Libya. This document allowed IOM to have a clearer picture of the profiles of the migrants attempting

the journey to Libya, but it was not always shared with the teams in the receiving missions, whereas it would have been useful for the reintegration process.

### Post-Departure Forms

The forms used in the post-departure phase were mainly to document and report the expenditure of travel allowances and reintegration grants. The Reintegration Declaration Plan gathered other qualitative aspects of the migrants' reintegration plans. For the requests for medical assistance, the form collected exhaustive information about the nature of the illness or injury and the treatment needed. Regarding the requests for educational or training support, the form recorded the course description, its duration and the title of the expected diploma.

Finally, for the requests to launch a micro-business, the form looked into:

- The business plan and the business idea: including the kind of business chosen, its expected development stages, the partnerships to be built and the business assumptions;
- The marketing strategy: comprising the pricing, the customer base evaluation, the competition analysis and the differentiation strategy;
- The preliminary risk analysis and the strategies to overcome the threats identified;
- The future plans: including the middle and long-term objectives as well as the sustainability plan;
- The financial plan: including a description of the funds and supplies needed and the provision of a starting cost;
- The expected profitability analysis: including the expected monthly sales, monthly expenses, rent, utilities and the expected profits before taxes.

### Forms used for the return of Unaccompanied Minors Children (UMC)

The documents dedicated to the return of the UMC were more wide-ranging in terms of data collection. This is aligned with IOM's VHR procedures for UMCs, to determine whether the best interest of the child is to go back home.

The process required a legal guardian or a parent to sign the Voluntary Return Declaration form in the host country and in the country of origin. A Legal Guardian Travel Consent form was also required to make sure that the legal guardian understood and agreed to all the terms and conditions of the repatriation. It also asserted that the UMC would be handed over to his / her legal guardian in his / her home country, who would sign the UMC Handover notification.

Finally, the UMC Consent for Family Tracing and Family Assessment enabled IOM to collect information on the departure of the UMC including an evaluation of their household or family and their living and socio-economic standards.

These procedures allowed IOM to ensure that the UMC will be returned to a safe environment, but the lengthy process and the various stakeholders involved caused important delays which left the UMC in a very precarious situation while waiting for their return.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Develop the use of electronic devices to collect information and speed up the completion of questionnaires, the exchange of these forms and their analysis.** This could also avoid delays in the sharing of information about migrants between the different stakeholders. Furthermore, an electronic data basis could be conceived to obtain information at any moment and deliver an appropriate response to their needs.



### 3.2.2. IMPLEMENTATION: TIMELINE AND PLANNING

The degrading security and political situation in Libya considerably complicated the implementation of the VHR. Since 2014, the trouble and the establishment of informal armed groups have urged IOM to relocate to Tunisia. IOM maintains a presence in Libya with staff members based in Tripoli, but their ability to travel inside the country has been reversely affected. Their access to prisons is now bounded to northern Libya, and is limited within that perimeter due to safety issues.

Likewise, before 2014 the staff could welcome migrants to conduct the first interviews at the IOM office but today, these meetings seldom happen as they need more prepared coordination with the IOM security teams. Similarly, for stranded migrants, the first interviews are currently conducted in the detention centres. This delicate environment affected IOM's capacity to provide in-depth counselling and discussions with the migrants. This also limited the possibilities of systematically gathering comprehensive data about the beneficiaries.

Finally, the unsafe context in Libya often constrained the team to revise its plans at the last minute. On several occasions, the return of migrants had to be put off because of political events or tensions in Tripoli. These issues impacted IOM's ability to coordinate operations for returnees.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Maintain good relationships with key actors and focal points in the detention centres.** As IOM's operations rely on these close ties, continue to strengthen relations to keep a smooth access to the detention centres.

### 3.2.3. COORDINATION WITH OTHER ACTORS

#### In Libya

##### Libyan authorities

IOM has developed a good working relationship with the Libyan authorities that understand the approach and processes of IOM Libya appropriately. They facilitate the admittance of IOM staff in the detention centres and escorts the IOM convoys transferring migrants from the jails to the airport. The free procedure for acquiring exit visas for VHR's beneficiaries is also a sign of the cooperation between IOM and the Libyan authorities.

Nonetheless, the internal power-struggles and the lack of budget of Libyan institutions impacted the work with IOM. The conflict over the appointment of the new DCIM director resulted in an organization ruled by two distinct leaders with whom IOM had to deal until they reached agreement in July 2017.

Moreover, DCIM is not high on the Ministry of Interior's agenda and so the office has not been funded since May 2015.<sup>12</sup> This has hampered its ability to offer basic services in the detention centres, like food and water supplies, basic health assistance, or hygiene material which consequently deteriorated the conditions of detention of the migrants.

##### Consulates of the countries of return

IOM has also kept excellent ties with the embassies and consulates of the countries of return, and works closely with them. An important number of embassies do not have a presence in Tripoli anymore and they always refer their nationals to IOM, acting as a point of contact. IOM meets with the embassies for operational reasons at least once or twice a week. This is generally to discuss or conduct the migrant identification visits.

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<sup>12</sup> Point mentioned during a Key Informant Interview with IOM Operations Officer

Some facilitate the procedure to fasten the issuance of the laissez-passer. For instance, the Senegalese Embassy automatically issues laissez-passers for the migrants recorded by IOM. They only ask for a Senegalese community leader to be with the IOM staff during the interviews, to avoid losing time with an exhaustive verification process of identities back in Senegal. This has significantly shortened the delays and confirms the good level of cooperation with IOM.

However, some uncollaborative embassies remain. For example, the Bangladeshi embassy has banned IOM charter flights carrying migrants. They explicitly mentioned that the repatriation of migrants by charter flights ruins “Bangladesh’s image”. The Ivoirian, Egyptian and Moroccan missions do not cooperate with IOM either.

### In countries of origin

#### IOM offices in countries of return

IOM Libya provided the project’s guidelines to IOM offices in countries of return at the beginning of the project. All the focal points in receiving missions interviewed confirmed that these were very clear. For the return process, IOM Libya shared the manifest of return that comprised the list of returnees and their basic data. Although delays and late updates for receiving this manifest and arranging the reception of returnees occurred last year, none of receiving missions interviewed complained about it.

Communication between IOM Tripoli and offices in countries of return was regular and efficient, as both sides were described as very responsive by their counterparts. It tended to be related to operational matters and remained. Further communication and regular physical meetings could still be beneficial to future projects improvement.

The misspelling of names and places in the countries of origin or the erroneousness of the contact numbers sometimes caused difficulties. The lack of literacy of the migrants and the problems stemming from their use of languages that are not understood in Libya (local dialects for instance) is likely to be one of the main reasons explaining this. It could also be due to the tough conditions under which the data was collected (in the detention centres).

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Design a formatted electronic form summarizing the backgrounds of the returnees and highlighting any vulnerabilities or possible trauma to be shared with the receiving missions. This would enable IOM receiving missions to welcome and support vulnerable migrants in the best feasible way.

### 3.2.4. MONITORING

#### Monitoring process

As stated in the VHR proposal, IOM staff in the countries of return are in charge of the monitoring for the reintegration projects. The objective is to assess the effectiveness of the assistance provided. The monitoring process includes ad-hoc visits to the returnees’ residences. These visits typically allow IOM staff to evaluate the sustainability of the reintegration assistance. It also helps them to obtain a better understanding of the local economies, as well as to identify the best opportunities for returnees. The monitoring process is thus essential for all voluntary return projects.

