

Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Papers Series

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FOSTERING
RETURNEES'
EMPLOYMENT



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Cover photo: Bernadette returned from Libya embarked on a difficult journey back home. Once back in Kribi she was supported with reintegration assistance by IOM Cameroon that firstly provided her support in medical and psychological care. She attended business trainings and developed her own business plan for a new shop by the sea in Kribi. © IOM 2022/Beyond Borders Media.

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INTRODUCTION

Welder on steel bars, Vinh Long, Vietnam.
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AIM AND SCOPE OF THIS PAPER

Migrant reintegration programmes have been largely focused on the set-up of microbusinesses. Self-employment and entrepreneurship fit the profile and preferences of many returnees: they allow returnees to rapidly generate an income, show relatives that they are back on their feet, and overcome perceived challenges in (re)accessing the labour market, especially when they have limited skills.

However, **not every returnee has the willingness, skills or mindset to become an entrepreneur.** Some may prefer to find a job and earn a regular salary. Jobs can provide a more stable source of income than small businesses and be better adapted to some returnees' skills and experience. Furthermore, jobs in the formal economy may also come with additional social benefits, including integration into social protection schemes. Despite this, **waged employment has remained a challenging area of support in migrant reintegration programmes.**

Migration and employment are core aspects of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), that among others calls for full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men (goal 8).¹ The [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) further links migrant reintegration with employment, as states have committed to “facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants [...] by providing them equal access to [...] employment opportunities and decent work [...] in order to fully build upon their [...] skills and human capital as active members of society and contributors to sustainable development in the country of origin upon return.”²

While the challenges faced by returnees to get into jobs have been the object of many studies, what has been done - and what can be done – to foster returnees' employment has received far less attention. This is what this paper seeks to explore.

It looks at **the various approaches and types of interventions that can be envisaged to foster returnees' waged employment** as a key factor to reach sustainable reintegration. Taking stock of practices and approaches implemented in a variety of contexts, it proposes **a broad panorama of possible support activities.** It looks at employment support from the supply side (“improving employability”), the demand side (“creating jobs”), and the matching of supply and demand (“facilitating employment”). It does so following an order that reflects the level of support and investment required by reintegration programmes as well as the potential number of beneficiaries and broader impact of these interventions, thus starting with describing activities and interventions that can help improve returnees' employability, then focusing on facilitating employment for returnees by connecting returnees and jobs more or less directly, and finally looking at how programmes can support job creation, which does not only impact returnees' reintegration, but also contributes to sustainable development. After describing these areas of interventions, the paper proposes recommendations for future programmes aimed to foster the employment of returning migrants.

This knowledge paper is intended to **provide ideas to** reintegration, development and employment **practitioners and policymakers** worldwide on concrete support activities that can be carried out to foster returnees' waged employment. Focusing on practices that can be implemented or supported in the framework of reintegration programmes, it does not describe policy interventions that can be carried out at a higher level to foster economic environments conducive to employment. Moreover, it does not address access to justice or other procedures related to employment abroad and the portability of social benefits acquired through employment in host countries.

¹ See in particular targets 8.5 and 8.8.

Target 8.5: By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.

Target 8.8: Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.

Target 4.4 is also relevant: it calls to “substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”.

² Objective 21 (h)



Written by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, this knowledge paper is based on a broad desk review as well as on interviews with and inputs from practitioners from various types of organizations working in different geographical contexts. It takes stock of good practices described in dedicated factsheets published by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub and incorporates numerous examples of activities implemented by IOM and other organisations.

RETURNEES' EMPLOYMENT: A CHALLENGING AREA OF SUPPORT

As mentioned above, returnees' employment is **a challenging area of support** in migrant reintegration programmes. These challenges are well known and have been largely researched: they can be related to the labour market realities in countries of origin (CoOs), to returnees' profiles, and to some extent to reintegration programme themselves that have often focused on entrepreneurship.

Common obstacles to returnees' employment linked to the socio-economic context include:³

- Weak economic situation and widespread unemployment: lack of employment opportunities and of decent jobs in the country of origin often contributes to the decision to migrate in the first place,⁴ and upon migrants' return the employment situation might not have improved much;
- Prevalence of the informal sector (without regular contracts or incomes) and of microbusinesses (with very few larger businesses able to employ people).

BOX 1

Typical challenges related to informal jobs

The informal economy plays a major role in the economies of many countries. In some of the major countries of origin of migrants returning through Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes, more than 80% of the workforce works in informal jobs.⁵ Jobs in the informal economy often combine several of the following characteristics:

- individual or small-scale economic activities
- casual employment
- labour relations based on personal networks (relatives, friends, social relations)
- low-skilled work

- undeclared employment and social insecurity for worker
- poor working conditions: labour-intensive activities; lack of respect of labour laws; no decent jobs
- unregistered businesses with low prospects for growth

These characteristics suggest that, while a significant proportion of the workforce in AVRR programmes' main countries of origin is active in the informal economy, it cannot be considered as a sector conducive to stable and regular incomes and decent jobs.

³ Reintegration programmes take place in a wide variety of countries (IOM implements reintegration activities in more than 160 countries) and contexts, including in upper-middle and in low-income countries, in development and post-crisis contexts, in urban and rural areas, and so forth. These contexts are marked by very different socio-economic realities, including very different levels of employment opportunities. The below represents typical issues faced under reintegration programmes, but it is acknowledged that it cannot reflect the wide variety of contexts reintegration programmes operate in.

⁴ For instance, "according to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey, 95 per cent of Gambian irregular migrants surveyed cited "lack of work" as their primary reason for migrating." IOM, [Alternatives to Irregular Migration: IOM Launches Vocational Training Programme for Gambians](#) (2019).

⁵ 61.2 per cent (58.1 per cent women; 63.0 per cent men) of the global workforce (population aged 15 and over) works informally. The highest rates of informal employment are found in Africa (85.8 per cent, with 89.7 per cent among women and 82.7 per cent among men). The Asia and the Pacific region with 68.2 per cent and the Arab States with 68.6 per cent have almost the same level of informality. In the Americas, informality amounts to 40.0 per cent, and 25.1 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. (ILO, *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture*, 3rd ed. (2018), as cited in ILO, [How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers, Guide for Employment Services Providers, Second Edition](#) (2020).



Common obstacles to returnees' employment linked to returnees' profiles and perceptions include:

- Stigmatisation (e.g.; perception of returnees as competitors for jobs and/or as unstable or unreliable; perception of deportees as criminals)
- Lack of appropriate social networks
- Low or inadequate education and skills (e.g.; educational background and skills not aligned to labour market needs; skills acquired abroad not adapted to labour market in countries of origin; de-skilling abroad)
- Lack of proof of skills and qualifications, lack of formal diploma
- Need of immediate income (no time for training or for uncertain job searching process)
- Perception of wages as too low and of working conditions as difficult or indecent
- Demotivation (e.g., lack of jobs prevents returnees from trying to register with employment agencies)

While these obstacles may push returnees to favour microbusinesses over waged employment as a way to overcome difficulties to (re)access the labour market and ensure quick earnings, returnees enrolled in reintegration programmes may also resist employment support as opposed to microbusiness support in that they may perceive microbusiness set up as a 'real assistance', that has a concrete monetary value, while employment support is immaterial and does not necessarily lead to successful outcomes.

There are not only barriers to returnees' employment: in some contexts, **employers may actually be particularly keen to employ them**, as they consider that returnees can bring added value to their enterprise or organisation thanks to their experience abroad, for instance in terms of work culture, language or skills acquired. This is for instance highlighted in the case study focusing on Guatemala (cf. section 2.6).



