



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
IOM Internationale Organisatie voor Migratie

“Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan”

External Evaluation

Final Report

July 2007

This report is presented by Laurence Hunzinger. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the International Organization for Migration, the European Commission or the EU Members States.

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Executive summary

The *Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan* program was developed within the frame of the *EU Plan for Return to Afghanistan* for facilitating and assisting voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration into Afghanistan. RANA was designed to complement existing national assisted voluntary programs while providing **enhanced reception and reintegration assistance for Afghan nationals returning from one of the EU Member States**.

RANA had two main components: (i) return and reception –by including pre-departure information and post-arrival reception assistance; and (ii) reintegration –by providing reintegration assistance to facilitate access to livelihoods.

Target groups: all Afghans seeking to return under Assisted Voluntary Return, irrespective of their status. RANA assistance was also made available to involuntary returnees upon their immigration clearance arrival in Kabul.

The program was timely designed to respond to identified potential caseloads of relevance for assisted voluntary returns based on statistics gathered by UNHCR and EU Member States. Program implementation started in June 2003 with an initial duration of 15 months. A 12-month extension was subsequently granted on September 2004, followed by another 12-month extension in June 2005 and a final extension granted in October 2006, allowing the program to continue up to 30 April 2007. RANA initial funding was granted by the European Commission with co-financing from Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany through the form of a secondment.

The Consultant has relied for this evaluation on a desk study carried out at the beginning of the assignment -in Brussels and Kabul, and on meetings with key informants and program beneficiaries during a 12 person day visit in Afghanistan. For reasons of time the areas visited in Afghanistan focused on Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif (prime recipient areas for RANA beneficiaries).

The program is one of the programs implemented under the *EC Return Action Program* following the adoption of the *Afghanistan Return Plan* of November 2002. The return and reintegration assistance activities implemented under the RANA program have provided a timely response to the needs and activities foreseen under the Plan, thereby contributing to implementing relevant and concrete components of the Plan. RANA is the first attempt at EC level to link up assisted returns with reintegration.

Consulted Member States representatives acknowledge that RANA has been **particularly expedient** in answering to two main concerns: (i) to provide returnees with dignified return; (ii) **to provide for ground reception and reintegration services that could not have been delivered otherwise** -in-person ground reception and information, local transportation, accommodation facilities, basic medical care – due to financial, human resources, and lack of facilities. Furthermore, on the national political agenda, RANA was presented as an assistance program helping Afghan refugees/returnees to contribute to on-going reconstruction efforts, and an **attempt to link development aid and return issues**.

The evolving national policies for Afghans asylum determination and/or the extension of temporary residence permits based on humanitarian ground has significantly impacted on Afghans asylum seekers' decision to return, thereof directly impacting on the program' implementation.

The UK represents the point of origin for 44% of all RANA returnees, followed by Germany (25%), the Netherlands (20%), Denmark (4%), Austria (3%) and Greece (2%), other Member States only contributing sporadically to RANA volumes.

RANA' implementation has been integrated within a wide operational set up. It has been directly managed by the IOM Mission in Afghanistan, with a liaison officer position appointed in the IOM Brussels Regional Liaison and Coordination Office to the European Union as well as an EU Return Liaison Officer based in Kabul, appointed to support the EC Delegation and operating within the framework of the EU Return Plan. IOM Offices/Missions in Europe have been actively involved in assisting and facilitating voluntary returns (through existing national programs) and making necessary arrangements (e.g. pre-departure information, counseling, travel), while IOM Kabul has been providing post-arrival reception and reintegration assistance.

IOM Kabul senior management experienced considerable turnover during RANA implementing timeframe both at Kabul and sub-offices level. Turnover pertaining to the AVR management was also high.

RANA was **timely established** and operated under a **complex implementing frame**. All the components of the program can be considered as highly human resources consuming and requiring elevated level of coordination amongst various stakeholders.

Overall, consulted participating Member States representatives are **very positive about RANA' concept and operational return and reception components**. They welcome **RANA' attempts to link return and economic reintegration** and see its outputs are essential elements for ensuring sustainable returns. They would welcome an **extension of the program** and its core funding by the EC.

The Deputy Minister of MoRR expressed the **support of the Government of Afghanistan** to any new initiative that could ensure a continuation of the RANA program. He is particularly eager receiving financial support for the Jangalak Reception Center.

While at the EC level the Steering Committee successfully contributed to provide timely information on the program implementation, **information flow** with the Member States and the EC in Kabul has been insufficient.

From an operational point of view and despite some shortfalls (e.g. pre-counseling), RANA can be considered as successful. In regards to operational coordination mechanisms, coordination between IOM Kabul and the IOM sending missions is reported to have been efficient and the reception component of the program was priced for its professionalism and dedication. More attention however could have been paid information regular updating on the country's situation and RANA assistance. Similarly, information dissemination to partners in direct contact with asylum seekers should be regularly updated. It should be acknowledged however that IOM sending missions have not been strictly involved in the design of RANA and **have been providing return assistance through their national return programs**. This led to discrepancies in pre-counseling services (offered in the Netherlands and the UK) as well as inequality in the level of information received by the returnees.

RANA delivery of reintegration assistance has been based on the principles of **flexibility and counseling**, allowing beneficiaries to freely develop personal initiatives, provided they make economic sense. The reintegration component has been designed to provide support to initial reinsertion and access to livelihoods based on preliminary assessments of needs and **feasible opportunities** in Afghanistan. RANA reintegration package included various forms:

- Training – vocational or educational (mainly English and computer courses initially foreseen for a duration of 3 months) primarily targeting under-aged and young adults;
- Employment - either through IOM established job vacancy database or direct placement;
- On-the-job training, with possible contribution by IOM to returnees' salaries while they are trained; or
- Self-employment through creating small businesses introduced late 2003.

Reintegration needs were adjusted in November 2003 following the needs to develop income-generating schemes and building on the successes of business start up opportunities offered under the UK *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Program*, thereof expanded to the RANA reintegration package. Consequently, a micro-enterprise specialist was hired and joined IOM Kabul in the course of 2004. **Accompanying measures** were foreseen for returnees engaging in non-remunerated activities to be offered room and board for the duration of their apprenticeship.

Returnees had to register in person in IOM Kabul or in the IOM sub-offices if they had immediately traveled to their final destination, contacts being provided in the written material disseminated upon arrival. The initial stage consisted of individual counseling sessions. The counseling process lead to the opening of individual case files and the design of basic business plans, thereafter evaluated by IOM staff. The **maximum amount disbursed** through this component was **€1,500**. IOM financial assistance went primarily to **buying equipment and products** necessary to the set up the small business. Joint visits assessments were carried out in business sites.

The bulk of the reintegration activities concentrated in the Kabul province (79.5% of the beneficiaries being established or having resettled in the province), Balkh (with 5.1% of the beneficiaries) and Herat (4.5%), the other provinces contributing only sporadically to RANA reintegration volumes.

RANA has been able to deliver some forms of reintegration assistance building upon IOM presence and programming throughout Afghanistan (e.g. RQA and DDR). The reintegration package has been **adapted at an early stage** in order to **better address the immediate needs** of the returnees.

RANA reintegration assistance has been offered out of **9 IOM offices** located in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, Faizabad, Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, Bamyian and Jalalabad. Sub-offices reintegration staff often worked part-time on RANA. IOM reintegration staff has been **overloaded** with work under RANA. Visited IOM team in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif are showing a **high level of dedication** in the fulfillment of their work but might have benefited from institutional training in the field of small entrepreneurial creation and business. This would have enabled them to provide **more substantial and technical counseling**.

Encountered beneficiaries acknowledged the importance of the financial assistance received, while stressing that **the amount of €1.500 had not been sufficient to really establish their business**. All have been investing additional money – provided either by family members and/or savings from the national assisted voluntary programs. Female beneficiaries have invested in partnership with male family members actually running the businesses. Most businesses are **retailing activities**, with only few productive enterprises. The business startup scheme can be considered as an **essential financial assistance for providing basic livelihoods to returnees**.

Local development community projects were meant to substitute the one by one approach comprised within the training component of the program -offered to an equivalent number of local residents that had not been implemented since the returnees showed little interest into training. The focus was thereafter reoriented to support domiciled population through small scale projects and targeting vulnerable groups, mainly women and children. Local development community projects were identified through partnerships

with individuals or NGO/UN stakeholders and the program contributed funds to their expansion, inclusion of specific beneficiary categories, etc. While visited RANA local development community funded projects have indubitably **benefited individuals** in a quite sustainable manner (e.g. vocational training, in-come generating activities) while also providing substantial financial assistance to the umbrella organizations providing services (e.g. purchasing of materials and equipment, payment of trainer' salaries, etc.). The impact of the activities upon local communities however is difficult to assert at the exception of the garbage disposal project in Mazar-e-Sharif.

RANA has provided **expedite and timely reception and counselling assistance for returnees in need. Assisted voluntary return assistance was facilitated for 2,097** returnees primarily returning from the Netherlands (representing 35.2% of the total of voluntary returnees) and Germany (35%), as well as from the UK, Austria, Denmark, Greece, Belgium, France, Finland, Italy or Finland.