Whereas the team in Libya developed these mechanisms, the receiving mission could not systematically enforce them. Indeed, none of the receiving missions interviewed (Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Bangladesh, The Gambia and Kenya) had implemented the complete monitoring process at the time of our evaluation. This is a common issue with AVR projects because the IOM offices are often short of time and budget to complete the monitoring.

The lack of specific monitoring systems in countries of return makes assessing the success of the reintegration difficult. The main monitoring processes that the missions undertake are mandated by donors and they are project specific. For example, in The Gambia, only returnees returning from Switzerland, Italy, and the Netherlands are required to receive home visits from the IOM mission. To improve the monitoring process, IOM could:

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Establish minimal guidelines for monitoring and evaluation to be implemented for all the projects.** These requirements should be enforced across the countries of return.
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Each country mission could design an M&E plan that makes sense for the country and takes into consideration the IOM-wide minimum requirements.** How the M&E should be carried out, either with paid field monitors, hired case workers, volunteers, should be determined in each country.
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Allocate more resources to IOM receiving missions for the monitoring process.** IOM missions do not have the capacity to visit returnees who are often in distant locations from the capital, but they could do it with some budget, or a focal point in these regions.
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Train project staff on the basics 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 project.

## 4. PROJECT OUTCOMES

Voluntary Humanitarian return and reintegration are two complementary activities composing the programme. The VHR offered stranded migrants the opportunity to return home in a humane way and, for approximately 20% of them, to reintegrate thanks to a small grant.

### KEY FINDINGS

- Considering the horrific conditions in the detention centres, IOM concentrated its efforts on detained migrants who constituted the main beneficiaries under this project. This strategy proved itself relevant since IOM's assistance was the only solution for most migrants. The second most efficient outreach mechanism used indirect connections with migrants, through referrals from the embassies of countries of origin.
- The project offered support to 1,246 migrants in returning to their home country. This represented a 46% increase compared to the initial target of the project.
- The return of beneficiaries happened as it was planned, and the IOM receiving missions welcomed the returnees on their arrival and provided them with transportation stipends.
- All the returnees entitled to reintegration who were interviewed decided to invest their grant to settle a small business.
- The receiving missions were able to support most beneficiaries to complete the procedure of reintegration. Yet, the staff did not systematically have the time nor the capacity to deliver in-depth assistance and follow-up on the set up of local businesses.

### 4.1. RETURN OF STRANDED MIGRANTS

#### 4.1.1. OUTREACH TO MIGRANTS IN NEED

Before the crisis in Libya, IOM staff was able to reach migrants in the streets, by placing information posters, leaflets and brochures. Today, the outreach strategy relies mostly on their access to detention centres where they can conduct activities.

#### Institutional outreach

IOM's visits to the detention centres were the main outreach mechanism used for the VHR. IOM went to the DCIM-run detention centres to support migrants with distribution of mattresses, food or hygiene kits. Through these visits, IOM briefed the migrants on the possibility to return home with their assistance. These visits were essential for the VHR because IOM staff could often not receive migrants in their office, for security reasons. Stranded migrants also have no access to information and counselling – especially as the authorities confiscated their cell phones.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Resume placing information posters, leaflets and brochures in strategic points on the usual routes taken by migrants. Contractors with a more appropriate capacity could implement such an outreach strategy so that more migrants get knowledge of IOM's activities. For example, none of the returnees interviewed declared that he/she knew IOM's activities before his/her return process.

## Indirect outreach

IOM's second most efficient outreach mechanism is through referrals by embassies of countries of origin. As most countries have not developed procedures, relations or systems to assist their nationals in detention centres, their embassy in Libya usually directs them towards IOM when they request support. In cases where consulates are not present in Libya, like for Senegal, Ghana, Ethiopia or Kenya, IOM worked with community leaders who volunteer to share information about IOM with migrants, participate in the visits to the detention centres and provide feedback to the consultates in Tunis.

Sometimes migrants directly contacted their relatives or people they knew in Libya, instead of calling their embassies. Reasons for this could be their fear of getting taken to court in their countries of origin because of the irregular nature of their journey to Libya or simply their lack of contact details of their embassy. One of the 11 respondents shared that she heard about IOM through a family member or a friend who knew they were in Libya.

**“I was living with a couple and I spoke to them about my situation. I wanted to leave Libya so they told me I could go with IOM, so we called.”**

**IDI Returnee in Nigeria**

### 4.1.2. SELECTION OF THE PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Thus, IOM could establish first contacts and inform the detained migrants during these visits. After gathering the migrants, IOM staff explained them what kind of assistance IOM could provide them under the VHR and what were the conditions. During these first visits, IOM staff registered the migrants who expressed their willingness to return home. A first list with the number of migrants interested in the project was established and shared with their respective embassy for travel documentation puposes.

After collecting this preliminary information, IOM assessed the vulnerability of the cases and selected which migrants would be entitled to Voluntary Humanitarian return and reintegration and/or further referral accordingly. For the vulnerability assessment, IOM staff relied on the Migrants At-Risk form. Under the VHR, special attention was paid to victims of trafficking, pregnant women, migrants with special needs, physically and mentally ill migrants, mono-parental families, and elderly persons (over 60 years).

## 4.2. PROFILES OF BENEFICIARIES

### Demographics<sup>13</sup>

1,246 migrants received assistance to voluntary return to their home country, and 257 had access to a reintegration grant. This number is 46% above the project's initial target (850 migrants).

Almost three quarters of the project beneficiaries were under-30 men coming from Nigeria, Mali and Niger. Only 330 women were assisted under the project. Nigeria is by far the main country of origin for the returnees, amounting to 38% of them. It is also the only country with a majority of women among the beneficiaries (59%). Nigerians are followed by Malians (24%), only 32 of which were female. Similarly, 13% of the returnees were from Niger, from where none female beneficiaries came from. Finally, Senegalese migrants account for almost 11% of the sample, followed by a small number of migrants coming from Southeast Asia and other African countries