A PANORAMA OF ACTIVITIES CONTRIBUTING TO FOSTER RETURNEES' EMPLOYMENT

Women at work in a rice plantation in Odisha, India.
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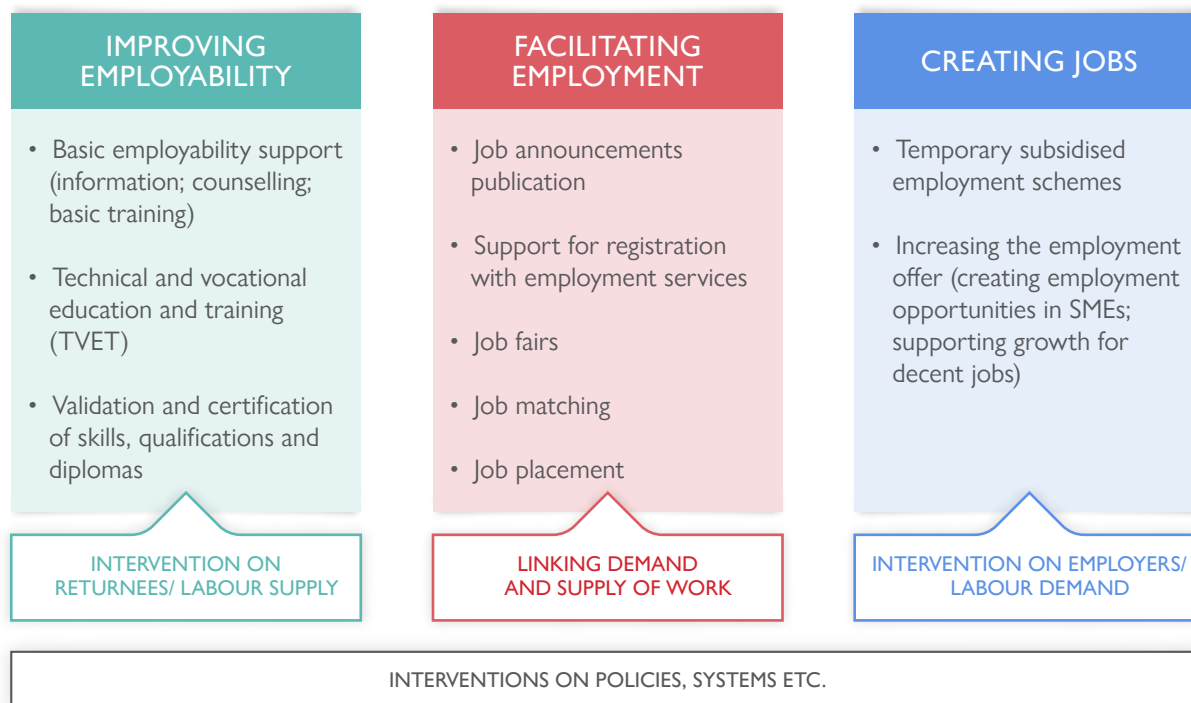


A large range of approaches and activities can be implemented to support employment for returnees, from basic provision of information on the job market or on job vacancies, to job placement but also the provision of support to the private sector for job creation. This paper presents these approaches and activities, and proposes a number of examples of their practical implementation in a variety of contexts and by a variety of actors.

Some promising and good practices related to returnees' employment have already been described in dedicated factsheets developed and published by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, including on training matching labour demand ([Reintegration good practices #2 - Skills and employability enhancement in Burkina Faso](#)), on job counselling, training and competency certification ([Reintegration good practices #4 - Support for Returnee Employability and Empowerment Through Vocational Training and Job Search in Mali](#)), on pre-departure training to strengthen returnees' technical and motivational skills ([Reintegration good practices #7 - Pre-departure reintegration assistance in Morocco: orientation, counselling and training](#)) and on jobs creation through Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) support ([Reintegration good practices #9 - Boosting returnees' employment through support to SMEs in Iraq](#), and [Reintegration good practices #10 - Supporting SMEs and former returnees to create jobs for migrants returning to Afghanistan](#)). Additional examples will be provided to illustrate the activities described.

While different categorizations can be established, **three main categories of support are proposed in this paper: improving returnees' employability; facilitating returnees' employment; and creating jobs for returnees**. They are presented separately for the sake of clarifying their respective scope and objectives, but in practice **various types of support are often provided in parallel and overlap with each other**, as many of the examples provided illustrate. Returnees' employment can also be supported by intervening on migration, labour and related socio-economic policies in the country or area of origin, but such interventions are beyond the scope of this paper.

Figure 1. Categories of support for returnees' employment





BOX 2



1. IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY

In many return contexts, finding employment – and even more, decent and sustainable employment - is challenging for a variety of structural reasons, such as high rates of unemployment in areas of return, skills mismatch, or the prevalence of an informal economy and/or of micro-entrepreneurship. Other challenges are more directly linked to the jobseekers themselves: lack of awareness on how to look for a job; lack of knowledge of the labour market needs and opportunities; lack of adequate skills to meet these needs and opportunities; weakness of personal networks; lack of formalization or recognition of the diploma, skills or work experience acquired abroad; and so forth.

Programmes can intervene at both the structural and the individual levels to address these challenges. **This section focuses on interventions at the individual level to address some of the challenges related to returnee jobseekers in order to improve their employability.**





'Employability' relates to "portable competencies and qualifications that enhance an individual's capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work"⁶, or to a "combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during career"⁷. In this paper, 'improving employability' is used to refer to **activities aimed to better enable returnees to get into employment**.

The following table and successive section describe the types of activities that can be carried out to improve returnees' chances to get into employment.

Table 1. Improving returnees' employability: types of support

Type of support	Consists of	Key actors	Example of methods/ tools
Basic employability support			
<i>Information provision</i>	Providing returnees with information on the labour market, requested skills, job searching tools and support available, etc.	Public and private employment services Employers IOs/ NGOs	Information session in-person or remotely, individually or in group Web-based services (websites, apps)
<i>Career guidance and counselling</i>	Supporting returnees identifying their skills, interests, employment targets and opportunities, and defining how to reach their objectives in terms of employment (e.g., through education, training, job hunting, etc.)	Education and training institutions Public and private employment services IOs/ NGOs	Meeting in-person or remotely, individually or in group Mentoring Web-based services
<i>CV and interview support</i>	Improving returnees' chances to get a job interview and perform well during the interview, by supporting them writing their CV and/or providing training on CV and interview techniques	Education and training institutions Public and private employment services IOs/ NGOs	In-person or remotely E-learning
<i>Training on soft and other basic skills</i>	Improving returnees' soft skills and other basic skills usually useful in workplaces, to increase their chances to get a job and be better prepared for employment. They include training on communication, teamwork, digital literacy, etc.	Training institutions Public and private employment services IOs/ NGOs	In-person or remotely E-learning
<i>Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)</i>	Providing returnees with knowledge and skills required to get a job or advance their career in a specific sector (improve their performance/ job opportunities)	Education and training institutions Public and private employment services Private sector Professional organisations IOs/ NGOs	In-person or remote training E-learning Work-based training (internship, short term placement, on-the-job training)
<i>Validation and certification of skills, qualifications and diplomas</i>	Assessing and certifying the competencies, skills, qualifications and learning outcomes of returnees to improve their employability in their sector of education or of professional experience	Employers and professional organisations Trade unions Training providers Higher education institutions Relevant ministries and authorities	Formal accreditation systems On-site practical assessment

⁶ UNESCO, [TVETipedia Glossary](#).

⁷ European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), [Terminology of European education and training policy: A selection of 100 key terms](#) (2008)



1.1 Basic employability support

The following types of support are combined under this heading: **information provision** (on jobs and labour market); **career guidance and counselling**; **training on job hunting, CV writing and interview techniques**; and **training on soft skills and other basic skills**.

These support activities aim to inform beneficiaries about the labour market, jobs available and skills required; to improve returnees' chances to find adequate job vacancies and get a job interview, and to perform well during the interview; and to provide them with basic skills that are relevant in many workplaces (such as communication, teamwork, financial literacy, digital literacy, and so forth).