Primary accommodation, transportation and referrals to RANA reintegration assistance was also granted to **1,983 involuntary returnees after their immigration clearance**. Most of these returnees were deported from the United Kingdom (88.5%), Germany (11%), the Netherlands (3.6%) Denmark (2.2%) or France (2%); remaining cases coming from Belgium, Portugal and Sweden.

Basic medical care and medical referrals have been made available by two IOM physicians (one male, one female) at the airport in a small clinic. **Overnight accommodation and full boarding** was offered in Kabul for a foreseen duration of 2 weeks. Derogations were granted to accommodate returnees without family and place of return for a longer period. **Local transportation** was made available to all those who needed it. Most of the time, voluntary returnees were picked up at the airport by family members. Some 451 returnees however availed themselves to this option.

Finally, RANA has been instrumental in providing **assistance for enrolling in educational and training activities or in establishing small businesses to some 1,092 returnees** (including 65 women). This component was particularly attractive to returnees and a total of **834 small businesses** have been established. **The program allowed its beneficiaries to access immediate subsistence livelihoods:** a key element for insuring sustainable returns.

Recommendations

Pertaining to similar program design

In the field of program development:

- ✓ Projects like RANA are entirely focused on achieving sustainable reintegration for its beneficiaries; therefore the return and post return assistance processes should be kept separate in the definition of objectives and numerical objectives should mention beneficiaries, grants, or any other variable in relation to actual reintegration. Setting, as a principal objective, a certain number of returns (in RANA's case, 5,000 over a period of 15 months) can be a misleading goal.
- ✓ IOM sending missions should be involved at the outset of the program design in close consultation with EU Member States.
- ✓ Pre-counseling departure and information dissemination budget should be included for IOM sending missions.
- ✓ In determining financial levels, greater amounts should be set aside for the development of self-employment projects. Greater allocation of resources towards monitoring functions of field staff - as key element of the reintegration strategy - should also be considered.

- ✓ Member States should be financially participating to the program through existing AVR programs.

In the field of program implementation:

- ✓ Project steering committee should be established and regularly convened including a broad range of stakeholders (Relevant ministries, EU Member States representatives, UNHCR and any other relevant organizations depending upon agenda).
- ✓ IOM sending missions-AVR counselors should be send on TDY to better understand the operational and environment constraints prevailing in Afghanistan.
- ✓ UNHCR country profile updates should be distributed on a regular basis to all involved partners.

Pertaining to reintegration package

While RANA demonstrated the possibilities of matching returns with reconstruction efforts, program implementation could be enhanced for optimizing the level of counselling and assistance to returnees while answering to higher professional standards expected from donors.

In the field of training and human development:

- ✓ IOM staff should received advanced specialized training in the field of business development, marketing analysis as well as micro-credit.
- ✓ Provisions for beginners and advanced business courses could be made enable for interested returnees to enrol in registered institutions.

In the field of reintegration components:

- ✓ Enhanced financial provisions could be foreseen (e.g. €1.500 is insufficient) and access/linkages to micro-credit schemes facilitated to complement global support whenever feasible (for productive investment in particular).
- ✓ Provisions for enrolling in higher education (e.g. university classes) could be foreseen, including boarding and lodging in the university dormitory. A one-per-one component (one returnee/one local resident) could be envisaged.
- ✓ Support to local entrepreneurs could be envisaged building upon the successful pilot funded by the Berlin Municipality in Kosovo and implemented by IOM. The pilot has provided financial assistance to local entrepreneurs under the condition that they would hire one local resident and one returnee for a duration of 2 years.
- ✓ An in-depth review of successful reintegration initiatives and their lessons learnt should be undertaken.

1. The scheme of reference

1.1. Brief program description

The *Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan* program (hereafter referred to as RANA) was developed within the frame of the *EU Plan for Return to Afghanistan* for facilitating and assisting voluntary returns and sustainable reintegration into Afghanistan. RANA was designed to complement existing national assisted voluntary programs while providing **enhanced reception and reintegration assistance for Afghan nationals returning from one of the EU Member States**.

RANA had two main components: (i) return and reception –by including pre-departure information and post-arrival reception assistance; and (ii) reintegration –by providing reintegration assistance to facilitate access to livelihoods.

Target groups: all Afghans seeking to return under Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR), irrespective of their status. RANA assistance was also made available to involuntary returnees upon their immigration clearance arrival in Kabul.

The program was timely designed to respond to identified potential caseloads of relevance for assisted voluntary returns based on statistics gathered by UNHCR and EU Member States.

Program implementation started in June 2003 with an initial duration of 15 months. A 12-month extension was subsequently granted on September 2004, followed by another 12-month extension in June 2005. A final extension was granted in October 2006, ensuring continuation of the RANA program until 30 April 2007.

RANA initial funding was granted by the European Commission under the B7-667 budget line with co-financing requirements. While 77.51% of the budget has been financed by the EC, three Member States eventually contributed in co-funding RANA: the Government of Denmark (out of development budget); of the Netherlands (out of development budget); and of Germany with a secondment to IOM Kabul specifically looking after returnees from Germany. Total budget: €4.5 million.

1.2. Evaluation objectives

The main objective of the evaluation is to evaluate the impact of the program and its relevance to the reconstruction process of Afghanistan, the *EU Return Plan to Afghanistan*, and the *Government of Afghanistan's return and reintegration strategy*. The integrated approach that RANA provides for returnees has been closely analyzed. The evaluation has also examined IOM's implementation strategy as well as its overall performance in fulfilling the outputs described in the project document.

According to the terms of reference, the purpose of the evaluation exercise is:

- To analyze the integrated approach of offering a return and reintegration program consistent for all EU Member States;
- To explore the ways in which RANA contributes to the *EU Return Plan*;
- To analyze the cooperation between EU Member States governments, the Government of Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, and IOM;

- To analyze the design of the reintegration package provided to beneficiaries and its effectiveness in contributing to their return and successful reintegration;
- To assess the flexibility of the reintegration package for returnees with varying demographic profiles;
- To evaluate the program beneficiaries' performance with small business start up and other reintegration options offered through RANA;
- To evaluate the impact of the RANA funded community projects on vulnerable populations.

1.2. Methodology

The Consultant has relied for this evaluation on a desk study carried out at the beginning of the assignment -in Brussels and Kabul, and on meetings with key informants and program beneficiaries during a 12 person day visit in Afghanistan. For reasons of time the areas visited in Afghanistan focused on Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif (prime recipient areas for RANA beneficiaries).

Meetings and interviews have been organized with a number of stakeholders and IOM' AVR programs implementers in Afghanistan and Europe to obtain information on RANA policy framework and on program overall implementation and outcomes, as well as to appreciate cooperation with various stakeholders. Visits and interviews with RANA returned beneficiaries were carried out in Afghanistan to understand and assess overall impact and performance in the program delivery.

Sources of information included:

In Europe:

- Project documents and progress reports made available by IOM Brussels and IOM Geneva
- In-persons interviews with IOM Geneva officials: Head of Assisted Voluntary Return, Head of Evaluation Unit and Donor Relations
- In-person interviews with IOM Brussels RANA & AVR officers
- Meeting with EC DG Justice, Freedom and Security, Unit Financial Solidarity, Asylum, Immigration and Borders
- Telephonic interviews with IOM Missions in Europe- Germany, Finland, Netherlands and the UK.
- Telephonic interviews with RANA co-funding Member States relevant officials (Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands) as well as United Kingdom -to collect their views as to the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of RANA as well as on overall program implementation.

In Afghanistan:

- Interviews with Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation representatives
- Interviews with RANA/AVR staff in Kabul and in Mazar-e-Sharif and e-mail communication with former AVR management
- Interviews with MS representatives in Kabul who co-funded RANA (Denmark, the Netherlands) as well as with UK returns liaison officer¹
- Visits and interviews with reintegration assistance beneficiaries in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif
- Visits to local community projects in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif

¹. Despite repeated attempts meeting could not be secured with relevant representative of the German Embassy in Kabul. Contacts were initiated with officials in the Federal Ministry of Interior and could only be pursued through the form of an electronic communication at the request of the Ministry.

- Visit to MoRR *Jangalak Reception Centre* in Kabul
- Statistics compiled by the AVR database
- Interviews with UNHCR representatives in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif

1.3. The EC framework

1.3.1. Moving towards an integrated approach: the Afghanistan Return Plan

The *Afghanistan Return Plan* was adopted in November 2002 following upon requests from the Seville summit.² The Council had noted that the Plan should be seen in the context of the creation of a general EU *Return Action Program*.

The scope of the *Afghanistan Return Plan* has been to provide for “the best possible facilities for return to Afghanistan” through practical cooperation between Member States and the Commission without hindering other existing or future return initiatives. The target groups of the return effort were identified as follows:

- i) Afghans residing legally in one of the participating Member States wishing to return to Afghanistan; or
- ii) Afghans who are illegally present in Member States or can no longer legally remain (e.g. asylum seekers who have received an enforceable final rejection of their claim).