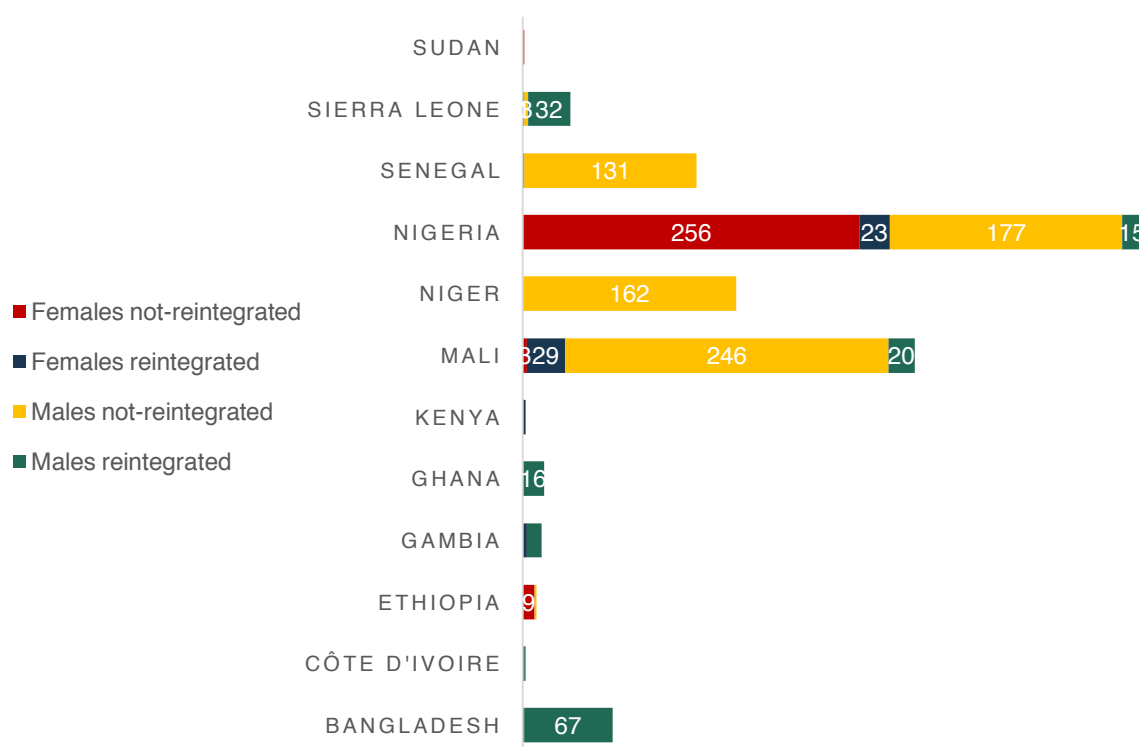
-  74% corresponding to 916 men.
-  26% corresponding to 330 women.
-  20% corresponding to 247 returnees entitled to the reintegration grant
- Total: 1,246 beneficiaries.

Figure 6: VHR's beneficiaries' gender per nationality and reintegration status



The average age of the beneficiaries of the project was 25, according to the personal data forms with 131 detained migrants (collected by IOM in Libya). The majority of the beneficiaries (51% of them) were between 18 and 27. The in-depth interviews conducted with 11 returnees in Senegal and Nigeria

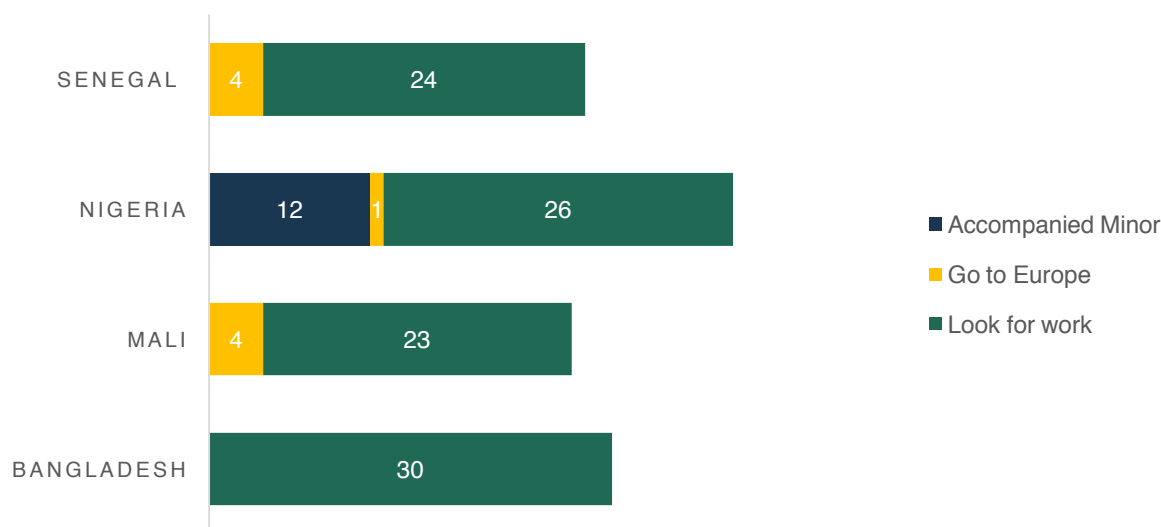
<sup>13</sup> The figures below are based on the personal data forms completed by 131 migrants in Libya, before their return. The qualitative data comes from Key Informant Interviews managed with 11 returnees in Senegal and Nigeria.

indicate that many of them had a very low education level or were illiterate. Migrants usually came from the poorest and most rural areas, the regions of Tambacounda, Kolda and Sedhiou in Senegal for instance.

These demographical trends are consistent with previous studies on irregular migrants in Libya, with a high number of young men, coming from developing West African countries, with a low level of education.<sup>14</sup>

### Motivations to travel to Libya

Figure 7: Reasons for departure per nationality



### Push factors

Economic conditions were clearly the main reason of departure for these returnees. They wanted to find a better source of income and settle in a new country where they could support their family. Sometimes, they needed the money to pay off a debt. A returnee in Nigeria explained for example that she could not meet the needs of her two children and therefore, she decided to go to Libya. The lack of education and qualification was also one of the main reasons explaining the difficulties of the returnees.

Some beneficiaries shared that they decided to migrate irregularly because many of their neighbours or relatives had left before and succeeded in Europe. A returnee from Senegal reported that many of his friends managed to reach Europe via Libya. These success stories motivated many of the migrants to undertake the same path, as confirmed by other Senegalese migrants interviewed in Boussoura, Dakar, Kolda and Tambecounda.

### Pull factors

A misperception of the situation in Libya explains why many of these migrants attempted the journey without preparing their trip. Only 2 out of the 11 interviewed returnees said that they had knowledge of the issues that could occur during their travel. They expected the way from Agadez (Niger) to Tripoli

<sup>14</sup> Altai Consulting (2017), Mixed Migration Trends in Libya: Changing Dynamics and Protection Challenges

(Libya) to be a matter of a few days. In reality, as several reported, “smugglers that did not hold their promises”.

Many of the interviewed returnees described Libya as the easy gate to Europe, a place where routes to greener pastures were well-known. While Libya remains the preferred transit point toward Europe, these migrants may have underestimated the difficulties they were likely to face along the way.

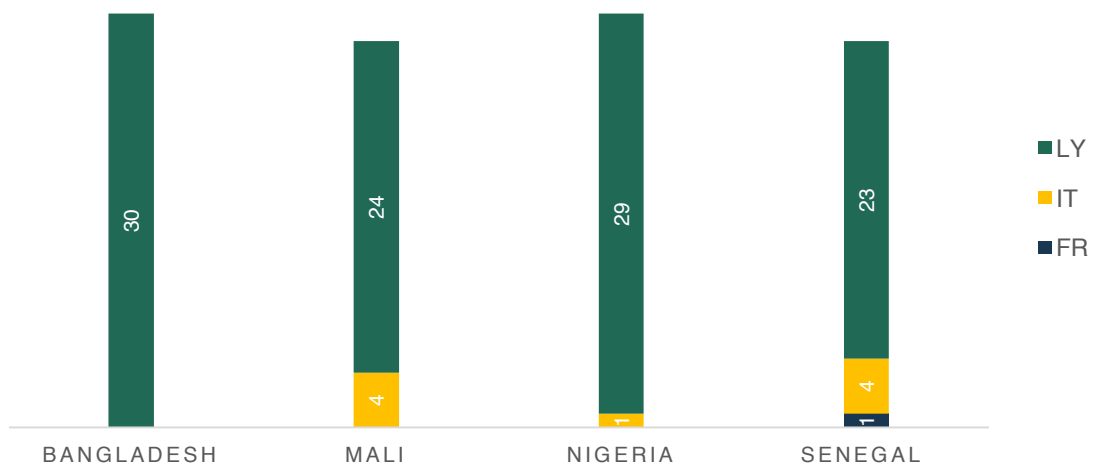
As shown by the data presented below, a clear majority of migrants travelled to Libya to find better economic opportunities and a job. The returnees interviewed perceived it as a country where they could have thrived. Specifically, all of the Nigerian migrants stated that they could have used their professional skills (hairdresser, shop-owner) more easily in Libya.