The scope of these “basic employability support” activities is relatively straightforward, and they are especially relevant for employment in the formal sector and where the recruitment process is open. **Projects often combine several of these activities for more effective results**, as illustrated in examples presented in other sections.



In **Colombia**, IOM organized workshops for returnees, actors involved in their reintegration (e.g., social workers), and other labour market stakeholders, to discuss basic skills needed when entering the labour market, such as how to write a resume and how to prepare for an interview. Returnees considered that these workshops helped them to better highlight their professional strengths, and highly qualified returnees could better tailor their application to the jobs available. The workshops were also useful for the other reintegration and employment stakeholders who could learn about the profiles and needs of returnees.⁸



TIPS

- ◇ Up-to-date information must be available. Information on the labour market should thus be based on recent labour market assessments, while information on job opportunities and skills needed should be based on regular exchange of information with employment services and employers (including direct employers, employer organizations, chambers of commerce, industry organizations).
- ◇ These types of activities must be adapted to returnees' profiles and needs.
- ◇ While soft skills are probably not the main factor influencing recruitment, it is important to consider them as part of a comprehensive employment support.

⁸ IOM, [2018 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights](#) (2019), p. 70



1.2 Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

“Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is understood as comprising education, training and skills development relating to a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods.”⁹ It refers to “non-academic technical education and practical training that develop the skills and knowledge of apprentices (learners of trades or crafts) working in different sectors of industry and trainees / students trained in different TVET Institutions”.¹⁰

Be it by providing trainees with new skills, by strengthening their existing skills or by formalizing their competencies and providing them with formal certificates (see also next section), **TVET is a strong instrument to increase people's employability as it provides them with the skills required to get into jobs.**

In the context of reintegration, TVET can be particularly relevant to address the widespread mismatch between returnees' skills and labour market needs, and thus to make returnees more employable. Some reintegration programmes include a TVET component in their support activities portfolio, though in most cases training is provided through referrals to TVET institutions and other specialized partners.

BOX 3

Vocational Skills Development (VSD)

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) uses the broad concept of Vocational Skills Development (VSD), instead of TVET. VSD “encompasses all organised learning processes for development of technical, social, and personal skills and qualifications that contribute to sustainable long-term integration of trained people in decent

working conditions into the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis. Thus, this broader vision of VSD has shifted away from classical Technical and Vocational Education and Training (VET/TVET), which aims at acquiring qualifications for employment in the formal economy.”¹¹

In **the Gambia**, IOM has partnered with the government, the private sector and other agencies to provide training to returning migrants. Through partnership with the National Youth Service Scheme (under the Ministry of Youth and Sports), Sterling Consortium and EMPAS Poultry Processing Company, more than 150 returnees received technical and vocational educational training in various sectors including auto-mechanic, construction, carpentry, CCTV & satellite installation, electronics and electronics installation, painting and decoration, plumbing, poultry, tailoring, and welding. Training was provided by five private companies and two government training centres. IOM worked with its partners to tailor the training to returnees' needs; for instance the training timeframe was reduced and some typical entry requirements were adjusted to make sure returnees were not excluded. While the trainees received a start-up kit with the basic materials and tools necessary to start working in their chosen sector, the skills acquired can also be used to get into a job. Partnership with the International Trade Centre also allowed referring some returnees assisted by IOM for a training in hospitality organized with the Gambia Hospitality and Training Institute. The training facilitated their employment in the tourism industry, which is one of the main sectors of the Gambia's economy.



⁹ UNESCO, TVETipedia Glossary, as cited in ILO, [Glossary of Skills and Labour Migration](#).

¹⁰ Wahba, M., Glossary of Terms for TVET, Assessment and Verification (2013), as cited in UNESCO, [TVETipedia Glossary](#).

¹¹ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, [Vocational skills development: key to employment and income. Insights into the SDC's cooperation in vocational skills development](#) (2016)



ARCHIPELAGO is a vocational training programme that aims to strengthen youth and vulnerable groups' employability by increasing their professional skills, and to enhance employment opportunities by strengthening the entrepreneurial capacity of micro, small and medium enterprises in twelve countries in **West and Central Africa**. Funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and implemented by sequa gGmbH in cooperation with EUROCHAMBRES (the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and CPCCAF (the Association of French-speaking Chambers in Africa and Europe), it seeks to increase local employment opportunities and employability by developing local training and vocational resources adapted to private sector needs. Under the programme, African chambers, business associations and educational institutions connect with their European partners to transfer demand-oriented skills to young learners and entrepreneurs in a wide range of economic sectors, including agriculture, agro-industry, hotels, construction, electricity, solar energy, textiles and crafts. Training programmes are developed in close cooperation with the private sector and in line with the needs of the labour market, and beneficiaries receive a certification at the end of the training.¹²

Archipelago's strategy to integrate young people into the labour market follows a two-step approach. It consists of, first, providing a work experience in a company as part of the dual vocational training¹³, thus establishing a contact between the jobseeker and a company looking to recruit new staff, and second, of supporting the graduates after completion of the training in their job search or creation of their own business.

Between December 2019 and January 2022, 20 competitively selected partnership projects have trained a total of 414 local trainers in dual VET and entrepreneurship, 2,765 young people in dual VET, 2,119 in entrepreneurship, and 117 African training providers and business support organisations have been mobilised, trained and institutionally strengthened. Among the trained young people, 7% were returnees.

To be impactful, **training programmes must be tailored to market needs**. In this regard, training courses should be **based on robust labour market assessments and forecasting**. The **involvement of the private sector** in the design and delivery of training courses can further help in providing returnees with the skills that are actually sought after by companies.



Walicounda Senegal. © IOM 2022/ Beyond Borders Media.

¹² European Commission, [ARCHIPELAGO: an African-European TVET initiative](#); Sequa gGmbH, [Archipelago webpage](#); [Archipelago website](#); [interview with a programme representative](#).

¹³ Dual VET refers to training that combines "classic" learning (i.e. class-based learning) and work-based learning (taking place in a company). Trainees alternate between the training center and the company, that ideally work together for coherence and optimized impact.



In **Burkina Faso**, migrants returning to the region of Manga received a training tailored to short term labour market opportunities, which allowed a large majority (82%) of the trainees to start self or waged employment shortly after the end of the training. The matching between skills gained through the training, and market demand, was key in achieving this result. Indeed, massive public works are carried out every year in the region hosting (on a rotation basis) the national Independence Day celebrations, offering significant economic opportunities in the short term. Returnees, who often gained practical construction experience abroad (especially in North Africa), were thus assisted by IOM in partnership with COFEC (Cercle d'orientation et de formation Emergency Consult) through a training in construction, to refine their skills and prepare them to meet the market needs.¹⁴

In **Bangladesh**, the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) supported the leather industry by piloting an enterprise-based training model. It was meant to provide workers with adequate skills in order to address the skills mismatch and the consequent poor quality of goods produced by shoe manufacturers and leather goods producers. Twenty-two companies subscribed to the one-year apprenticeship scheme. The trainees spend three months acquiring basic skills at a production line within the factory. During this time, they receive the official basic wage (the company paying more than half of it). After this initial period, the apprentices are fully integrated into regular production and added to the company's payroll, while still being supervised and coached by their trainers. As this training scheme directly addressed employers' needs for skilled workers, it has been very successful. More than 95% of the trainees succeeded in finding stable work after their apprenticeship. Companies benefitted from higher productivity from its trained workforce and produced higher quality goods. Furthermore, this involves sustainability of the scheme, and the leather industry would likely pursue it (including its financing) even after the initial support provided by the SDC stops.¹⁵

While the above example does not relate to returnees, it illustrates how the needs of workers and jobseekers and those of employers can be matched and benefit all, and how well-designed (market-driven) schemes can become self-sustainable.

Practical experience can further strengthen the relevance of and interest for training. Training can thus include or be complemented by practical work, as well as by **on-the-job training** in the form of internships, apprenticeships or job placement. They can be facilitated by the training provider based on its reputation and network of relationships with enterprises working in the sector.