The Plan specified that the identification of returnees and the pace of return should take into consideration the best available information on the situation on the ground, the possibilities of matching returns with reconstruction efforts and the partnership between the EU and the Transitional Government of Afghanistan. The Plan emphasized that **preferred model of return is by voluntary return**. The Status of Afghans deciding not to avail themselves of voluntary repatriation continues to be governed by national legislation in full respect of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

An *Afghanistan Coordination Return Group (ACRG)* was established to promote and facilitate the smooth implementation of the *Return Plan* and to secure coordination of the return efforts of the Member States. All Member States were invited to participate and the group was chaired by the European Commission. Austria, Belgium, France, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have been active members. IOM, UNHCR and the ICMPD were invited to participate.

The EC Return Action Program

The Commission had earmarked in 2003 €7 million for projects to be implemented within the framework of the Return Plan developed by the Justice and Home Affairs Directorate-General.

- i) IOM Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan project;
- ii) UNHCR Capacity Building Program towards Afghan ministries and government-led initiative to promote sustainable returns;
- iii) IOM Return of Qualified Nationals.

The Program was complementing broader reconstruction activities undertaken by EuropeAid and RELEX. The sustainable return of refugees and IDPs has been a cross-cutting issue in the EC’s *Afghanistan Country Strategy Paper 2003-2006*. Support was integrated in all EC-supported interventions: health, rural development, alternative livelihoods, de-mining and other relevant programming. Complementing

². Justice and Home Affairs Council Decision of 28 November 2002, MIG 131 RELEX 269.

the rehabilitation efforts supported by EC-development funds, humanitarian and protection needs of Afghan refugees, returnees and IDPs were also addressed by the EC Humanitarian Office.

1.3.2. RANA contributions to the EU Return Plan

The *Return Plan* contained concrete measures to be undertaken within the implementation of the EC-funded return action programs. The foreseen components of the plan of relevance for RANA are presented in the following table (table 1) with corresponding activities undertaken under the RANA program.

It is worth reiterating that RANA was not a classic Assisted Voluntary Return program³ but a pilot program complementing existing national AVR programs -primarily implemented by IOM in respective EU MS and providing standardized post-arrival assistance to returnees coming from any of the Member States.

Table 1. Review of RANA contributions in implementing the EU Return Plan

EU Return Plan components	Activities undertaken under RANA
<p>Pre-departure measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of returnees 2. Information for returnees 3. Procuring travel documents 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Through AVR national programs for voluntary returnees. 2. Provided through existing AVR national programs. Specific information pertaining to RANA designed and disseminated through IOM missions in Europe in collaboration with partner organizations and local authorities. 3. Through AVR national programs for voluntary returnees.
<p>Travel related measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transportation costs 2. Joint flights & transit arrangements (e.g. enforced returns) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provided through existing AVR national programs for voluntary returns. 2. N/A.
<p>Post-arrival measures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination with relevant bodies 2. Reception facilities 3. Information for returnees 4. Transport in Afghanistan 5. Reintegration assistance 	<p>Benefiting both voluntary and involuntary returnees upon arrival in Kabul airport</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IOM standard operative return procedures (e.g. IOM missions); close cooperation with Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR); IOM airport coordination cell; EU return liaison officer at the EC Delegation in Kabul; 2. Support to MoRR reception centre in Kabul (Jangalak Reception Centre) –providing full board and lodging; and responding to immediate needs. MoRR representatives also present upon arrival, monitoring returns. 3. In-person basic information provided by IOM airport coordination cell (focal point for initial reception); distribution of written information with IOM contact details in Kabul and in the provinces. 4. Onward transportation by air or road to final destination. 5. Reintegration assistance services made available upon registration and counselling: education training and support to starting up small businesses in particular.

³. IOM definition of AVR: assisted voluntary returns can generally be described as the assistance (such as finance, transport, travel, documents, reintegration) offered to a returnee for voluntary return by a Member States and carried out by a third party such as an international organization. AVR is always based on the returnee’s voluntary decision.

1.3.3. Conclusive remarks

From an implementing point of view, the return and reintegration assistance activities implemented under the RANA program have provided a timely response to the needs and activities foreseen under the Plan, thereby contributing to implementing relevant and concrete components of the Plan. From a policy point of view however -coordination at EC level and complementarity of Member States and Community actions- , RANA achieved mixed results despite its high level of complementarity.

At EC level:

Within the frame of the *Afghan Return Action Plan*, RANA was designed to assist Afghan returnees in their return and reintegration process. EU Member States were invited to support and actively participate in the program. Only a few Member States however have actively seen RANA as an opportunity and actively participated in its implementation: Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK –namely Member States with the most significant asylum seekers/irregular migrants of Afghan origin.

The implementation of the Plan has provided useful experiences and information on how best to organize reintegration assistance –offering relevant incentives, adapted to specific situation and needs, demands and capabilities of those returned as well as reintegration possibilities and accessibility.

A follow up on the Plan was foreseen but never materialized due to a shift in Member States priorities. They started granting temporary status based on humanitarian basis as well as signing tripartite agreement with the Transitional authorities and UNCHR governing enforced returns. Besides, the human tragedy in Iraq led to important population movement that attracted Member States attention.

The *Afghanistan Coordination Return Group* provided a useful platform for information exchanges on the situation in Afghanistan as well as on national return arrangements. Discussions also assisted Member States to refine their selection processes (e.g. for enforced returns, only single males adult should be eligible, etc.). The ACRG also established in the participating Member States respective administration's a network of contact points responsible for return to Afghanistan. The Group has contributed to disseminating good return practices.

RANA should be seen as the first attempt at EC level to **link up assisted returns with reintegration**.

At Member States level:

While the *EU Return Plan* has not led to harmonizing Member States voluntary return program packages to Afghanistan (e.g. national assisted voluntary return programs variations in cash allowance or additional reintegration opportunities) it has facilitated information and practices sharing on voluntary returns.

IOM is managing various national-driven Assisted Voluntary Return programs specific or not to Afghanistan. Such programs comprise a variety of reintegration financial entitlements:

- i) Under the IOM Austria-CARA, *Coordination of the Assistance for Voluntary Return to Afghanistan program*: €500 per adult; €800 for a couple; €100 per under-age (the maximum per family being €1.200)
- ii) Under IOM Belgium-REAB, *Return and Emigration of Asylum Seekers* program: €750 per person
- iii) Under IOM Denmark-*Integrated Return, Reception and Reintegration of Afghan Nationals to Afghanistan program*: up to €2.000 per adult, €72 per under-age (maximum amounts, digressive based upon application timing –the earliest the most)

- iv) Under IOM Germany REAG-GARP - *Reintegration and Emigration Program for Asylum-Seekers in Germany - Government Assisted Repatriation Program*: €500 per adult/youth and €250 per child under the age of 12 (max. €1.500 per family)
- v) Under IOM Netherlands-REAN, *Return and Emigration of Aliens from the Netherlands program - REAN+* for Afghanistan: €500 per adult; €250 per under-age
- vi) Under IOM United Kingdom-VARRP, *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Program*: £500 (upon departing the UK) and (£300 upon arrival in Afghanistan).

Consulted Member States representatives acknowledge that RANA has been **particularly expedient** in answering to two main concerns: (i) to provide returnees with dignified return; (ii) **to provide for ground reception and reintegration services that could not have been delivered otherwise** -in-person ground reception and information, local transportation, accommodation facilities, basic medical care – due to financial, human resources, and lack of facilities. A program such as RANA has withdrawn the direct involvement of EU Embassies in Kabul pertaining to assisted voluntary returns. Consulted Member States greatly benefited for the services delivered by the RANA program.

Furthermore, on the national political agenda, RANA was presented as an assistance program helping Afghan refugees/returnees to contribute to on-going reconstruction efforts, and an **attempt to link development aid and return issues**.

The evolving national policies for Afghans asylum determination and/or the extension of temporary residence permits based on humanitarian ground has significantly impacted on Afghans asylum seekers' decision to return, thereof directly impacting on the program' implementation.

Concomitant to RANA' designs, discussions involving various Member States, the Afghan transitional administration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees were initiated for the conclusion and signing of *Tripartite Agreements*. Such Agreements govern the voluntary return and repatriation of Afghans staying in one of the signatory country and defines modalities of repatriation including enforced returns.

The UK represents the point of origin for 44% of all RANA returnees, followed by Germany (25%), the Netherlands (20%), Denmark (4%), Austria (3%) and Greece (2%), other Member States only contributing sporadically to RANA volumes.

2. Analysis of RANA management, design & implementation

2.1. RANA Management & operational implementation set-up

RANA has been directly managed by the IOM Mission in Afghanistan, with a liaison officer position appointed in the IOM Brussels Regional Liaison and Coordination Office to the European Union as well as an EU Return Liaison Officer based in Afghanistan, appointed to support the EC Delegation in Kabul and operating within the framework of the EU Return.

IOM Offices/Missions in Europe have been actively involved in assisting and facilitating voluntary returns (through existing national programs) and making necessary arrangements (e.g. pre-departure information,

counseling, travel), while IOM Kabul has been providing post-arrival reception and reintegration assistance. RANA' implementation has been integrated within a wide operational set up.