### Accompanied minors

10% of the studied migrants were accompanied minors and 7 out of them were born in Libya during the trip of their parent(s). They had to follow their relatives in this journey and ended up in jail for a majority of them. For example, a Nigerian mother of three kids had even more severe difficulties in Libya, being unable to support her family without a decent job. Of note, all the children on the move were from Nigerian families.

As a result, surprisingly but consistently with previous research, Libya is by far the main intended destination. This survey conducted as reported in the survey conducted with a sample of 131 migrants. It is however possible that some mentioned Libya as their desired destination whereas they actually meant to travel to Europe.

Figure 8: Intended country of destination per nationality



**“I learnt hairdressing job back in Nigeria and I was hoping I could make more money in Libya.”**

**IDI Returnee in Nigeria**

**“I wanted to leave Senegal to go to Europe. Yet, I could have stayed in Libya or anywhere I could have found a job”**

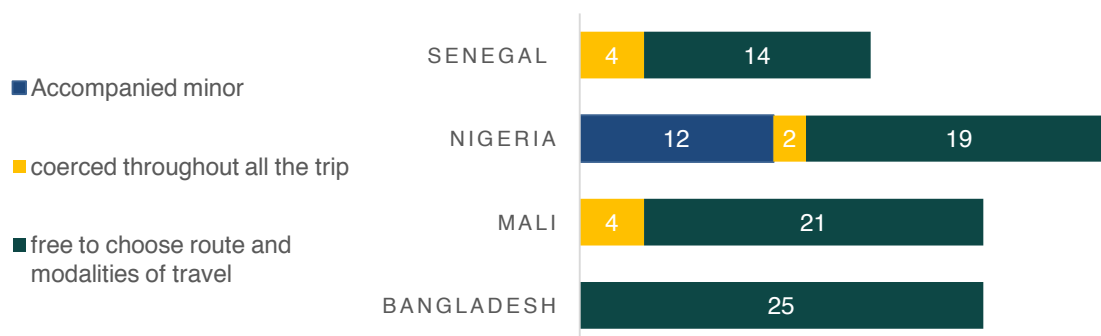
**IDI Returnee in Senegal**



## Freedom of travel during the journey

More than three quarters of the migrants interviewed felt free during their journey and did not feel constraints or pressures exerted on them. Less than 10% stated that they were coerced and could not choose their route according to their personal wish. Yet, as reported in the KIIs, this freedom disappeared once they were arrested and held in jail by the Libyan authorities. A Senegalese returnee could leave the prison only after paying his guards, but he then became stranded because he did not have money to resume his way to Europe.

Figure 9: Freedom of travel during trip per nationality



## Motivations to return

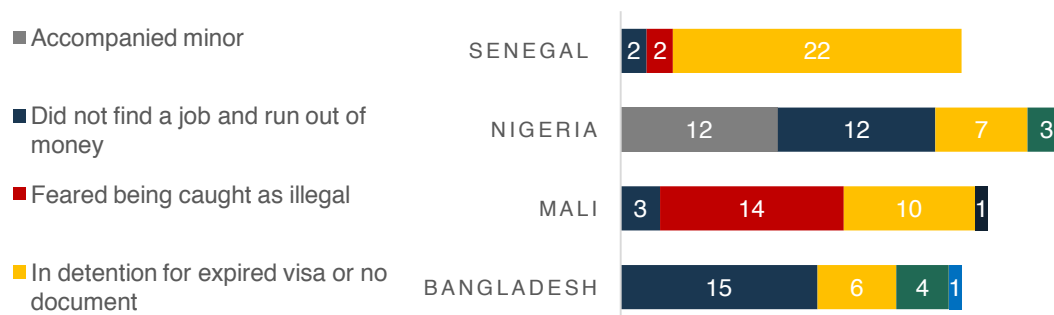
39% of the migrants interviewed in Libya preferred to come back to their home country because they were staying in prison for lack of documentation or a valid visa. This high figure may be explained by the methodology of the project itself, which focused on the most vulnerable migrants, such as those in Libyan detention centres, for its outreach activities.

28% of the beneficiaries became stranded because they ran out of money and could not find a decent job to earn money and continue their trip. 7% lost their job or had an expired work permit. Several migrants shared stories of torture, rape, harassment and beating, which urged them to flee the country by all means. Finally, migrants who had been injured wished to return home to get medical assistance.

**“My trip did not go according to plan. I had to engage in prostitution so I could pay for my trip to Europe. When that did not work, I started hawking food. Making a living was almost impossible.”**

**IDI returnee in Nigeria**

Figure 10: VHR beneficiaries’ reasons for returning per nationality



## Release from detention

Before being rescued by IOM, most returnees had been in detention centres for up to a year, and being released was the main reason why they accepted to return to their home country. Most of the incarcerated returnees declared that they were never told how long their stay in prison would last. They believed they would still be in detention centres without the assistance of IOM and the consulates. They were all thankful for the relief IOM's assistance proved to be, which was their only hope.

Returnees shared that they were incarcerated at different moments of their journey: some were arrested by the Libyan authorities while trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea, others were brought to the police by their smugglers because they could not pay an additional trip after several unsuccessful attempts, whereas others were captured after being caught without proper documentation.

**“After two unsuccessful crossing attempts, we ended up on the rocks, then the smugglers drove us to Sebreta where we were supposed to take another pirogue. Unfortunately, as we refused to pay for the second time, they brought us to Tripoli where we were incarcerated for a month and 13 days.”**

**IDI Returnee Senegal**

## Precarious conditions in the detention centres

In addition to the unknown length of their stay in the detention centres, all the detained migrants who were interviewed declared that they were subject to different forms of abuse and extremely precarious living conditions. Among others, they reported racism, moral and physical harassment from the guards. They stated that the latter diverted food that they received from aid organizations to sell them to prisoners and prevented them from accessing drinking water or sanitations.

Packed in small rooms, the conditions of detention were awful. Many of the migrants had to receive medical assistance from NGOs as the spread of diseases and infections was made easy by the poor hygiene conditions. Cases of torture and violence were also reported, as well as racketing by the guards who kept stealing the belongings of prisoners'.

**“The hardest conditions I experienced were in prison. Sometimes, IOM used to send food to the detained migrants but the guards stole it to sell it to us.”**

**IDI returnee in Senegal**

**“I was in prison most of my time spent in Libya. They used to beat us, won't give us food and maltreat us. I also heard cases of rape and abuse.”**

**IDI returnee in Nigeria**

Previous studies also showed that abuses specific to women were frequent. For example, Human Rights Watch collected testimonials of female migrants who were mistreated with invasive body searches or strip-searching by the guards. Furthermore, Oxfam recent report presents statements from migrants who had just arrived on the shore of Italy with stories of systematic abuses.