Providing concrete job prospects is key for returnees who need to earn an income quickly, and who would thus probably not be interested in skills development otherwise. Furthermore, on-the-job training gives "jobseekers and [potential] employers an opportunity to 'try each other out' before entering into an employment contract."¹⁶ Such type of support goes beyond improving employability and may be considered as "facilitating employment" to some extent (see section 2.5 on job placement).

Many returnees need to earn an income quickly after their return. This contributes to returnees often preferring to set up a microbusiness upon return instead of envisaging training that could improve their job and earning prospects in the longer term. To address this, **an income generating component can be embedded in training courses.** For instance, beneficiaries of a woodworking training can sell the pieces they produce during the course, ideally through a system facilitated by the training institution or programme (e.g., a shop linked to the institution that can sell the goods produced by all trainees).

¹⁴ EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, [Reintegration good practices #2 - Skills and employability enhancement in Burkina Faso](#) (2020).

¹⁵ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, [Vocational skills development: key to employment and income. Insights into the SDC's cooperation in vocational skills development](#) (2016).

¹⁶ Andersen, T., L. Feiler and G. Schulz, [The Role of Employment Service Providers. Guide To Anticipating and Matching Skills and Jobs Volume 4](#) (2015), European Training Foundation / European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training / International Labour Office.



In **Burkina Faso**, IOM referred six returnees to the [Ethical Fashion Initiative](#) implemented by the International Trade Center (ITC). They were trained on bag production made up of local cotton. During the training they produced a number of bags, 500 of which were purchased by IOM to use instead of plastic bags when providing return assistance to stranded migrants and returnees.¹⁷

Subsidized on-the-job training is also an option; in this case the returnees' salary is fully or partly covered by the reintegration or employment programme until they learn the required skills, after which they can look for a job in this sector or continue working for the same company, with the salary then being paid by the employer, as illustrated in the example above focusing on Bangladesh, as well as in the Nigeria case study further below (cf. section 3.4).

Beyond training delivery to returnees, programmes can work at a more **structural level** and support the strengthening of TVET systems (e.g., support to training curriculum development, improved alignment with market reality and private sector needs, adjustment of length and modalities of training, capacity building of TVET institutions). More basically, but very importantly, reintegration programmes can support TVET systems to better understand the specific needs of returnees, so that they can better take them into account and address these needs.



TIPS

- ◇ Training should be tailored to labour market needs and opportunities and thus focus on sectors of activities in demand and with good employment prospects.
- ◇ Training programmes should be adapted to beneficiaries' needs and concerns. This may include the establishment of shorter training courses, the establishment of more frequent training courses with various starting dates throughout the year, the inclusion of an income-generating component or the adjustment of training schedules to leave time to beneficiaries to work during the training period. If no income-generation component can be integrated in the training, a subsistence allowance for beneficiaries, child care arrangements, and any other arrangement to place returnees willing to follow a training in the conditions to do so, should be envisaged during the training period.
- ◇ As training programmes can have entry requirements, for instance required existing skillset, that exclude many returnees, reintegration programmes can support the adaptation of some courses to match returnees' profiles, or can support returnees in meeting the entry requirements or gaining the basic skillset required by organizing preparatory training.
- ◇ As much as possible, training should be accompanied by practical experience and linkages with the job market.
- ◇ To this end, close collaboration between all key stakeholders should be fostered.
- ◇ Particular efforts should be placed on engaging the private sector. The private sector can be involved at various stages and levels, including in identifying training needs and gaps, designing training curricula

¹⁷ IOM, [EU-IOM Joint Initiative, Biannual Reintegration Report #1 \(2019\)](#) and [Tailor Made: New Hope for Migrants Returning... and their Communities \(2019\)](#).



and programmes, participating in training delivery (including on-the-job), and taking on interns or apprentices. Private companies can also contribute to the certification. Since the private sector can benefit from well designed and well implemented training – and thus from a workforce whose skills are adapted to the local market – there is strong argument to involve them in TVET and engage them in improving vocational training systems. Chambers of commerce and industries and professional organizations are key in this regard, as they gather numerous companies as members.

- ◇ Reintegration programmes should as much as possible build on existing TVET systems and structures. This includes building on informal systems of apprenticeship where relevant, and supporting training institutions in CoOs developing and delivering appropriate training modules instead of organizing ad-hoc training courses.
- ◇ Training (both technical and vocational training, and basic skills training) can also be provided in migrants' host countries, before their return takes place, taking advantage of the potential prestige related to training abroad (for technical and vocational training) or of the period that separates their return request from their actual return (for basic and soft skills training). This is the approach adopted by the FORAS project, implemented by IOM in Morocco and described in a good practice factsheet produced by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub.¹⁸



1.3 Validation and certification of skills, qualifications and diplomas

The lack of formalization or recognition of returnees' diploma, skills or work experience, including those acquired abroad, can constitute important obstacles for their employment. For instance, many migrants from West African or South Asian countries work in the construction sector in North Africa and the Gulf States. During their stay abroad, they can learn different skills related to the construction sector, from plumbing to electricity work, or to road construction. Upon return, they do not have any documentation to demonstrate their work experience or certify their skills, and may thus be disadvantaged in the competition for jobs. Some migrants also return with diplomas gained from schools or technical or vocational training institutions abroad. Upon return, these diplomas might not be recognized, preventing returnees from accessing jobs in their sector of education or training.

By collecting information on beneficiaries' diploma, skills and past employment records, assessing them against local standards, and if satisfactory, formally recognizing the diploma or skills through a certificate, relevant stakeholders can support returnees in their employment process. **Having their skills certified or their diploma recognized may mean access to more and better jobs for returnees.** Reintegration programmes can facilitate this by referring returnees to relevant institutions. Some countries have dedicated departments in the education or employment ministries, while in others private companies may need to be mobilized (at a cost) when it comes to certifying returnees' skills. Programmes can also support the establishment or strengthening of certification mechanisms.

¹⁸ EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, [Reintegration good practices #7 - Pre-departure reintegration assistance in Morocco: orientation, counselling and training](#) (2020).



In **El Salvador**, deportees are often perceived as criminals in their community of return, which obstacles their reintegration in the labour market. However, in the United States of America many of them acquired skills and practical experience that are in demand in some of El Salvador's growing economic sectors, including construction and tourism. The recognition and certification of these migrants' skills could thus respond to both returnees' need for jobs, and employers' need for skilled workers. To this end, Swisscontact introduced the certification of competences in its *Nuevas Oportunidades* project. An assessment of the work experience of Salvadoran returnees found that many men had worked in construction. As the sector did not have any skills certification mechanism, it was established, in close partnership with the Salvadoran Vocational Training Institute (Instituto Salvadoreño de Formación Profesional, that set the standards and trained several people as competency evaluators in the construction sector), and the Salvadoran Chamber of Construction Industry (Cámara Salvadoreña de la Construcción, CASALCO). Between 2018 and 2020, 313 returnees obtained a certificate for their skills in the construction and tourism sectors and 79% of certified returnees were successfully inserted into the labour market, including 156 returnees who benefitted from job placement.¹⁹

In the **Philippines**, an Onsite Assessment Program was established in 2015 by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Taking place in some of the main host countries of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), it allows formal recognition and certification of the skills acquired abroad by returnees, with a focus on some types of jobs such as domestic work, in preparation for their return and to facilitate their reintegration into the Philippine labour market. Between 2015 and December 2018, 2,681 OFWs had their skills certified.²⁰

Diploma, qualification and skills recognition is particularly relevant for those migrants with higher skills, who may aim to take qualified jobs upon return. This is even more important when states seek to attract migrants in specific sectors; in this case the existence of a recognition mechanism is essential.