Table 2. A program integrated within a wide operational set up

	IOM Brussels	IOM sending missions	IOM Afghanistan
Management & prime responsibilities	<p>Overall program liaison with EC and EU MS</p> <p>Chair Brussels program steering committee</p> <p>Production of progress and interim report</p> <p>Participate in EC <i>Afghan Coordination Return Group</i></p>	<p>Responsible for respective AVR national programs</p>	<p>Overall management at Kabul level: RANA under the responsibility of the AVR program manager. RANA team consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1 project manager ✓ Airport coordination cell of 3 (working for all AVR projects) ✓ 2 part time medical doctors (at the airport) ✓ 1 Operation officer based in Dubai ✓ 1 data entry clerk (for all AVR projects) ✓ 1 Business development officer ✓ 1 Senior reintegration assistant and 3 reintegration assistants ✓ EU Return Liaison Officer (based at EC Delegation in Kabul) <p>At sub-offices level: (8):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Full-time reintegration assistants in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat ✓ Part-time reintegration assistants (e.g. involved in DDR, other projects) ✓
Return process		<p>Through AVR existing national programs/agreements</p> <p>Pre-departure counselling and/or information</p>	<p>IOM Dubai Ops in case of transit</p>
Reception			<p>Airport coordination Cell providing reception and basic information</p> <p>Onward transportation to final destination or overnight accommodation in Kabul for those in need</p> <p>Provision of primary medical care and medical referral</p> <p>Close liaison with MoRR representative (present at the airport and at Jangalak Reception Center)</p>
Reintegration			<p>Reintegration options proposed at Kabul and sub-offices levels. Reintegration assistants conduct individual counselling and referrals to feasible service or activity</p>

IOM Kabul Management

IOM Kabul senior management experienced considerable turnover during RANA implementing timeframe both at Kabul and sub-offices level. With three program managers for a program of 4 years, turnover pertaining to RANA management can also be considered as high but is to be placed within the frame of Afghanistan being classified as a hardship duty station.

RANA management was split into two: an AVR manager and a Small business specialist/Reintegration manager, responsible for all reintegration activities and who worked on RANA during 3 years.

2.2. Overall cooperation and coordination mechanisms

The RANA program involved coordinating with a broad range of institutional stakeholders and Member States representatives as well as with IOM missions in Europe.

2.2.1. At Brussels level

Steering Committee in Brussels: RANA Brussels' Steering Committee was set up to monitor and share information on the project implementation; to develop the cooperation among project stakeholders as well as to discuss/solve relevant issues that could affect the smooth implementation of the project. The 1st Steering Committee was convened in Brussels on September 2003 under the chairmanship of the IOM Brussels Regional representative. Members comprised IOM representatives from European Missions as well as IOM Kabul and relevant Member States Officials. A total of 6 meetings were held during the implementing period. Steering Committee meetings were always scheduled jointly with the EC *Afghanistan Coordination Return Group*, as Member States participants participated to both meetings.

2.2.2. At Kabul level

Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation

RANA has been discussed and agreed upon with the Ministry of Refugees and Reintegration (MoRR), holding overall responsibility for returnee and internally displaced persons programs. RANA is in line with the principals developed by Interim Administration *National Return, Displacement and Reintegration Strategy* of March 2003: **voluntary returns on the basis of informed choice, safety, gender equality and gradualism**. MoRR reports a very good level of coordination and cooperation with IOM Kabul. Daily contacts are established through the IOM airport cell and the appointment and presence of MoRR airport representatives.

Although, IOM contributed financing the running costs of the Ministry's Reception Centre - *Jangalak Reception Centre*- located in Kabul.

Steering Committee

RANA Steering Committee in Kabul aimed at co-ordinating activities and providing timely reporting on overall implementation process. The first meeting was held in Kabul on 9th of October 2003, involving participants of the EC, representatives of EU Member States and IOM. Consulted files however do not refer to/contain any other information pertaining to RANA steering committee meetings.

*With Member States:*⁴

Co-funding Member States representatives met in Kabul invariably report a dearth on information sharing pertaining to program implementation and program data for the years 2005-2006. Information flow has

⁴. In-person meetings with relevant Member States representatives in Kabul.

been uneven, irregular and mainly informal. This is mainly due to shortfalls in the information flow, IOM Brussels being responsible to disseminate progress reports to the EC and the Member States, gauging that Member States would distribute information internally and to their respective missions abroad.

Communication and information flow however is reported to have significantly improved since early 2007 and the entry into function of a new management.

Also, in order to facilitate the identification/outreach of involuntary deportees from Denmark and the United Kingdom upon arrival, notification mechanisms have been developed by the British and Danish returns liaison officers to provide in advance lists of involuntary returnees' passengers – distributed to MoRR, UNHCR and IOM for their respective information and follow up.

EU Return liaison Officer

RANA program had foreseen the appointment of a liaison officer in Kabul, whose role was to support the EC Delegation in Kabul in program monitoring and policy formulation in the area of migration and return, as well as reporting and advising on issues affecting return to Afghanistan. The role of the liaison officer has been essential for the Commission; enabling a close follow up on micro-level activities and providing timely information updates. The liaison officer has also been able to update Member States representatives in Afghanistan on program progress.

With other donors

RANA management successfully engaged discussions with the Australian Development Assistance Agency for costs sharing of the Jangalak Centre initially rehabilitated and funded by Australian funds.

With UNHCR and other potential partners

Despite the release of a joint letter pertaining to returns to Afghanistan written by IOM Director General and UNHCR High Commissioner, the level of cooperation between the two organisations has remained limited.⁵ Regular RANA information sharing meetings have been lacking and UNHCR is describing a “vacuum of knowledge” regarding the program’ assistance component. UNHCR together with MoRR is monitoring the arrival of enforced returns into Afghanistan and referrals could most likely be increased for involuntary returnees’ reintegration assistance. Also, UNHCR human rights monitoring teams, deployed throughout the country, together with the Human Rights Commission teams could have been made aware of the program for referral and assistance purposes (e.g. physical threats and assaults etc.).

Overall, it seems that more coordination efforts could have been paid in seeking developing synergies and referral modalities with on-going initiatives (e.g. ILO employment centres; AGERF reintegration assistance for involuntary returnees from the UK etc.).

2.2.3. With IOM sending missions

IOM assisted voluntary return programs are more or less on-going programs revised on a yearly basis.

The RANA budget has not foreseen specific information design and dissemination budget for the IOM sending missions in Europe. Only a few of the AVR programs such as in Denmark or in the UK had within their own AVR programs a specific information budget line for returns to Afghanistan. IOM missions in Europe therefore relied primarily on information material prepared by IOM Kabul.

⁵. Joint Letter of January 16, 2003.

Sending missions usually outreach to potential beneficiaries through a broad network of partners comprising of charity and refugee associations and including relevant national administrations. In the UK for example, the contractual agreement involved visits to migrants' reception centers (to be organized twice a year). In Austria the outreach is organized via return counseling centers working closely together with the local Afghan associations. In Germany, information dissemination is done through "applying entities", comprising of charity associations providing assistance to asylum seekers. In the Netherlands, the 25 IOM district officers are in direct contact with asylum seekers and were able to provide individual counseling to RANA beneficiaries.

2.2.4. Implementing sequences⁶

IOM Missions reported to have disseminated relevant information to all their partners in collaboration with respective relevant bodies by end of 2003.

In Afghanistan, all components of the program were in place in November 2003 - at the airport and in the different offices in Afghanistan. The Airport reception team comprised of three persons and two medical officers with their equipment and a dedicated facility. Information material had been designed and printed including a leaflet on mine awareness and a leaflet on RANA assistance with relevant contacts. A reintegration questionnaire had been designed to collect relevant personal information and a database on services and job opportunities created –including 495 entries identified in both the public and private sectors. Finally, arrangements for onward transportation and training institutions enrollment had been made.

Temporary accommodation and boarding has been accessible to EU returnees since March 2004 at MoRR Jangalak Centre.

Importantly, RANA management quickly realized that its training reintegration component was not attractive to returnees. It proposed a timely budget revision to the EC. Part of the funding that had originally been foreseen for trainings would be used for the setup of small businesses.

2.2.5. Conclusive remarks

RANA was **timely established** and operated under a **complex implementing frame**. All the components of the program can be considered as highly human resources consuming and requiring elevated level of coordination amongst various stakeholders. From an operational point of view and despite some shortfalls (e.g. pre-counselling), RANA can be considered as successful.

Overall, consulted participating Member States representatives are **very positive about RANA' concept and operational return and reception components**. The program has withdrawn the bulk of the workload pertaining to voluntary returns from the Embassies – the process being driven and managed by the IOM. Embassies however are involved in enforced returns. A few MS have thereby appointed returns liaison officer (the United Kingdom or Denmark) to facilitate enforced returns as well as advising their home office on return conditions (e.g. by reporting on security and political situation; advising on return criteria, frequency of returns, etc.). They welcome **RANA' attempts to link return and economic reintegration** and see its outputs are essential elements for ensuring sustainable returns.

Consulted Member States would welcome an **extension of the program** and its core funding by the EC.

⁶. Source: IOM Brussels steering committee minutes.