## Family

Family was often mentioned by the returnees, as many of them attempted to reach Libya and Europe alone, sometimes without warning their friends and family, and could not contact them.

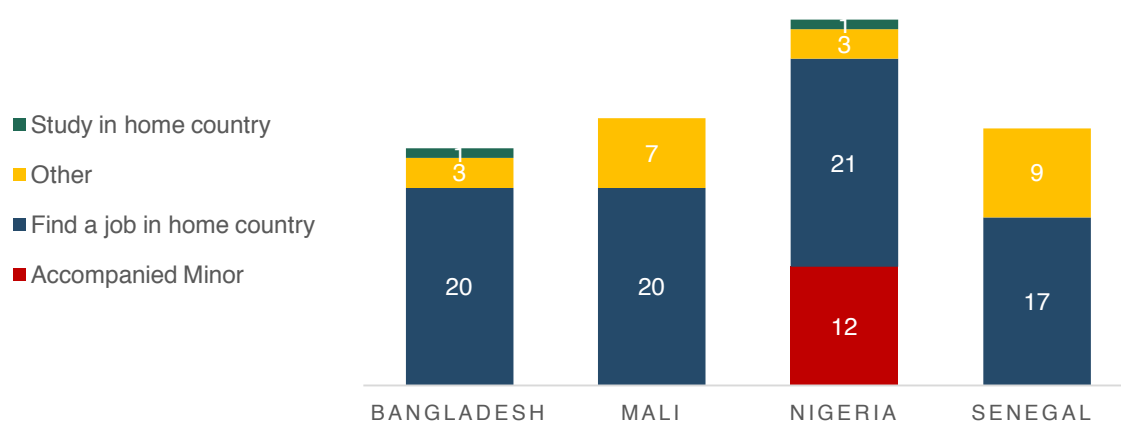
**“I missed my children and I felt it was better to stay home and suffer than to be in another man's land and still be suffering.”**

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Develop an approach to contact families before departure and describe them the situation, with the consent of the returnee.** This could bring more family members to come at the airport to welcome the migrants (when this is easy and affordable for them). It would also help the IOM missions to gather phone numbers and addresses of the relatives of the returnees, which will be useful points of contacts for the monitoring.

### Plans after the return

The expectations of migrants prior to their return were to find a job and to be able to live in decent standards (60% of them). The beneficiaries interviewed wanted to use their skills in order to succeed in their home countries. For instance, after failing to become a hairdresser in Libya, a Nigerian returnee shared her motivation to start her business thanks to the IOM’s assistance. Some expressed their wish to resume studying so they obtain a proper professional education and get a satisfying job.

Figure 8: Plans after returning to home country per nationality



### Concerns about the returns

Many of the returnees interviewed expressed their concerns about going home. They were happy to come back, after being rescued from a dreadful situation, but they were worried about their families and what they would tell them. For instance, a Senegalese returnee expressed her concern about her family as her relatives got into debt to pay her trip. Many described their shame to come back home without any resources and empty-handed. Moreover, some explained that they did not let their parents know about their trip, and so they were even more worried about getting back home.

## 4.3. REGISTRATION PROCESS

Once the migrants interested were identified by the Documentation Team, the application process to join the project took place as planned: the beneficiaries completed and signed the Personal Data form, Voluntary Departure and the Reintegration forms in case they fit the criteria, and they had a medical check before leaving. That said, these time-consuming administrative requirements are not allowing the field teams to conduct in-depth interviews and provide more counselling – in addition to the challenging environment in which these interviews took place.

## Initial interviews

### Information shared during the initial interview

The Documentation Team was in charge of the first contacts with the detained migrants. Its members explained to migrants what IOM could provide them thanks to the project and what their different options were. Almost every returnee interviewed (eight out of eleven) declared that he/she was well informed about the return procedures. They were all notified by their embassies a few days before their departure in order to be ready for it.

The travel documentation was prepared by the consulates in coordination with the IOM and no issue regarding this was reported. Migrants also all got instructions about the transportation stipend that they used to go back home and answer to their immediate needs.

Nevertheless, none of the returnees selected for the reintegration package understood the vulnerability criteria. Some thought it was due to their unsuccessful attempts to migrate or their willingness to work in their home country. Most of them heard of this assistance at the airport in Tripoli, and did not really understand the process at that time. Only three of the respondents understood that they received extra money because they were parents, what produced additional financial needs. According to IOM, information regarding reintegration was deferred in order not to influence migrants return decisions by ensuring that its self-imposed and reintegration is not a pull factor.

**“I was helped to reintegrate because I unsuccessfully tried to travel.”**

**IDI Returnee in Senegal**

**“They told me they would help me to get back on my foot by providing some money for a trade I would be interested in.”**

**IDI Returnee in Nigeria**

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Personal counselling interviews should be organized upon return, to advise and guide returnees.** Funding for dedicated staff could provide returnees with concrete solutions to be used once they arrive home.

## Medical visits

Under the project, all the returnees were supposed to go through a medical examination. This is to make sure that they are fit to fly back to their home country and to avoid spreading diseases there. Yet, two out of the eleven migrants interviewed did not go through this medical check-up. Besides, five did not receive a medical clearance before traveling.

This is probably due to the challenges to operate in the detention centres. These check-ups were carried out by the medical unit that is also called “fit to travel unit”, generally just after the migrants gave their consent to participate in the project. Notably, one of the Nigerian returnee interviewed received special assistance because she gave birth in her prison.

The examinations seemed to be basic, as the only regular check was a blood pressure test. A few returnees (two out of eleven) were taken a blood sample. This can be explained by the difficult working environment in the detention facilities, where the doctors cannot conduct full medical check-ups. Many returnees lamented the lack of medical examination once back in their country, in case they had got an illness since the check-up, which was generally a month before their departure.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: IOM could continue to get funding to support regular medical visits and health support in the detention centres.** These medical services could be generalized

to all the migrants in the detention centre – and not be limited to the ones involved in AVR projects.

#### 4.4. PRE-DEPARTURE

The beneficiaries interviewed considered the pre-departure period to be the toughest. They felt frustrated because they were not updated on the documentation process that IOM was coordinating with the consulates. During this time, they were still subject to various abuses, remained vulnerable and were expecting their return to happen as soon as possible.

##### Wait and doubts

The length of the pre-departure phase ranged from a week to a month and a half, but two returnees shared they waited up to three and four months to return. This timeframe depended on the nationality of the migrants, the responsiveness of the consulates, and whether IOM organised a charter or a commercial flight. In the case of charter flights, IOM needed to gather enough returnees to organise the return, and so the wait of migrants could be longer.

**“My recommendations to IOM would be to supervise the distribution of goods and food and also to accelerate the process so that the waiting time would be shorter”**

**IDI returnee in Senegal**

**“The main challenge I faced was to stay in the detention centre. The food was bad; the general living conditions were terrible. I kept telling myself it would only last for a while.”**

**IDI Returnee Nigeria**

**“I was able to bear the tough waiting time and the mistreatment in jail thanks to IOM and MSF that also gave a bit of moral support”**

**IDI Returnee in Senegal**

#### 4.5. RETURN

##### Journey back to the country of origin

No issues during the travel occurred for the returnees interviewed. IOM or the Libyan authorities drove the migrants to the airport, sometimes with IOM providing a bus and the Libyan authorities escorting the transfer to guarantee the security of the convoy. The few migrants who were not detained reported that they were assisted with some cash to pay the transportation to the airport, but they always met with IOM staff at the airport before departure. All migrants but one were given food, clothes and hygiene kits, as well as shoes for those we needed some.