TIPS

- ◇ The certification process can be complex and costly. Focusing on returnees' most common qualifications and job experiences, and organizing group sessions, can help make the process more cost-efficient.
- ◇ In countries or sectors in which there are no existing standards in terms of education and skills, they should be developed with the private sector and relevant professional organisations.
- ◇ Adequate policies and bilateral agreements can have a significant impact on these aspects.
- ◇ For more information, see ILO, [How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers: Guide for Employment Services Providers \(Second Edition\) \(2020\)](#).

¹⁹ Swisscontact, [Nuevas Oportunidades webpage](#); PADF, [Generación de conocimiento y evidencia para la reintegración económica-laboral de migrantes retornados en los países del norte de Centroamérica \(PNCA\) \(2020\)](#).

²⁰ United Nations Network on Migration, [Mapping: Gaps and positive practices for safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration](#) (2021); Wickramasekara, P., [Effective return and reintegration of migrant workers with special focus on ASEAN Member States](#) (2019), ILO.



1.4 Beyond economic support: social stability and psychosocial well-being as essential conditions for employment

Improving returnees' employability and supporting them in actually obtaining a job may not only require specific employment support. Indeed, returnees who are not able to find a stable accommodation, who do not have any solution for their children's care during working hours, who have health (including mental health) issues or significant psychosocial issues, may not be able to get or remain in a job. **Supporting returnees' social stability, mental health, and psychosocial well-being is thus essential when envisaging returnees' economic reintegration through waged employment.**

Such support can be provided in the form of specialized and dedicated services,²¹ but it can also be delivered in combination with other forms of support. For instance, a good practice identified under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, regards the integration of basic mental health and psychosocial support in training curricula. Consisting of group discussions and basic information helping to identify mental health or psychosocial issues and providing tips on how to address them and where to look at for support, the support provided proved to be very useful.



India. © Unsplash 2019/Shubham VERMA.

2. FACILITATING EMPLOYMENT

Even when returnees have adequate skills and formal certification, finding a job can remain challenging. Programmes can further support them and facilitate their recruitment by **connecting returnees and potential employers and referring returnees for available jobs**. This may encompass liaising and partnering with employment services and employers, managing a list of job vacancies (as well as of employers' propensity of employing returning migrants), organizing job fairs, or working as fully-fledged employment agencies where such services are unavailable.

The below table and successive section describe the types of activities that can be carried out to facilitate returnees' employment.

²¹ These are out of the scope of this paper. Examples can be found in various reports, including the [Biannual Reintegration Reports](#) published by IOM under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.



Table 2. Facilitating returnees' employment: types of support

Type of support	Consists of	Key actors	Example of methods/ tools
<i>Job announcements publication</i>	Advertising vacancies that could be of relevance to returnees	Employment services (public and private) Employers, chambers of commerce or professional organisations IOs/ NGOs Education and training institutions Ministries (Labour, Commerce and sectoral Ministries) Local authorities	Billboard, app, website Web-based services (apps, websites)
<i>Support for registration with employment services</i>	Supporting returnees registering with public or private employment service to facilitate their access to job vacancies and other services provided by the employment service	IOs/ NGOs Employment services (public and private) Ministries (Labour, Commerce and sectoral Ministries) Local authorities	In-person Web-based services
<i>Job fairs</i>	Gathering returnee jobseekers and employers (and potentially other types of employment-related actors such as employment services, chambers of commerce, training institutions, etc.) with the aim to share information on available job opportunities and potentially match them with jobseekers' profile.	Employment services (public and private) Employers, chambers of commerce and professional organisations IOs/ NGOs Education and training institutions Ministries (Labour, Commerce and sectoral Ministries) Local authorities	Stands, roundtables, group or one-to-one meetings. Usually in-person, but can be done virtually. Can include job interviews (on-the-spot job matching), career counselling, short training, testimonies.
<i>Job matching</i>	Matching the skills required by employers with those possessed by jobseekers, thus identifying suitable jobseekers for specific jobs. The process includes registering the CV/ profile of returnees seeking employment, registering the vacancies opened by employers, and matching vacancies with CVs.	Employment services (public and private) IOs/ NGOs	In-person meetings Web-based services
<i>Job placement</i>	Supporting returnees' recruitment from the identification of a suitable job, to actual recruitment	Employment services (public and private) IOs/ NGOs Education and training institutions	Outreach to potential employers/ door-to-door campaigning Registration and matching of returnees' profiles and job vacancies Subsidies/ sponsorship Leveraging corporate social responsibility

2.1 Job announcements publication

A very basic activity carried out by employment services and other employment stakeholders, is the **advertising of job vacancies**. Reintegration programmes can have their own dedicated website or app (see further below), or display announcements on billboards placed in their offices or other strategic locations. They can also more simply refer to existing job announcements websites and apps, for instance those run by public and private employment agencies.

Though it can be key in securing jobs when combined with activities to improve employability, publishing job announcements has only limited relevance as a stand-alone activity for the issue at hand; it will thus not be further described.²²

²² The publication of job announcements is the visible result of a number of activities, usually carried out by employment services. Many publications focus on the role and activities carried out by public and private employment services; see for instance Andersen, T., L. Feiler and G. Schulz, [The role of employment service providers. Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs VOLUME 4](#) (2015)



2.2 Support for registration with employment services

Registering with employment services allows returnees to access job vacancies and other forms of support typically provided by employment agencies. In addition, their profile will be available to the employment service and potentially to recruiters, which may allow returnees to receive more targeted job vacancies. Registering with such services is usually relatively easy, but reintegration programmes can help returnees in case they face any obstacle to do so. As for job announcements publication, this type of support is usually provided together with other forms of support.

2.3 Job fairs

Job fairs (also called 'employment forum' or 'recruitment events', among others) are **events gathering jobseekers and employers in one place** (usually physically, but in some cases also virtually). Their aim is to share information on employers' needs and requirements and on available job opportunities, and potentially to match available job opportunities with jobseekers. Activities include the visit of stands where returnees can get **information on employers' needs and available job opportunities, as well as the registration, interview and potentially placement of jobseekers.** This type of event reduces job searching cost and time, and can constitute a more efficient alternative to job matching on an individual basis.

Job fairs can be relatively easily organized under reintegration programmes. It requires preparatory work to liaise with employers who have jobs opportunities that they are willing to offer to returnees and that are in line with some common returnee profiles. Once the participation of the employers is secured, the reintegration organization can invite returnees. The number of participants invited depends on the number of employers present and job opportunities available.

Beyond the matching of job vacancies with jobseekers, job fairs can include workshops on CV writing or interview techniques, or other activities mentioned in the section on "improving employability".

Job fairs targeting or including returnees have been organized under several programmes implemented by IOM.



In Mogadishu, **Somalia**, a job fair was held in December 2019 under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa. It was organised by the Federal Government of Somalia, through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in collaboration with Hano Academy and Khibrad Recruitment Agency, and support from IOM. The fair gathered more than 500 participants, including private sector representatives, job placement agencies and training institutes, as well as Somali youth and returning migrants (149). Participants were able to visit different stands set up by businesses, companies, institutes and organizations, and recruiters actively engaged with the youth. Career counsellors offered advice on ways to increase employability. Practical sessions in CV-writing were also offered.²³

Unless returnees' needs are so unique that they have to be addressed very specifically through dedicated job fairs, **reintegration programmes can also support job fairs open to non-returnees** in cooperation with employment services, training and education institutions, professional organizations, or development programmes, **and ensure returnees' participation and/or ensure that specific attention is given to their needs and profiles.** Programmes can also simply encourage returnees' participation in existing job fairs.

²³ IOM, [Jobs Fair Attracts Hundreds In Mogadishu](#).



In **the Niger**, a job fair took place over three days in March 2019 in the region of Tahoua, the main region of origin of migrants returning from Libya. Organized by IOM through a partner business incubator and in synergy with various projects (the *Migrant Response and Resources Mechanism II* project (MRRM II), the *Initiative for Enterprise Development* project (IDEE) and the *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration*), it gathered young Nigerien entrepreneurs, returning migrants, representatives from national and regional institutions (including the Ministry of Professional and Technical Education, Ministry of Youth Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security, the Niger's public employment agency, worker and employers unions, etc.), and the private sector.