The Deputy Minister of MoRR expressed the **support of the Government of Afghanistan** to any new initiative that could ensure a continuation of the RANA program. He is particularly eager receiving financial support for the Jangalak Reception Center.

While at the EC level the Steering Committee successfully contributed to provide timely information on the program implementation, **information flow** with the Member States and the EC in Kabul has been insufficient and future programming would have to expressly address decentralized information flow mechanisms and the holding of regular meetings including all stakeholders (MoRR, MS representatives, as well as UNHCR).

In regards to operational coordination mechanisms, coordination between IOM Kabul and the IOM sending missions is reported to have been efficient and the reception component of the program was priced for its professionalism and dedication. More attention however could have been paid and should be paid in the future to information regular updating on the country's situation and RANA assistance. Similarly, information dissemination to partners in direct contact with asylum seekers should be regularly updated.

It should be acknowledged however that IOM sending missions have not been strictly involved in the design of RANA and **have been providing return assistance through their national return programs**. This led to discrepancies in pre-counseling services (offered in the Netherlands and the UK) as well as inequality in the level of information received by the returnees⁷.

2.3. Reintegration activities: design and effectiveness

2.3.1. A flexible package

RANA delivery of reintegration assistance has been based on the principles of **flexibility and counseling**, allowing beneficiaries to freely develop personal initiatives, provided they make economic sense.

A flexible reintegration component has been designed to provide support to initial reinsertion and access to livelihoods based on preliminary assessments of needs and **feasible opportunities** in Afghanistan.

At the time of its design, RANA reintegration package included various forms:

- Training – vocational or educational (mainly English and computer courses initially foreseen for a duration of 3 months) primarily targeting under-aged and young adults;
- Employment - either through IOM established job vacancy database or direct placement;
- On-the-job training, with possible contribution by IOM to returnees' salaries while they are trained; or
- Self-employment through creating small businesses. **This component was introduced at the end of 2004 to better answer the immediate needs of the returnees.**

Accompanying measures were foreseen for returnees engaging in non-remunerated activities to be offered room and board for the duration of their apprenticeship.

Also, in order to diminish any tensions among various returnees and their elected communities of reintegration over perceived inequalities of opportunities/assistance, Afghans from resident communities were invited to register their interest in a limited number of training placement – for each returning taking

⁷. Random interviews with RANA beneficiaries in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif seem to indicate that exhaustive information was received by returnees in the Netherlands and Denmark while scarce information was provided to the returnees from Germany.

advantage of training opportunities, **a training placement voucher would be issued to a registered person from the local community**. This component however was not implemented due to returnees limited interest in enrolling to training activities.

Reintegration needs were adjusted in November 2003 following the needs to develop income-generating schemes and building on the successes of business start up opportunities offered under the UK *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Program (VARRP)*, thereof expanded to the RANA reintegration package. The budget was revised accordingly and **300 business start up expected** with a maximum amount of €1.500. Consequently, a micro-enterprise specialist was hired and joined IOM Kabul in the course of 2004 to support RANA and other programs including RQA.

This new approach is well explicated by IOM Kabul former AVR manager Vincent Houver.⁸ “In an environment such as Afghanistan, and in view of the limited financial amounts at our disposal, the starting point to RANA's strategy was that returnees themselves should be allowed to develop their own projects and initiate self-employment endeavors of their own. In the majority of cases, returnees go back to an activity they were engaged in prior to emigrating, join a family endeavor, or partner with an existing business, contributing some equipment/supplies and sharing in the profits or essentially acting as an employee of the business (with regular income) - these elements justified in our view a full yet simplified counseling process, leading to the completion of a business plan, followed by an assessment field visit. This ensures swift establishment of the project, and leaves room for flexibility in adjusting the project in cases where it does not meet expectations.”

A total of **1,092** returnees have decided to benefit from RANA reintegration package:

Educational:	95 beneficiaries
Business start-up:	834 beneficiaries (75.5% in trading businesses; 9% in services and 6.5% in productive businesses such as carpenter, garments)

In addition, some **job placements** were facilitated by IOM, and returnees have been contracted by International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations. In such case salary topping was not offered, since the organizations were paying adequate salaries.

2.3.2. Implementation mechanisms

Most of RANA beneficiaries opted for business start up activities (e. g. providing immediate livelihoods) and the component will be further detailed and analyzed.

RANA project document had foreseen to collect returnees' individual information (e.g. family and professional background) prior to their arrival in Afghanistan in a preparedness attempt and in order to better identified returnees needs. Individual forms were supposed to be completed at the occasion of pre-departure counseling sessions carried out by IOM sending missions or their partners and timely forwarded to IOM Kabul. While the design of such form and advance notification mechanism was an important tool for enabling preparedness, implementation suffered various constrains pertaining to (i) dissemination; (ii) literacy - illiteracy, translation; (iii) accuracy; or (iv) timely forward to IOM Kabul.

⁸. Electronic correspondence with IOM Kabul former AVR manager of June 2007.

2.3.2.1. Registration and counseling

Returnees had to register in person in IOM Kabul or in the IOM sub-offices if they had immediately traveled to their final destination, contacts being provided in the written material disseminated upon arrival. An interview was then completed by a counselor and their details and professional background experience recorded. Their eligibility to the program had then to be verified (e.g. passenger flight details).

The initial stage consisted of individual counseling sessions (up to 4-6) designed to help the returnee decide whether business start-up is a suitable form of assistance, and identify which field offers adequate potential for economic success. Previous work experience and knowledge in the chosen field, the proposed form of the business project (independently run, joint venture) were then discussed.

The counseling process lead to the design of a basic business plan following a standard format⁹, thereafter evaluated by IOM staff together with supporting documentation (e.g. rental agreements, 3 quotations for goods purchasing and work permit if necessary). The maximum amount disbursed through this component was €1,500.

While some 1,300 returnees have applied for reintegration and counseling assistance, 1,092 have successfully completed the process. Reasons for not pursuing the entire process can comprise of the following elements: accessibility criteria; services not responding to expectation and needs; reunification with family members in neighboring countries, etc.

2.3.2.2. Implementation

IOM financial assistance went primarily to **buying equipment and products** necessary to the set up the small business. Joint visits assessments were carried out in business sites together with the beneficiary and IOM staff in an attempt to gauge the location and premises pertinence.

Payments have been handled by IOM, usually in two tranches -one for allowing initial purchasing, and another one following a visit scheduled one month after the business start up. Cash was never handed out to returnees.

The business-start up process requested on average one to two months (from registration to start up – depending on beneficiary timely provision of required documentation and IOM procurement verification).

To alleviate traveling costs on beneficiaries, sub-offices reintegration staff has been to the extent of possible encountering returnees in their area of residence.

The bulk of the reintegration activities concentrated in the Kabul province (79.5% of the beneficiaries being established or having resettled in the province), Balkh (with 5.1% of the beneficiaries) and Herat (4.5%), the other provinces contributing only sporadically to RANA reintegration volumes.

2.3.2.3. Monitoring mechanisms

Monitoring visits have been carried out at the early stages of the project – at least one after the first month of implementation when IOM provided the second installment, and to the extent of possible afterwards. Monitoring outcomes are recorded in standardized forms and attached within **RANA individual case files**.

⁹. Forms adapted from business development plan forms developed and used by IOM Sarajevo.

2.3.3. Conclusive remarks

Reintegration programs depend upon key elements: (i) accessibility; (ii) opportunities –**scarce in Afghanistan**; and (iii) adequate human resources. They require extensive administrative and operational preparatory work (e.g. list of training facilities; job opportunities; market analysis) and are extremely **human resources consuming** (e.g. counseling and business development staff; procurement staff; monitors). This is antonymic with AVR existing national practices of providing reintegration schemes as incentives for initiating returns under a **limited** timeframe that does not allow for establishing required operational framework. RANA however was able to deliver some forms of reintegration assistance as it built upon IOM presence and programming throughout Afghanistan (e.g. RQA and DDR activities in particular).

The reintegration package has been **adapted at an early stage** in order to **better address the immediate needs** of the returnees. A total of **1,092** returnees have benefited from RANA reintegration package.

Provisions for enrolling in higher education (e.g. university classes) were not foreseen under RANA and could have benefited young adult returnees eager to access university economics or agriculture degrees. The under 25 years of age constitute 37% of the RANA returnees.

RANA reintegration assistance has been offered out of **9 IOM offices** located in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, Faizabad, Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, Bamyian and Jalalabad. Sub-offices reintegration staff, often working part-time on RANA has been covering several provinces - up to 8 provinces in the case of Mazar-e-Sharif.

IOM reintegration staff has been **overloaded** with work under RANA.

Visited IOM team in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif are showing a **high level of dedication** in the fulfillment of their work but might have benefited from institutional training in the field of small entrepreneurial creation and business. This would have enabled them to provide **more substantial and technical counseling**.

From a managerial point of view, more training could have been delivered to the reintegration staff in the field of feasibility market studies, small scale entrepreneurial creation, marketing or access to micro-credit. Also, meeting with relevant sub-offices staff could have been regularly conducted at Kabul level in view of experience and practices sharing. Finally, partnerships with micro-credit institutions for those beneficiaries necessitating further financial assistance could have been pursued if human resources would have allowed.