**“IOM helped me prepare for my departure by giving me a coat because it was winter. I was also given about 30 dinars for transportation to the airport.”**

**IDI Returnee Nigeria**

##### Arrival

For most of the returnees interviewed (9 out of 11), IOM staff was present at the airport to welcome them and provide the assistance planned. IOM gave them 50 GBP as a transportation stipend and collected their contact number. The ones who were selected for the reintegration program were also informed on the necessity to call or to visit the IOM office as soon as possible.

Returnees used this cash to pay transportation to their home, sometimes several hours away from the capital city. This stipend represented a useful support that also enabled them to meet their immediate needs and buy essential goods that were confiscated in Libya. Migrants with special requirements due to kids, pregnancy or illnesses are also given additional cash to meet them.

In some countries, the authorities were at the airport with IOM to welcome migrants. For instance, in Senegal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Police representatives welcomed the returnees and provided them with additional financial and moral support. In Mali, the government actually hosts returnees in a centre and provides them food and emergency medical assistance. In other countries like Kenya, the government is not involved.

According to the interviews conducted with various IOM missions, some best practices emerged: IOM Kenya is used to welcoming the returnees with a member of the family. As for IOM Bangladesh, the team deals with the customs and the luggage services in case of any issues to sort the returnees out. All IOM receiving missions coordinate with the Ministries of Health to take care of the migrants who are sick upon arrival.

## 4.6. REINTEGRATION PROCESS

The reintegration assistance amounted to 1,000 GBP per person. The returnees selected had to get in touch with the IOM mission at home, either by going to IOM office in their country or by calling the AVRR focal point, to let them know about their business ideas and be briefed on the next steps. They had to get formal invoices from suppliers and business licenses from the cities, counties or states institutions managing the authorizations. IOM's role was then to verify these documents, send them for approval to IOM Libya and once approved, gather the invoices and pay the providers.

### 4.6.1. PREPARATION FOR THE REINTEGRATION UPON RETURN

A broad range of options were offered to the returnees, from starting a business, vocational training, medical assistance and house rental. The purpose of the reintegration program was to facilitate the rehabilitation and reinsertion into their home environment, keeping in mind that they were in a situation of vulnerability.

Figure 8: Description of the type of assistance provided under the VHR

Start up for business activity	Accommodation	Education and Vocational Training	Medical aid	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rent of premises, business license, purchase of equipment/goods, transportation means, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing rent, purchase of material for restructuring/restoring, shelter fees, temporary guesthouse, nursery home, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School fee/taxes, procurement of educational material, books, uniforms, personal computer, transport, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase of medicines/drugs, specialized medical treatment and follow-up, hospitalization, physiotherapy, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First aid goods, food, heating, etc.</li> </ul>

### 4.6.2. REINTEGRATION PROCESS IN THE COUNTRIES OF RETURN

According to the Personal Data Forms filled in by the 1,246 returnees, 21 % of the migrants supported were entitled to the reintegration assistance. They were chosen based on criteria of vulnerability.

### First contact with the IOM office in the countries of return

After the beneficiaries arrived in their country, the duration before the returnee contacted IOM office, either by visiting or calling it, ranged from one day to two months, depending on the motivation and situation of the returnee (e.g. distance between his/her home and the IOM office).

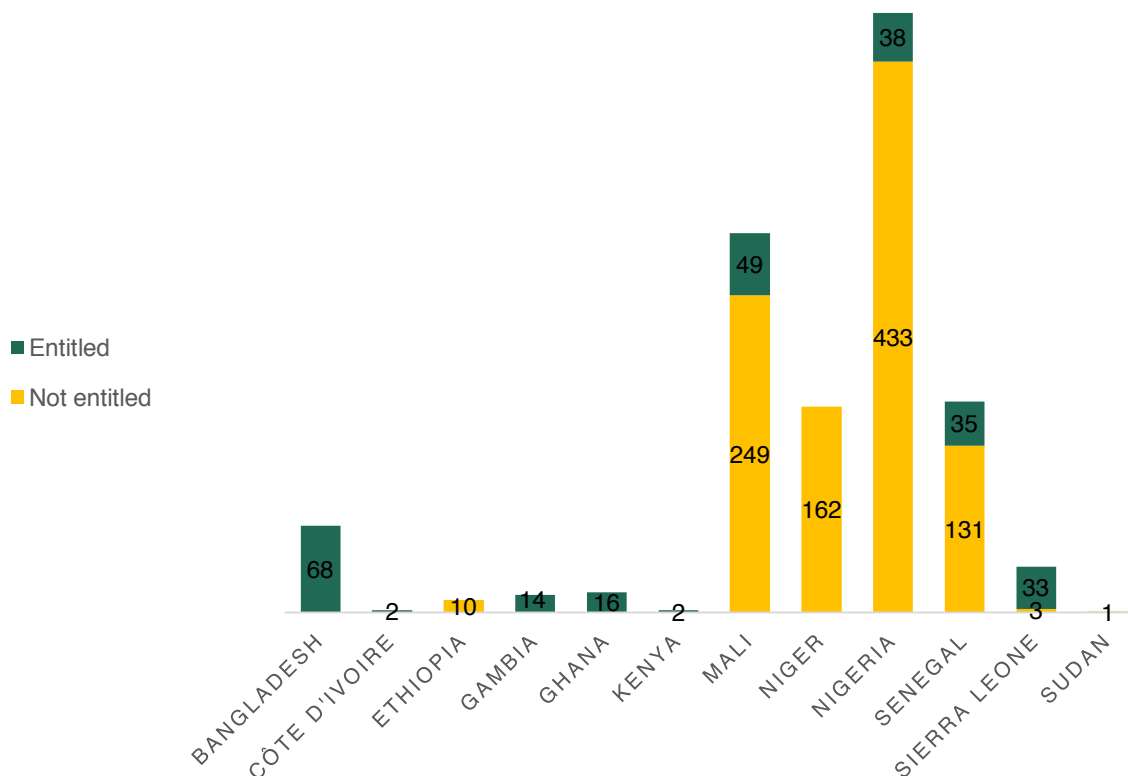
### Distance to IOM office

As most reintegrated migrants came from rural areas, the distance to the IOM offices constituted a real challenge. Because most returnees came from rural areas, distance to the IOM office often constituted an important obstacle to the reintegration process. The distances reported by the returnees ranged from an hour-driving distance to a seven-hour driving distance, with transportation costs from 0,3 USD to 35 USD. This issue was critical because, sometimes, migrants had to undertake several trips to the office before completing the procedure.

In Nigeria, only one of the returnees went to IOM Office, as she was also the closest, but they were all given the opportunity to send the invoices and receipts by e-mail or mobile to maintain the reintegration process. However, the education level and lack of literacy of an important number of returnees severely constrained this practice.