155 enterprises held an exhibition stand.

The enterprises interested in recruiting, indicated in advance the profiles and skills they were looking for to the organizers. This was communicated to the participants, whom if interested could leave their CVs at the stands. After a selection of the CVs by the enterprises, job interviews were conducted on the last day of the event.

The job fair attracted over 6,000 visitors, including around 20 returnees. The business incubator estimated that over 340 young Nigeriens were hired by companies following the job fair. In addition, it gave the opportunity to returning migrants, young entrepreneurs and young producers, to meet potential partners and supporters who could engage in a sustainable business relationship, including from the diaspora.

Panel discussions and practical workshops were also organized to promote youth economic and social development. They included sessions on entrepreneurship and diaspora investment, but also on topics such as CV writing and effective job searching. The fair also included a sales competition, a talk show evening where entrepreneurs shared their atypical journeys, a cultural evening, and allowed for B2B meetings.

In March 2022, IOM supported the organization of a second edition of the job fair, in Agadez. It attracted over 10,000 young entrepreneurs, jobseekers, government representatives, and youth from the sub-region. Building on these successes, a ministerial decree is under development to formalize the yearly organization of the fair in order to open up entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for young people in the Niger.²⁴



Ouallam, The Niger. © IOM 2022/ Safa MSEHLI.

²⁴ IOM, [Job Fair in Niger Brings Together Over 6,000 Visitors, Entrepreneurs and Returnees](#) (2019); project reports and documentation (unpublished); [job fair's website](#).



While in-person meeting is probably ideal for both jobseekers and employers, **virtual fairs** have some advantages, such as the possibility to include more jobseekers and more employers. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also constituted a safe alternative to large gatherings.



In May 2021, the **Serbian** National Employment Service (NES) organised a virtual job fair with the support of the Migration for Development programme operated by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). 7,500 participants, including more than 1,500 returnees, registered. In addition, 70 companies registered and offered approximately 2,800 jobs in engineering, information and communication technology, crafts such as tailoring and sewing, sales, translation and production. A local NGO supported the NES to attract members of vulnerable groups, especially returnees, by organising information events in the local communities and referring anyone interested to the [German Information Centre on Migration, Training and Employment \(DIMAK Serbia\)](#). Another NGO supported the fair by helping specific target groups, including returnees, to access the job fair or make it easier for them to visit and talk to employers.²⁵



TIPS

- ◇ Ideally, companies should be available both to present their activities and needs, and to carry out job interviews with interested participants.
- ◇ Testimonies by returnee jobseekers who were recruited following a job fair, and of employers who recruited returnees in previous fairs, can be impactful and give credibility to the process. More generally, testimonies from employers who recruited returnees can help build the confidence of other employers towards recruiting returnees.
- ◇ The number of jobseekers invited should depend on the number of companies participating and on the number of vacancies they offer. The size of the room should be adapted to these numbers.
- ◇ It is not necessary to organize big fairs. Smaller networking events, organized more regularly, for specific job sectors, and with fewer returnees (morning coffees for instance), may also work well.

2.4 Job matching

Reintegration programmes and employment services can go one step further in facilitating returnees' employment by providing **job matching services, whereby they match the vacancies received from employers/ recruiters with returnees' profiles**. It requires collecting recruiters' job vacancy notices and returnees' profiles, and comparing them. It helps returnees who may not have the necessary network to find appropriate job vacancies, and employers to identify adequate candidates. When matching is done, the programme can either inform jobseekers with the right profile and encourage them to apply to the vacancy, or directly refer the appropriate jobseekers to the recruiter.

²⁵ Startfinder, [The first virtual job fair was a great success](#) (2021)



This type of support is typically provided by employment agencies, but employment services are not always available at the local level, or they may be available but not function well. In such case, the reintegration or employment programme should **seek to develop the national service's capacities to enable it to provide this form of support in the longer term**, while in the shorter term, reintegration and employment programmes can offer it.



The **Philippines** has established a **Skills Registration Database** for returning migrant workers in Davao province. Six government agencies under the leadership of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) oversee the Permanent Returning Overseas Filipino Workers Network. TESDA maintains the database and, together with the Overseas Workers Welfare Agency, links their expertise to prospective employers or other useful services. The network operates to link returning workers with business and other opportunities, with emphasis on the importance of the skills and work experiences acquired. Additionally, TESDA in partnership with the Philippine Department of Labor and Employment is setting up a database of skills available in all localities that will serve as the basis for offering training, re-training and skills upgrading and certification.²⁶

In the recent years, such services have often been provided through **mobile apps**, as illustrated below and in the Guatemala case study (cf. section 2.6).



In **Ethiopia**, ILO implemented the *Support the reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia* project (2015-2018). In its framework, ILO and a private communication and marketing company developed an app – SIRA – that linked returnees and public and private employers in the “low and middle skills occupation” sectors. The app allowed jobseekers to search or subscribe for job alerts, and upload and update their information on the platform. It also allowed employers to post vacancies and search for potential candidates. Though a web-based portal and a call center service were also made available, the large diffusion of mobile phones among returnees made an app the ideal format to connect returnees with jobs. By February 2020, 1,154 vacancies had been posted by employers, 12,817 jobseekers had registered, and 235 jobs were matched. The app has remained operational even after the project ended.²⁷

Gender-sensitive approaches

The societal norms and expectations associated with gender can drastically affect return and reintegration experiences by interfering with returnees' ability to access the necessary resources (tangible and intangible) and means to rebuild their lives.²⁸

A study conducted by the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance for the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (MGSoG), Maastricht University, 2021, Research

Study #2 - Comparative Reintegration Outcomes between Forced and Voluntary Return and Through a Gender Perspective, Final Report, EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub) revealed that female returnees surveyed scored lower than men in the economic dimension of reintegration. According to the study, this fact could “be explained by their limited access to employment opportunities due to societal stereotypes and norms, distressful experiences during the migration journey, as well as particular circumstances of separated

BOX 4

²⁶ ILO, [Guidelines for Recognizing the Skills of Returning Migrant Workers](#) (2010), p.7

²⁷ ILO, [Support to the Reintegration of Returnees in Ethiopia, Program Achievement](#) (2019); Addis Standard, [News: Ethiopia launches mobile App to help match low, middle skills workers to the labor market](#) (2018). [The figures presented are the latest figures made available by ILO \(through e-mail exchange\).](#)

²⁸ IOM, [Gender and Migration website](#).



or widowed females such as the double workloads of childcare responsibilities and providing for the family or high financial dependence on in-laws and relatives.”

Gender stereotypes can hinder women's access to employment opportunities. Obstacles include restricted access to certain types of jobs that are typically occupied by males, expectations that women manage the household and take care of children, stigmatization when they engage in employment, movement restrictions or even interdictions to work. Limited involvement of women in their reintegration assistance decision making process, can further contribute negatively to women's sustainable reintegration. This can be reinforced by social and psychosocial obstacles, such as mental health issues, emotional challenges and health conditions following experiences of violence, abuse or exploitation during the migration journey. Women returnees are more likely

than men to face stigmatization, family rejection and social exclusion. Specific categories of women, such as single mothers, might be affected even more by the above challenges; and most of these obstacles can also apply to returnees with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

These challenges require specific responses and the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach in reintegration assistance planning and delivery. Besides working on stigma and gender norms with the communities of return, reintegration programmes seeking to foster employment should plan appropriate measures to facilitate women's access to training and employment, for instance by taking child care into account, considering safe transportation to the training or job site, or providing a daily allowance to single mothers until they start earning an income.