Last, the training which was meant to be offered to an equivalent number of local residents has not been implemented, since the returnees themselves showed little or no interest.

Overall, **the reintegration package as adjusted in November 2003 was relevant to RANA beneficiaries' age groups** as presented in below table.

Table 3. RANA beneficiaries age groups

Return status	Under 18	18-25	25-40	Over 40	Unknown
Involuntary	23	779	1032	111	38
Voluntary	329	366	912	464	26
Total	352	1145	1944	575	64

2.4. Performance/impact analysis of the small business start up

Before analysing the impact of the reintegration activities undertaken under the program it is worth briefly presenting some social factors specific to Afghanistan.

2.4.1. Afghanistan specific social factors

In terms of education background/skills, most of the encountered beneficiaries can be considered as low skilled workers. They had little exposure/access to training or qualified employment prior to their departure to Europe and encountered low-skilled employment opportunities while in the EU where they were only allowed few hours of work per week. They have been primarily involved in catering, cleaning, construction work as well as other informal activities.

Young women access to education and vocational training face serious social restrictions in Afghanistan and their enrollment can only occur in institutions located in the family direct vicinity.

Afghanistan is a country where the perception of the value of training and higher education remains low (e.g. livelihoods concerns; sons typically reproduce their fathers' livelihood occupation; dearth of opportunities in villages; elderly are by large dictating the community's rules; concept of individual choice does not really exist). Moreover, many returnees do not see training as opportunity as they **seek immediate remunerated activities to feed their families**. The overwhelming majority had traveled without proper documentation to the EU, using costly smuggling networks by air or land roads across Iran-Turkey-Central Europe or Central Asia-Russia and Central Europe. Most of them/most families had to sell their house or land in order to pay for the travel expenses.

In Afghanistan, **family and community support** is paramount for a successful reintegration and re-insertion within the local community. Such support is also essential for engaging into economic activities (e.g. supportive network, access to cash, to customers). **Returnees with no family and with longstanding time outside of the country have fewer chances to reintegrate and being accepted back.**

MoRR airport representatives noted that an important number of involuntary returnees had departed the region from Iran or Pakistan where their family members are still established. Most of them decide to reunify with their families upon arrival in Afghanistan.

Deciding on behalf of another individual bears important social repercussions going beyond one individual and implying its family/tribe as a whole. IOM reintegration officers are well aware of this social rule and could not possibly discourage RANA beneficiaries to set up their business activity in a specific area if they had decided so (e.g. most of the time the beneficiaries and their family members had to invest their own money in the business start up and rental).

2.4.2. Push and pull factors influencing RANA returnee's decision making to return

Interviewed RANA beneficiaries primarily consisted of single male that left Afghanistan to escape Taliban rule and on-going turmoil, or whom departed from neighboring Iran and Pakistan in an attempt to provide livelihoods to their family. A total of 285 families have been assisted under RANA.

The following push and pull elements have been gathered in the course of face-to-face interviews with RANA returnees in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

Push factors

- ✓ After receiving a denial of refugee status and with their reception facilities coming to an end;
- ✓ Prolonged waiting period for asylum requests;
- ✓ Hostile political climate in host country and restrictive employment/livelihoods possibilities.

Pull factors

- ✓ Family circumstances (e.g. most of the RANA returnees are single men whose family remained in Afghanistan or in neighbouring countries);
- ✓ Political changes (e.g. outcomes of the presidential and parliamentary elections);
- ✓ Longing for their home country (e.g. primarily those granted with asylum status or residence permits - a few of encountered RANA beneficiaries);
- ✓ Provision of return incentives and reintegration assistance while they know having limited chances for obtaining legal status. Sometimes received incorrect information and had false expectations.

2.4.3. Impact

The business environment in Afghanistan can be considered as highly volatile with limited opportunities.

Some 21 returnees have been encountered in their business premises at the time of field visits. Such encountering enabled to discuss about their experiences, while gauging on the size of the businesses and their actual viability.

All encountered beneficiaries (including three women who returned respectively with their husband or brother and one alone) acknowledged the importance of the financial assistance received, while stressing that **the amount of €1.500 had not been sufficient to really establish their business**. All have been investing additional money – provided either by family members and/or savings from the national assisted voluntary programs. Female beneficiaries have invested in partnership with male family members actually running the businesses.

Most businesses are **retailing activities**, with only few productive enterprises (e.g. carpentry, garment and orthopedic equipment), thereof reducing growth production and further employment opportunities. They are by large small proximity shops.

Anecdotal conversations with beneficiaries suggest that those beneficiaries who are currently well off (e.g. experienced business persons; those who could purchase distribution license and become retailers) benefited primarily from strong family financial support and would have been able to establish or re-establish their activity without the RANA program. For the vast majority of RANA beneficiaries however, the financial assistance has been of paramount importance even though it only enabled to cover some of the initial costs. **Generated incomes allow for sustaining the basic needs of the family**.

2.4.4. Conclusive remarks

The business startup scheme can be considered as an **essential financial assistance for providing basic livelihoods to returnees**. It enabled timely access to income generation and provides families with basic subsistence.

Activity turn-over is reported by RANA staff and beneficiaries themselves as high, including relocations in areas with fewer competitors or in the vicinity of their inhabitation, or adaptation to seasons, supply and demand. Also, activities may suffer from instable rental agreements. Governmental owned land is reported particularly instable – contracts being often terminated with the appointment of a new governor or mayor and re-allocated to friends/associates.

Finally, encountered returnees report a decline in security, investment opportunities since their return.

2.5. Impact of the local development community projects

Local development community projects were meant to substitute the one by one approach comprised within the training component of the program -offered to an equivalent number of local residents that had not been implemented since the returnees showed little interest into training. The focus was thereafter reoriented to support domiciled population through small scale projects and targeting vulnerable groups, mainly women and children. Local development community projects were identified through partnerships with individuals or NGO/UN stakeholders and the program contributed funds to their expansion, inclusion of specific beneficiary categories, etc. Activities started in May 2005.

Table 4. Local community projects financed under RANA

S.No	Project Title	Location	Target Group	Total	Budget US\$
1	Welding workshop – training	Kabul	Returnees	10	1,720
2	Training and employment	Kabul	Women	50	6,050
3	Training and employment	Kabul	Women	15	3,400
4	School for orphan girls	Jalalabad	Children	50	6,500
5	Special needs school	Kabul	Children	20	4,600
6	Training and employment	Kabul	Women	114	8,405
7	Training and employment	Kabul	Women	60	9,440
8	Beauty salon and training center	Kabul	Women	5	1,800
9	Girls orphanage	Heart	Children	120	5,000
10	Chaghcharan City orphanage – emergency winterization project	Ghor	Children	350	13,000
11	Disease prevention initiative - waste management project	Mazar	Returnees & local residents	7000	9,600
12	On the job training & employment – blanket production	Kabul	Women	25	11,500
			Total	7,819	81,015

Source: project proposals

2.5.1. Review of implemented projects through a “good practice” analysis

The consulted visited a selection of three projects implemented under the local development community component of the program. A particular focus has been placed on their target groups and impact through a “good practice” analysis.¹⁰

A “good practice” for local development community projects related to returns is therefore a project made in a specific context -**areas of high return**- that has relevant characteristics from the point of view of the beneficiaries, whose strategy is **to mitigate potential tensions between returnees and remaining residents**, the builds upon **local community involvement** and which contributes to **enhancing the social and living environment** of the local population.

The grid analysis used for the purpose of this evaluation allows the analysis of 7 variables described below:

- (i) **Ownership and participation dimension:** direct involvement and ownership process in the practice of beneficiaries from planning to implementation stages;
- (ii) **Impact:** economic dimension, sustainable and social impact on the life of the beneficiaries;
- (iii) **Social dimension:** the relational dimension of people participating in realizing the project;
- (iv) **Cost efficiency and effectiveness:** a balance of the costs needed to realise a determinate project and the economic advantages that derive from it;
- (v) **Organisational dimension:** analysis of the group of players and the ways the project/activities are organized (cooperative, individual firms, management unit, links with local actors etc.);
- (vi) **Transferability:** the possibility to be reproduced in a different cultural and territorial context.
- (vii) **Visibility:** identification of the project purpose by local communities/authorities.

2.5.1.1. The Waste management project in Mazar-e-Sharif

Project objectives: to provide 32 metallic disposal garbage containers around the Blue Mosque in Mazar-e-Sharif. The area is located at the heart of the city and edges one of the city main bazaar.

Ownership and participatory dimension: the waste management project was designed by IOM Mazar in agreement with the local residents and traders and the local municipality. The disposal containers were produced by a company established by a returnee that came back from Iran.

Impact: an area cleared of garbage that before piled up on the streets; a contribution to upgrading the living and working environment of local residents in this dense populated area of the city; an important public health benefit.

Social dimension: participatory project involving returnees from Iran, local residents and traders.

Cost efficiency and effectiveness: a total budget of €7.200 for the production, transportation and instalment of 32 metallic disposal containers that benefit an area at the heart of the commercial, social and spiritual life of the city.

Organizational dimension: one-time initiative. The municipality of Mazar providing necessary follow up by regularly collecting the garbage.