### Challenges for starting the reintegration process

Figure 9: Proportion of VHR's beneficiaries of the reintegration assistance per country



Under this project, 257 returnees were considered particularly vulnerable and entitled to the reintegration assistance. This part amount to almost 21% of the caseload, which remains superior to the initial target of 20% planned in the VHR proposal.

In some cases, IOM staff was not able to get in touch with the entitled returnees and the latter did not reach out to them either. Since contacts were lost, the exact reasons for this remain unclear, but according to the IOM missions' focal points interviewed, it is likely to be linked to several factors:

- Logistical constraints: the migrant lost IOM's phone number and address; the number he/she gave to IOM is not working or out of coverage area. Sometimes, when the migrant does not have any contact number, he refuses to give his family's phone number as he/she does not want them to know that he failed to join Libya/Europe.
- 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.
- 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.
- Family pressure: the migrant does not get sufficient financial support from his family to settle as he/she failed to reach Europe/Libya; the family convinces him/her not to meet the reintegration package's requirements that are considered constraining.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Deploy further efforts to ensure beneficiaries before their departure and at their arrival that IOM is going to assist them. This can be done via a clear introduction speech and some success stories of former returnees that reintegrated successfully thanks to IOM's support.

## Reintegration process

The receiving missions had to prepare the reintegration procedures in collaboration with the returnees and IOM Libya had to approve the plan. The returnees, with the directions and support from IOM, were to design their business plan and then to provide formatted invoices and receipts from their suppliers and local authorities (managing business licenses) to the receiving missions. The ones who opted for educational training or medical support had to provide the same documents from schools and doctors, which were most of the time recommended by and in relation with the IOM missions. IOM Libya then had to approve the plan before the IOM receiving missions could pay the vendors for the equipment, the authorizations, education or the medical assistance.

## Choice of reintegration form

The returnees interviewed shared they would have needed further counselling for their reintegration plan. The assistance targeted very vulnerable people, and interviews with the IOM missions confirmed that the beneficiaries were not autonomous and would have required sustained assistance, over a longer period of time.

## Submission of valid preformat and invoices

To complete the Individual Reintegration Plan, the main issue that returnees had to deal with was the difficulty to acquire valid and formatted invoices from suppliers. Because the economy is mainly informal in regions of return, the providers were often not keen to provide such documents. Frequently, the vendors were suspicious that the migrants would use these documents against them or they did not have the capacity to prepare them. Several interviews with returnees and focal points in the IOM missions raised complaints about the difficulties to comply with the donors' requirements. However, the



IOM missions seemed to be responsive when the migrants asked for assistance and they were willing to talk with the suppliers to convince them of the necessity to deliver these documents.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Authorize IOM offices to process the payments to suppliers to reduce delays and facilitate the reintegration of returnees.** Refunds could be done later, after an approval by IOM Libya for each reintegration plan. This would speed up the process of reintegration and lighten the burden on IOM Libya.

### Approval by IOM Libya

None of the interviews suggested that the approval of the integration plans by IOM Libya raised difficulties. Every focal point in the receiving missions declared that IOM Libya was prompt to answer and that a few days were sufficient for them to approve the plans. They rarely modified the content of the plans and the different VHR focal points focused on the completion of the administrative requirements for the applications.

The Gambia's case is noteworthy as they have to go through IOM's Regional Office in Dakar to submit the reintegrations plans to IOM Libya and then obtain the payments.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: The Gambia mission should have more signatories in the office that can approve WBS payments so they do not have to go through the Regional Office.** This would be very useful as the flow of migrants coming from the Gambia is significant.

### 4.6.3. FORMS OF REINTEGRATION

All the returnees interviewed opted for starting a small business because their priority was to quickly earn an income to support their family.

#### Setting up a micro-business

All the returnees interviewed (11 respondents) decided to set up a small business thanks to the reintegration package. Most of them chose to go back to their previous activities because it was more relevant, considering their skills and experience.

The amount of 1,000 GBP for the reintegration package was higher than under other typical AVRR projects. Six returnees interviewed (out of 11) confirmed that the amount was sufficient to effectively start their micro-business. They shared that the grant enabled them to become self sufficient.

The other five returnees reported they relied on their family's support or had to borrow money to settle. For instance, a returnee interviewed in Nigeria used the grant to start his business – to sell food – but he still has not managed to make it work. In most cases, the amount of the grant is one parameters among others to explain the success of a micro-business.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: IOM staff in countries of return could spend more time to guide the returnees throughout the reintegration process.** This is key to ensure the understanding of the procedures and the different options. It is of course challenging in missions where AVRR staff manage several projects and while there is limited funding for this specific activity.
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Bringing on board partners that have a background in small business enterprises.** This could provide training and counseling to the returnees to ensure success of the migrant business.
- ⇒ **Recommendation: Organizing workshops or training sessions on business management and development, which would be useful to every returnee settling its micro-business.** This can be coordinated with the partners mentioned above, as they might have a better access to remote areas.

**“I would have liked IOM to help me do the business plan. I have not really seen any achievements so far. The money I make is not enough to cater for my needs”**

**IDI Returnee in Nigeria**

### **Training and education**

No VHR’s beneficiaries interviewed chose to invest their grant in training or education for themselves. This can be partially explained by the fact that they had to generate incomes in order to support their families. As stated by a few returnees, coming back empty-handed after having failed to sustain an income in Libya or reach Europe and sometimes after having put their families into debt was already a real problem for their poor households.

Three parents were also offered one term of school for each of their children, what they were very thankful for, but were wondering if they would be able to pay for the fee afterwards. That said, IOM hopes that their business to grow enough and cover the next school terms.

### **Medical assistance**

None of the VHR’s beneficiaries chose to invest in medical assistance and only one of them raised health-related issues. This could be due to their lack of understanding of the reintegration options. Considering the precarious living conditions in the detention centres and the abuses most migrants suffer, including physical and psychological assaults, health problems are likely to occur, as it was the case for a Senegalese returnee who had to rely on his brother to obtain a treatment. Furthermore, the lack of budget for monitoring does not enable the receiving missions to keep track of the migrants potentially ill.

Yet, all IOM missions stated that they coordinated with the local Ministries of Health in case they were notified by IOM Libya that an urgent case was to care of. This was confirmed by one Nigerian returnee who actually saw the Ministries of Health at the airport at her arrival.

- ⇒ **Recommendation: Conduct a second medical check-up at the airport or in a transit on arrival to ensure the fitness of migrants to come back home.** The first check-up would be to decide whether the migrant is fit to travel or not, and the second one would be to assess whether he/she needs medical assistance.

### **Accommodation**

As for medical and educational assistance, none of the VHR’s beneficiaries decided to invest their grant in accommodation. This could be due to the lack of knowledge about the reintegration options, but also to financial pressure they had, to meet their needs. Data is not comprehensive enough, but it seems that most returnees went back to their family’s place. Seven out of the 11 refugees openly said that they were welcomed by their families once back. Others talked about their families’ anger, disappointment or happiness as well when realizing that they were back.

**“They thought I was dead. So, they were scared until they saw my baby.  
My mother fainted when she saw me.”**

**IDI Returnee Senegal**

### **Social pressure**

A few cases of difficult social reintegration were reported by the returnees. One Nigerian returnee still reported she felt poorly reintegrated in her community. Two other returnees stated that they had to face

their family's anger and that they could not support them to meet their needs. Family pressure also rose when migrants could not make a sufficient revenue to cover their basic expenditures – as is still the case for 6 of the 11 interviewees. It is true that the project does not include a social or community reintegration component, whereas this could help the returnees to find a job, to deal with vendors or to find a decent accommodation more easily.