BOX 4



TIPS

- ◇ For a job matching system to work, both types of users – returnees and employers – must actively contribute to it by sharing profiles and vacancies. The more jobseekers are registered, the more interesting it is for employers to use the system, and the more vacancies are posted, the more interesting it is for jobseekers to use the system. Therefore, targeted outreach and communication should be carried out to attract these users. Results and successes should be disseminated so as to maintain engagement and use. In case of web-based systems, user-friendliness is also key.
- ◇ Programmes should exercise due diligence over employers that are considered for job matching to avoid promoting employment opportunities that may not reflect principles of decent work.
- ◇ Employers will remain engaged only if adequate profiles are proposed. Jobseekers' CVs should contain only the necessary information, and only the most relevant CVs should be shared with (or the most relevant returnees referred to) employers. Reintegration or employment counsellors need to check beneficiaries' motivation and availability before sharing their profile with employers, and if possible they should also check the beneficiaries indeed have the skills indicated in their profile. These preparatory steps are key to facilitate the recruitment process while avoiding inundating employers with useless and burdensome information.
- ◇ If returnees' profiles do not match available jobs, training and upskilling should be envisaged.
- ◇ The soft skills and other basic training described in the first chapter is an important complement to this type of support. In particular, training related to job interviews constitutes a good preparation for the beneficiaries and helps them gaining confidence ahead of the interview.



2.5 Job placement

Together with job creation (cf. section 3), job placement is the type of support that most directly and concretely contributes to foster returnee employment. It goes further than job matching in that **it allows actually filling a job vacancy with a jobseeker whose profile matches the job requirements**. Programmes supporting returnees' job placement usually have to **build strong relations with potential employers**, based on trust and regular exchange of information. Employers usually need to be sensitized on returnees' profiles and to communicate on jobs available and skills needed. Trust and regular exchanges should enable **reaching mutual understanding about expectations** related to national law, employment standards and reintegration objectives, among others.



Under the Motuse project (2015 – 2016), IOM partnered with the NGO “Association Campagne” to support **Tunisian** returnees' employment. One of the core activities of this NGO, usually targeting disadvantaged local youth, consisted of visiting private sector companies on a daily basis to learn about their activities, available jobs and required skills. Over the years, the NGO increased its address book, reaching hundreds of companies which were regularly contacted to learn about potential job vacancies and mobilize them to consider employing local youth. This painstaking work helped placing several beneficiaries in jobs.

2.5.1 Wage subsidy

Job placement can be encouraged in various ways. For instance, reintegration and employment programmes can envisage **subsidising the worker's salary for a certain period of time**.



A project component increasing job market access for migrants returning to the Caucasus region was piloted between 2015 and 2019 under the Belgian AVRR programme implemented by IOM. Building upon partnerships fostered by the IOM country offices in **Armenia, Georgia and the Russian Federation** with employment agencies, training institutes and relevant private stakeholders, 187 returning migrants received tailored job placement support.

The component included a variety of activities, such as mapping of public and private employment and training agencies, employers and relevant development projects in the countries of origin, as well as job counselling and in-house training to returnees in the countries of origin (e.g., skills profiling, identification of training needs and future employment options, skills training for job interview, update of CV). Individualized follow-up was also carried out to enhance the skills of returnees and to actively assist them with finding employment opportunities. To this end, returnees' CV were registered in existing databases for further job mediation, group training on career development and entrepreneurship was provided, and the costs related to vocational training or job placement contracts were covered by the project. In addition, info sessions were organized in Belgium for AVRR counsellors and other stakeholders to improve pre-departure counselling on employment opportunities in the targeted countries of origin.

Monitoring of the beneficiaries' reintegration process in 2018 showed that all the returnees who were assisted with training or job placement in the Caucasus region, were either employed (33%), self-employed (47%) or still studying or finalizing a training (20%) at the time of the monitoring. Returnees stated that the training or job-placement support improved their job situation or allowed them to develop their skills for future employment plans.



In 2020, IOM conducted a comparative analysis to measure the reintegration outcomes of Georgian returnees from Belgium during the period 2016 - 2019. The analysis highlighted that returnees who benefitted from job placement showed a significantly higher level of well-being compared to those who received general reintegration support. This effect was most pronounced on the economic dimension of reintegration, clearly visible on the social dimension, and present but to a lesser extent on the psychosocial dimension.

Considering the positive results of the job placement component, it has become an inherent part of the reintegration support provided under the Belgian AVRR programme implemented by IOM. It has evolved and has been adapted since its launch to respond to migrants' needs as well as to donor priorities. A similar approach was replicated in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guinea and the Niger as of 2018, with adaptations to match the local context. Since 2020, following the impact of COVID-19, new initiatives have been set-up in Belarus, El Salvador and Mongolia.²⁹

It should be underlined, though, that subsidizing returnees' salary for a period of time can raise some questions, especially in terms of sustainability. If the employer cannot (or does not want to) cover the salary of its apprentice or new employee, it can be counter-productive. Although such a scheme could help employers "try" the new employee for a period without taking any financial risk, **other forms of incentives can be more appropriate**, including: offering training to the future or new employee or covering an internship, transportation and/or subsistence allowance until the employee receives its first salary, and so forth.

More generally, **programmes can support job placement by acting as intermediary between the employer and the jobseeker**, facilitating the process. In some cases, they can even act as kind of guarantors based on their credibility, relationship of trust established with employers and returnees, and potentially on previous successful experience. This role of "guarantor" can include sensitizing employers on the specificity of working with returnees, committing to provide the required soft skills training or guidance, and "guarantee" (with adequate limits in place in terms of responsibility) that the returnees are committed, that they will arrive on time, that they will take the required training, and so forth.



Zestaponi, Georgia. © IOM 2022/ Beyond Borders Media.



Ozurgeti, Georgia. © IOM 2022/ Beyond Borders Media.

²⁹ Based on exchanges with IOM Country Office in Belgium.



2.5.2 Other forms of placement

Other types of programmes linked to returning migrants' employment exist and are briefly presented below, but since they regard very specific categories of migrants or anecdotal forms of placement, and are usually developed and implemented separately from classic return and reintegration programmes, they are not described in detail.

Return and employment of highly-skilled migrants

Sometimes, job placement is at the core of return programmes. This is the case of programmes that aim to **fill specific jobs in strategic sectors with highly qualified nationals who migrated abroad**, for instance to improve the health or education sectors. Programmes like IOM's *Migration and Development for Africa* (MIDA) or *Return of Qualified Nationals* (RQN) supported states identifying migrants with required skills who accept to return to share their skills and experience in their CoO and thus contribute to the country's development.³⁰ While such programmes are often focused on temporary returns for specific assignments, governments and international organizations can support similar schemes in the longer term.

Many countries also established broader programmes to **"repatriate their human capital"** considered as useful for the country's development or economic competitiveness. While not necessarily linked to specific jobs, several European countries have programmes to encourage the return of scientists or researchers, for instance.³¹ Several countries also encourage the return of successful entrepreneurs from the diaspora to **invest** and contribute to economic development in their CoO.

Employment in local antennas of companies from host country

Recruiters may value the skills acquired by returnees while they were abroad. This may regard language skills, but also work standards and ethic, specific qualifications, and so forth. In this regard, local antenna of companies based in returnees' former host country, or local companies working in relation with the host country, may be interested in recruiting returnees. For instance, Mexican returnees from the United States have constituted a significant stock of workforce for Mexican call centers focusing their services on the United States of America.³² Programmes can build on this type of requirement to facilitate the placement of returnees in companies.