Transferability: high.

Visibility: limited overtime (e.g. few months after the inauguration).

¹⁰ The term “good practice” has been introduced in the EU documents to indicate a significant experience made in a specific area that can be transferred or that can be a point of reference for other areas. Within the short implementation timeframe of this study, only few practices have been analyzed.

2.5.1.2. Training and employment: support to the Kabul dolls project

Project objectives: training and income generating activities to 15 vulnerable women.

Ownership and participatory dimension: the Kabul doll project is a small women organization established in 2004 with the support of NATO International Security Force (ISAF). It is administered by Afghan women -mainly widows and head of households who have returned from Pakistan and Iran. The project therefore does not benefit local communities directly but rather vulnerable individuals.

Impact: 15 women provided with basic training and employed 5 hours/day for a salary of 100 AFA/day (some €1.5).

Social dimension: participatory project involving women working in the organization one room premises.

Cost efficiency and effectiveness: a total budget of €2.500 for the purchasing of material and equipment necessary for the realization of the dolls and the training and subsequent employment of 15 women.

Organizational dimension: one-time initiative. IOM provided funding for completing the activities, the project aiming to reach sustainability by the sale of the production (to international community representatives).

Transferability: high.

Visibility: limited.

2.5.1.3. On-the job training and employment: support to the Afghan Women Vocational Skills learning Centre.

Project objectives: on-the-job training and income generating activities to 50 vulnerable women.

Ownership and participatory dimension: the Afghan Women Vocational Skills learning Centre is an NGO that was created in Pakistan in 1998. AWVSK is also a registered productive company contracted by the Afghan Government for providing all army uniforms.

Impact: 50 vulnerable women provided with six month professional training in tailoring and subsequently employed by the company. Employed for a salary ranging from US\$3 per day for the lowest skilled, up to US\$100-150 per month. The program did not benefit local communities but vulnerable individuals.

Social dimension: contractual obligations.

Cost efficiency and effectiveness: a total budget of €4.600 for the purchasing of materials and 25 sawing machines equipment necessary for the training and the training.

Organizational dimension: IOM provided funding for completing the activities, the association/business firm employing thereafter the project aiming to reach sustainability by the sale of the production.

Transferability: a similar project was granted to AWVSK for the training of 25 vulnerable women for the production of blankets (allocated budget: €8.500 including the purchasing of sawing machines given to each of the beneficiaries).

Visibility: limited.

2.5.2. Conclusive remarks

While visited RANA local development community funded projects have indubitably **benefited individuals** in a quite sustainable manner (e.g. vocational training, in-come generating activities) while also providing substantial financial assistance to the umbrella organizations providing services (e.g. purchasing of materials and equipment, payment of trainer' salaries, etc.). The impact of the activities upon local communities however is difficult to assert at the exception of the garbage disposal project in Mazar-e-Sharif.

It would have been important to clearly define the scope of a local development community project. Its area of implementation: **areas of high return**; the object of the strategy –**to mitigate potential tensions between returnees and remaining residents**, the stress on the importance of **local community involvement** in project design as well as defining its main objectives - to contribute to **enhancing the social and living environment** of the local population.

Synergies with existing community based development programs (CDCs) such as those undertaken by UN HABITAT in could have been developed.

3. Conclusions

3.1. Expected qualitative results and results achieved

The project document had foreseen to provide up to 5,000 Afghans residing in EU Member States with different legal status, assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance in a safe, orderly and dignified manner. While RANA project document does not refer to enforced returns –under the responsibility of each of the EU Member States, non-voluntary returnees have also been eligible for RANA assistance after their formal admission into Afghanistan.

Table 5. RANA quantitative results and achievements

Time frame	Expected results	Results achieved
Upon arrival	5,000 returnees assisted in completing formalities upon arrival and provided with basic reintegration information	4,080 returnees assisted upon arrival, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2,097 voluntary returnees and ✓ 1,983 involuntary returnees
	3,000 returnees assisted with onward in-country transportation and overnight accommodation	451 returnees provided air or land transportation within Afghanistan to their final destination 565 returnees provided with immediate overnight accommodation
Within implementation time frame	5,000 returnees provided with counselling and referral services	Some 1,300 returnees provided with reintegration scheme counselling and referral services
	Up to 1,500 returnees provided with training, 3 months board and lodging or other reintegration support	1,092 returnees provided with reintegration support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 95 with education ✓ 834 through establishing businesses
	1,500 local residents provided with training under a ‘one for one’ approach	Instead, launch of local community projects having directly benefited to some 819 persons, women and children in particular

RANA has provided **expedite and timely reception and counselling assistance for returnees in needs.**

Assisted voluntary return assistance was facilitated for 2,097 returnees primarily returning from the Netherlands (representing 35.2% of the total of voluntary returnees) and Germany (35%); followed by returnees from the United Kingdom (8.6%), Austria (6%), and Denmark (5.9%). Greece, Belgium, France, Finland, Italy and Finland accounting for the remaining countries of return.

Primary accommodation, transportation and referrals to RANA reintegration assistance was also granted to **1,983 involuntary returnees after their immigration clearance.** Most of these returnees were deported from the United Kingdom (88.5%), Germany (11%), the Netherlands (3.6%) Denmark (2.2%) or France (2%); remaining cases coming from Belgium, Portugal and Sweden. It should be noted that to avoid any confusion with the VARRP program, the British Government started financing at the end of 2003 a specific program for assisting involuntary returnees from the UK and implemented by AGEF. Since this date involuntary returnees from the UK could not be eligible for RANA assistance.

Basic medical care and medical referrals have been made available by two IOM physicians (one male, one female) at the airport in a small clinic. Most patients have been treated for petty infections either at the airport upon arrival, in the Jangalak Reception Centre or at the IOM Kabul office. In case of most serious disease, referrals were made to relevant specialists or to the main Hospital. IOM sending missions have consistently informed IOM Kabul about special medical cases for their diligent preparedness and follow up. It was reported that a few of the involuntary returnees showed psychiatric problems, and were subsequently referred to available specialists for care.

Overnight accommodation and full boarding was offered in Kabul for a foreseen duration of 2 weeks. Arrangements were made to accommodate families in single private rooms. Derogations were granted to accommodate returnees without family and place of return for a longer period.

Local transportation was made available to all those who needed it. Most of the time, voluntary returnees were picked up at the airport by family members. 451 returnees however availed themselves to this option, the top 7 prime destinations being within the Kabul province (125 persons); followed by Herat (79 persons); Balkh (68 persons); Nangarhar (62 persons); Kandahar (18 persons); Baghlan(15 persons) and Parwan (11 persons), the other provinces accounting respectively for less than 9 persons transported.

RANA has also been instrumental in providing **assistance for enrolling in educational and training activities or in establishing small businesses to some 1,092 returnees** (including 65 women). At the time of the project' revision, only 300 small businesses start-up were envisaged. The component was particularly attractive to returnees and a total of **834 small businesses have been established** under RANA. **The program allowed its beneficiaries to access immediate subsistence livelihoods;** a key element for insuring sustainable returns.

3.2. RANA SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is an important tool for assessing programs or initiatives in their environment. While 'strengths' & 'weaknesses' refer to the internal factors of the program, 'opportunities' & 'threats' refer to external elements imposed on the program environment.

SWOT Analysis of RANA <i>Source: meeting key informants</i>	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A pilot initiative embracing all Member States, providing concrete and timely reception and reintegration assistance upon arrival and benefiting both voluntary and enforced returns. ✓ Building upon existing Assisted Voluntary Return Programs managed by IOM in EU Member States. ✓ Building upon IOM Kabul presence in Afghanistan (i.e. main offices located in Kabul and 8 sub-offices throughout the country) and programs (e.g. AVR, DDR, RQA, etc.). ✓ Flexible approach and services readjusted based on needs assessments/requests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Senior managerial turn over in Kabul and sub-offices. ✓ Requires sufficient and specialized human resources for optimal counselling assistance. ✓ Synergies with on-going small scale business creation, access to micro credit were not pursued. ✓ Local development community projects have not benefited community-but vulnerable individuals.
Threats	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continuous degrading security environment. ✓ Scarcity of investment and employment opportunities and land ownership issues. ✓ Family support is an essential element of successful reintegration. Returnees without perennial family and community ties have little chance to reintegrate. ✓ Discriminatory vis-à-vis involuntary returnees coming back from Iran and Pakistan –with little assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Member States recognizing the value of reintegration assistance for enabling sustainable returns. ✓ Linking development funding to return programs. ✓ Developing reintegration scheme components involving local entrepreneurs (e.g. through supporting hiring of 1 local resident and 1 returnee). ✓ IOM to strengthen its small scale entrepreneurial expertise and service delivery.