### Need of emergency cash

In some cases, returnees came back home without no resources and they needed cash to address their immediate needs. For example, a returnee from Nigeria could not rely on her parents and she could still not meet the needs of her two children four months after her return.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Create a fund to support emergency needs upon return. This money would be allocated to the most urgent cases, for instance to migrants who need urgent medical treatment. This would allow them to cover their costs while waiting for the disbursement of the reintegration grant.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Despite the constraining and perilous environment in Libya, IOM remains one of the very few organizations implementing activities in the country and helping migrants. It faced the challenge of relocating its office to Tunisia but kept assisting the stranded migrants in Libya. Because of the political instability and the emergency needs of thousands of migrants, IOM Libya started concentrating its efforts on its answer to the urgent humanitarian needs of migrants instead of supporting reintegration and development. However, all the returnees interviewed were thankful for their rescue and insisted that IOM saved their lives.

VHR beneficiaries still faced many challenges upon return. In addition to traumatizing experiences in Libya, the Libyan detention centres, in the desert or at sea, migrants considered their return as a failure, and so did their communities. Returnees often expressed the feeling of going back to the same challenges, usually the absence of economic opportunities and the pressure to provide for their relatives. These problems were worsened by the money lost on the journey, often sourced from family or community savings. Sometimes, migrants also contracted a debt during their trip in order to pay the smugglers. In many other cases, their families had to borrow money to pay a ransom to traffickers in Libya.

These psychological and economic vulnerabilities make a strong case for reintegration support, that is additional aid for the returnees once they arrive home so that their return is not perceived as an additional burden on their family and community. Thus, in future projects, additional financial and psychosocial assistance to returnees is highly recommended.

In order to guarantee a more sustainable reintegration, IOM could look into ways to mentor the returnees. Partnerships with training and capacity building organizations could be enhanced. These could involve organizations that have specific knowledge of the local economies, like microfinance institutions or private sector partners. Furthermore, as many migrants come from the same regions (for example, Casamance in Senegal or Edo State in Nigeria), community-based reintegration initiatives involving both the returnees and the local communities would ease their social reintegration and create wider development opportunities.

Finally, a significant number of migrants in Libya are extremely vulnerable, with some having been heavily injured or victims of trafficking and abuses. Since this is the case for the majority of returnees, an increase in the number of migrants entitled to the reintegration assistance would allow to reflect better today's reality. IOM could also reshape the support it provides to answer to the specific needs of these particular cases. Emergency cash, additional medical check-ups and formatted electronic forms would help to assess more comprehensively the situation of migrants, disseminate this information effectively and adapt IOM's response accordingly.

## 6. ANNEX: SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1. PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### 6.1.1. RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

- ⇒ **Recommendation 1:** Improve the exchange of information about cases and, particularly, deepen this exchange about very vulnerable ones.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 2:** Develop IOM procedures to deal with specific cases like illnesses, injuries, minors, pregnant women and elders.

#### 6.1.2. ORGANIZATION

##### Organization among IOM offices

- ⇒ **Recommendation 3:** Enhance the mobility of the Operations Officer.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 4:** Improve the payment/finance systems in the small missions. These missions should have more signatories in the office that can approve payments so they do not have to go through the regional office.

##### Tools

- ⇒ **Recommendation 5:** Develop the use of electronic devices to collect information and speed up the completion of questionnaires, the exchange of these forms and their analysis.

#### 6.1.3. COORDINATION WITH OTHER ACTORS

- ⇒ **Recommendation 6:** Organize context briefings about Libya.

#### 6.1.4. MONITORING

##### Monitoring processes

- ⇒ **Recommendation 7:** Establish minimal guidelines for monitoring and evaluation that should be implemented on all projects that do not come with an M&E requirement from the donor. These minimum requirements should be enforced across the countries of return.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 8:** Each country mission should design an M&E plan that makes sense for the country and that takes into consideration the IOM-wide minimum requirements.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 9:** Allocate more resources to IOM receiving missions for the monitoring process.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 10:** Train project staff on the basics of monitoring and evaluation.

## 6.2. PROJECT OUTCOMES

### 6.2.1. OUTREACH TO MIGRANTS IN NEED

#### Institutional outreach

- ⇒ **Recommendation 11:** Resume placing information posters, leaflets and brochures in strategic points on the migration routes.

### 6.2.2. PROFILES OF BENEFICIARIES

- ⇒ **Recommendation 12:** Develop an approach to contact families before departure and brief them on the situation, with the consent of the returnee.

### 6.2.3. REGISTRATION PROCESS

- ⇒ **Recommendation 13:** Personal counselling interviews should be organized upon return, to advise and guide returnees. Funding for dedicated staff could provide returnees with concrete solutions to be used once they arrive home.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 14:** IOM could continue to get funding to support regular medical visits and health support in the detention centres. These medical services could be generalized to all the migrants in the detention centre – and not be limited to the ones involved in AVR/VHR projects.

### 6.2.4. PRE-DEPARTURE

- ⇒ **Recommendation 15:** Reduce delays by using of electronic forms that will speed up the registration process.

### 6.2.5. REINTEGRATION PROCESS

- ⇒ **Recommendation 16:** IOM staff in countries of return could spend more time to guide the returnees all along the reintegration process. This is key to ensure the understanding of the procedures and the different options. Advantages of each option should be clearly presented so the returnees can make an informed decision.

### 6.2.6. FORMS OF REINTEGRATION

- ⇒ **Recommendation 17:** Bring on board partners that have a background in small business enterprises. This could provide training and counseling to the returnees to ensure success of the migrant business.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 18:** Organize workshops or training sessions on business management and development, what would be useful to every returnee settling its micro-business.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 19:** Conduct a second medical check-up at the airport or in a transit on arrival to ensure the fitness of migrants to come back home.
- ⇒ **Recommendation 20:** Create a fund to support emergency needs upon arrival.

## 7. ANNEX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

### 7.1. LIST OF RETURNEES INTERVIEWED

NAME	AREA OF RETURN
<b>SENEGAL</b>	
Abdoulaye Bagayoko	Bossera
Check Mbaye	Dakar
Mamadou Balde	Kolda
Mane	Manecounda
Sadio Cissokho	Tambacounda
<b>NIGERIA</b>	
Favor Osaghele	Benin (Edo State)
Juliet Nsha	Benin (Edo State)
Benjamin Alele	Benin (Edo State)
Kaosara Abdulkaheem	Lagos
Oduje Betsel	Sagamu
Sonia Victor	Benin (Edo State)

### 7.2. LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
Ashraf Hassan	Operations Officer	IOM Libya
Nadia Khlifi	Project Assistant	IOM Libya
Uptal Barua	VHR Focal point	IOM Bangladesh
Nouhoum Dahou	Interview Coordinator	IOM Mali
Sarah Fadayomi	VHR Focal Point	IOM Nigeria
Seydina Kane	VHR Focal Point	IOM Senegal
Famara Nije	VHR Focal Point	IOM The Gambia
Paul Gitonga	VHR Focal Point	IOM Kenya