4. Recommendations

Pertaining to similar program design

In the field of program development:

- ✓ Projects like RANA are entirely focused on achieving sustainable reintegration for its beneficiaries; therefore the return and post return assistance processes should be kept separate in the definition of objectives and numerical objectives should mention beneficiaries, grants, or any other variable in relation to actual reintegration. Setting, as a principal objective, a certain number of returns (in RANA's case, 5,000 over a period of 15 months) can be a misleading goal.
- ✓ IOM sending missions should be involved at the outset of the program design in close consultation with EU Member States.
- ✓ Pre-counseling departure and information dissemination budget should be included for IOM sending missions.
- ✓ In determining financial levels, greater amounts should be set aside for the development of self-employment projects. Greater allocation of resources towards monitoring functions of field staff - as key element of the reintegration strategy - should also be considered.

- ✓ Member States should be financially participating to the program through existing AVR programs.

In the field of program implementation:

- ✓ Project steering committee should be established and regularly convened including a broad range of stakeholders (EU Member States representatives, MoRR, UNHCR and any other relevant organizations depending upon agenda).
- ✓ IOM sending missions-AVR counselors should be send on TDY to better understand the operational and environment constraints prevailing in Afghanistan.
- ✓ UNHCR country profile updates should be distributed on a regular basis to all involved partners.

Pertaining to reintegration package

While RANA demonstrated the possibilities of matching returns with reconstruction efforts, program implementation could be enhanced for optimizing the level of counselling and assistance to returnees while answering to higher professional standards expected from donors.

In the field of training and human development:

- ✓ IOM staff should received advanced specialized training in the field of business development, marketing analysis as well as micro-credit.
- ✓ Provisions for beginners and advanced business courses could be made enable for interested returnees to enrol in registered institutions.

In the field of reintegration components:

- ✓ Enhanced financial provisions could be foreseen (e.g. €1.500 is insufficient) and access/linkages to micro-credit schemes facilitated to complement global support whenever feasible (for productive investment in particular).
- ✓ Provisions for enrolling in higher education (e.g. university classes) could be foreseen, including boarding and lodging in the university dormitory. A one-per-one component (one returnee/one local resident) could be envisaged.
- ✓ Support to local entrepreneurs could be envisaged building upon the successful pilot funded by the Berlin Municipality in Kosovo and implemented by IOM. The pilot has provided financial assistance to local entrepreneurs under the condition that they would hire one local resident and one returnee for a duration of 2 years.
- ✓ An in-depth review of successful reintegration initiatives and their lessons learnt should be undertaken.

Annex 1. RANA evaluation visits timetable

Place	Date	Activities	Remarks
Brussels	May 29	Meeting IOM Brussels, Henk Vandamme (RANA liaison officer), Valon Halimi (AVR information officer) EC, JLS Patrick Lefevre	Patrick.Lefevre@ec.europa.eu Hvandamme@iom.int
Paris-Dubai	May 30	International travel	Overnight in Dubai
Dubai-Kabul	May 31	International travel Meeting H��l��ne FORS, (IOM AVR program manager) and Ali Haider (Senior reintegration assistant)	Hfors@iom.int Ahaider@iom.int
Kabul	June 1 (Friday)	IOM Office – review of documentation Meeting with Fernando Arocena (CoM)	Farocena@iom.int
Kabul	June 2	Meeting Guillaume Teerling (First Secretary at the Royal Netherlands Embassy) Meeting Elisabeth Rousset (EC Deputy Head of Operations)	guillaume.teerling@minbuza.nl elisabeth.rousset@ec.europa.eu
Kabul	June 3	Meeting Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation Mr Hadi; Khawja Fitri (Advisor) and Khair Mohammad (MoRR representative at the airport) Visit MoRR Jangalack Reception Centre Meeting UNHCR Aurvasi Patel and Aziz (Senior international & local Protection Officers) Airport: meeting IOM Airport Coordination Cell (Abdul Sayed Senior Ops and Barikzai Saleha)	fitrimr@yahoo.com aurvasi@unhcr.com Asayed@iom.int
Kabul-Mazar	June 4	Travel to Mazar-e-Sharif Meeting with Gulham Rabbani Ansri (AVR reintegration program assistant) Visit local community project (waste management)	UNHAS flight gansri@iom.int
Mazar-e-Sharif	June 5-6-7	Visit RANA returnees beneficiaries (small businesses) Meeting UNHCR Head of sub-office (Debbie Elizondo) and protection team (Tomoko Fukumara and Abdul Khan Adel)	elizondo@unhcr.org fukumara@unhcr.org
Mazar-Kabul	June 8	Return to Kabul by road	UNHAS flight cancelled on June 7
Kabul	June 9	Visit returnees beneficiaries (small businesses) Meeting Iqubal Makati (UK Returns Liaison Officer, British Embassy)	Iqubal.makati@fco.gov.uk
Kabul	June 10	Meeting with Abbas Ebrahimi (IOM data clerk) Visit local community project and beneficiaries Meeting Charlotte Olsen (Deputy Head of Mission of the Danish Embassy)	chasols@um.dk

Kabul	June 11	Visit beneficiaries and local community project Meeting with IOM AVR medical officer	
Kabul- Dubai	June 12	Departure to Dubai Drafting report	UNHAS 8.30 a.m.
Dubai-Paris	June 13	International flight to Paris	AF 11.40 a.m.
Paris-Geneva	June 14	Departure to Geneva by train	Departure time: 5.40 p.m.
Geneva-Paris	June 15	Meeting Nicoletta Giordano (Head of AVR), Christophe Franzetti (Head of Evaluation Unit), and Patricia Reber Hashemee (Donor Relations Officer, Division of Program Support), Christine Adam, (former AVR and Operation officer in IOM Helsinki)	cfranzetti@iom.int Ngigordano@iom.int cadam@iom.int Departure time: 19.23 p.m.
Paris	June 16-17	Drafting report	
Paris	June 18	Phone interviews with Dirk Brouwer (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands) Lorena Lando (IOM Kabul DCOM) Maria Brons (IOM den Haag, program development officer) Drafting report	dirk- jan.brouwer@minbuza.nl llando@iom.int mbrons@iom.int
Paris	June 21	Phone interviews with Henrik Jespersen (Chief Advisor, Humanitarian Assistance and NGO Cooperation, Danish MFA) IOM Nuremberg, Joachim Mussotter (REAG- GAP/RANA Ops) and Nasim Faruk (DHOM)	henjes@um.dk jmussotter@iom.int nfaruk@iom.int
Paris	June 23-24	Phone interview with Iqbal Mohamad (IOM London, in charge of RANA); Leif Bach Christensen (Immigration Attaché, Danish Ministry of Integration) Electronic communication with Vincent Houver (IOM Kabul former AVR manager) Drafting and submission of draft report	moiqbal@iom.int lec@inm.dk vhouver@iom-iraq.net
Paris	June 25	Submission of draft report	Final report to be submitted upon reception of IOM comments

Annex 2. List of stakeholders met or contacted

In Europe		
ORGANISATION	PERSON AND POSITION	DAY
EC	Patrick Lefevre, Directorate General JLS,	May 29
IOM Brussels	Henk Vandamme, RANA liaison officer Valon Halimi, AVR information officer	May 29
IOM Helsinki	Christine Adam, former AVR operation officer - met in Geneva	June 15
IOM Den Haag	Maria Brons, program development officer	June 18
IOM Geneva	Nicoletta Giordano, head of AVR Christophe Franzetti, head of Evaluation Unit Patricia Reber Hashemee, donor relations officer, division of program support	June 15
IOM London	Iqbal Mohamad, AVR officer in charge of RANA	June 19
IOM Nuremberg	Joachim Mussotter, REAG-GAP/RANA operation officer Nasim Faruk, deputy head of mission	June 21
Danish MFA	Henrik Jespersen, chief advisor humanitarian assistance and NGO cooperation	June 19
Danish Ministry of Integration	Leif Bach Christensen, Immigration Attaché	June 23
Dutch MFA	Dirk Brouwer, department for international cooperation	June 18
German Ministry of Interior	Martin W. Köhler, department for migration and asylum seekers	June 21
In Afghanistan		
ORGANISATION	PERSON AND POSITION	DAY
EC	Elisabeth Rousset, deputy chief of operations	June 2
IOM Kabul	Fernando Arocena, chief of Mission	June 2
	Helene Fors, AVR program manager	May 31-
	Ali Haider, RANA senior reintegration assistant	June 11
	Abbas Ebrahimi, data clerk	June 10
	Doctor Abdalla, medical officer	June 11
	Airport coordination cell: Abdul Sayed, senior operations officer and Barikzai Saleha	June 3
	Lorena Lando, deputy chief of mission	June 18
Vincent Houver, former IOM Kabul AVR program manager	June 23	
IOM Mazar e-Sharif	Gulham Rabbani Ansri, AVR reintegration program assistant	June 4-7
Ministry of Repatriation and Reintegration	Mr Hadi, deputy minister Khawja Fitri, advisor Khair Mohammad, MoRR representative at the airport	June 3
UNHCR Kabul	Aurvasi Patel, senior international protection officer Aziz, senior local protection officers	June 3
UNHCR Mazar-e-Sharif	Debbie Elizondo, head of sub-office Tomoko Fukumara, Abdul Khan Adel protection officers	June 5
British Embassy	Iqbal Makati, returns liaison officer	June 9
Danish Embassy	Charlotte Olsen, deputy head of mission	June 10
Netherlands Embassy	Guillaume Teerling, first secretary	June 2