Based on the observation that many companies of the Republic of Korea (ROK) operating in **Indonesia** experience difficulties in communicating with their employees who do not speak Korean, and that many migrants returning from ROK remain unemployed in Indonesia, the Government of the former established a programme aiming at employing returnees in ROK companies operating in Indonesia. It was expected that returnees' previous work experience in ROK would help overcome communication problems, and that they would be able to take office worker, translator, and middle management positions. Operated by the Human Resource Development Service of Korea (HRD Korea), the programme included a six-week training programme for migrants returning from ROK, covering aspects such as the use of computers, Korean language, quality control, and office administration. Beneficiaries were provided with accommodation and meals during the training period. At the end of the training, a job fair was held where beneficiaries could meet with ROK companies in Indonesia and could directly apply for jobs, with positive outcomes for a number of returnees.³³

³⁰ See for instance: IOM Finland, *MIDA*; Altai Consulting, *Integration of Returnees in the Afghan Labor Market* (2006), p.60; Migration Data Portal, *Diasporas* (2020)

³¹ See for instance: ICMPD, *Return Migration: Background, Practice Examples and Policy Options for Intra-EU Mobility – Focus on Poland* (2019), p.22; Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze (Italy), *Misure urgenti per la crescita economica* (2019)

³² See for instance Da Cruz, M., *Offshore Migrant Workers: Return Migrants in Mexico's English Speaking Call Centers* (2018), RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences, vol. 4 no. 1

³³ Bachtar, P. P. and D. D. Prasetyo, *Return Migration and Various Reintegration Programs for Low-Skilled Migrant Workers in Indonesia* (2017), SMERU Research Report, p.35-37



Job placement abroad

Programmes can also support returnees finding a job abroad in a regular way, including through seasonal or other circular migration schemes, or on a more permanent basis. They can harness the human and social capital and skills gained during the previous migration experience (e.g., language skills, familiarity with culture, experience with type of job). This appears as particularly relevant in the context of the post-COVID-19 pandemic economic recovery, where millions of migrant workers who returned in their CoO are expected to migrate again.



Yola, Nigeria. © IOM 2021/ Natalie OREN.



TIPS

- ◇ For job placement systems to work, jobseekers' profiles must match with job requirements (cf. above section on job matching), and employers must be sensitized on returnees (information on returnees' profiles, debunking myths and addressing bias and stigma, etc.)
- ◇ If required, the job placement capacities of the national employment service should be developed (for instance by organizing study visits or inviting experts to coach the service's staff).

2.6 Case studies

Various forms of support and types of activities have been presented so far. Programmes focusing on returnees' employment usually combine a number of the approaches and activities described to maximize their impact and increase their chances of success. This is illustrated by the following three case studies.



Ozurgeti, Georgia. © IOM 2022/ Beyond Borders Media.

2.6.1 Case study: Job Placement and Counselling Centres in Georgia

To address the absence of functioning state employment agency in Georgia, IOM in coordination with local authorities opened job placement and counselling centres (JPC) in six strategic areas hosting many internally displaced persons and returnees.

After a preliminary phase including national and local labour markets assessments and hiring and training local staff to work as job counsellors, the job placement centres were established and started organizing outreach information sessions and providing individual career plan development. The trained job counsellors provided jobseekers applying to the JPCs with thorough information on the national and local labour market needs, based on regular assessments of employers' demands, and on marketable skills development options to match those demands. They also provided career orientation guidance and referrals to existing vocational education and training courses. Those with ready skills were referred directly to employers. Jobseekers could register in a JCP database to match their profiles with employers' needs. This database also facilitated follow-up and monitoring of employment and skills training results.

Job fairs were organized, gathering employers from various sectors and jobseekers registered in the JCP database, for direct job matching. For some jobseekers, these were the first ever interviews with employers. Job fair materials were developed for both employers and jobseekers: jobseekers received job fair guides with a list of employers represented and short outline of their business profiles and their location in the fair hall; employers received the CVs of invited jobseekers.

To complement the JPCs, IOM supported national authorities' efforts to enhance the employability of jobseekers by designing new vocational training programmes for high-demand sectors (e.g., service, textile, welding), training teacher training, and renovating and equipping workshops.

Originally managed by IOM (2010-2012), the JPC have successively been handed over to and are currently operational under the management of the government of Adjara autonomous Republic of Georgia. The know-how as well as the experience and knowledge gained, are shared regularly with the State Employment Support Agency, under the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia.³⁴

³⁴ IOM, [Reintegration Handbook - Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance](#) (2019), updated by IOM Country Office in Georgia in October 2022.



2.6.2 Case study: Employment support and job placement in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (MAGNET II)

From April 2014 to March 2016, IOM supported the sustainable employment of migrants returning from six EU Member States (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Through individual job counselling, matching and placement services, the MAGNET II project³⁵ aimed to address both the challenge faced by many returnees in finding employment after extended periods of time abroad, and the demand of the Iraqi private sector to hire returnees.³⁶ It helped improving the reintegration of returnees by facilitating access to information on the local labour market and to existing job opportunities, and at the same time helped businesses in need of employees in the booming KRI economy.

The following activities were implemented in order to establish a functioning job placement mechanism in the KRI.

Preparatory activities and strengthening of the links with the private sector in the KRI

A job matching database was set up to register returnees' professional profiles (skills and experience) and job vacancies available. It helped Iraqi returnees to access accurate and up-to-date information on available job opportunities and relevant skills requirements, and constituted a crucial tool to match available vacancies with returnees' skills and experiences to find potential suitable candidates.

To increase the number of job offers made available, IOM had to establish a network of partnering enterprises. To do so, Focal Points in the KRI's three governorates contacted and regularly visited the businesses and chambers of commerce and industries operating in their respective governorate, to inform them about the project and how they could benefit from it. They also regularly monitored job searching websites to identify suitable jobs.

Under MAGNET II, 247 companies or branches in the KRI have been contacted regularly and informed on the project activities, resulting in 69 companies and 207 jobs registered in the database.³⁷

In addition, IOM conducted a comprehensive market survey and mapping of relevant training centers to identify adequate training facilities for returnees needing to strengthen their skills.

³⁵ The project built upon the activities and lessons learned from its pilot phase, which was implemented by IOM with the support of the Iraqi Bureau of Migration and Displacement and in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government from January 2012 to June 2013.

³⁶ This demand was highlighted in a study commissioned by IOM and carried out by Altai Consulting in 2010 ("Reintegration of returnees in Iraq: Local economy absorption capacity, scalability of IOM programs and potential local partners – a study in seven governorates").

³⁷ Under MAGNET I, 105 businesses agreed to participate and registered 393 vacancies in the database.



Reintegration counselling and referral to potential employers and to training facilities

Potential returnees in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom were provided with pre-departure information on the socio-economic context in the KRI, on concrete job and training opportunities identified through the project, and on the job placement assistance available upon return.

Upon return in the KRI, returnees received post-arrival counselling on job opportunities and job placement support. Information was provided on the salary scales in the region and on the types of jobs available, with a specific attention to address the returnees' often high expectations. An assessment of the returnees' skills and experience was also conducted in order to envisage potential referrals to job opportunities. Based on the returnees' skills and experience and on the needs of the private sector, the counsellors could refer returnees to potential employers for interview and potential employment.

To enhance the returnees' employability, referrals could also be made towards training courses (language, IT and vocational training) identified through the mapping conducted, and apprenticeships were fostered. The project included the provision of short-term training and/or transportation allowances when needed.

Job and Training Fairs were also organized in each of the three KRI governorates, allowing returnees to meet potential employers ('job dating') and learn more about other reintegration opportunities such as training courses. CV drafting and interview-skills workshops were organised in the frame of these fairs to enable beneficiaries to showcase their experience and skills more effectively.³⁸

Under the MAGNET II project, 276 Iraqi returnees were individually counselled upon return and 170 returnees interested in job placement assistance were registered in the project database. 86 of them found employment through the project, and 59 undertook training courses to enhance their employability.

A third-party monitoring exercise carried out at the end of the project stressed that the project also benefitted the private sector: most companies that participated in the project perceived it as a "bridge between companies and returnees" that facilitated and speeded up their recruitment process.



Qayara, Iraq. © IOM 2018/Muse MOHAMMED.

³⁸ Job Fairs were envisaged under the first phase of MAGNET. As the project progressed, it became clear that the initial concept of the Job Fairs was potentially irrelevant. The original objective was to facilitate contacts between project beneficiaries and businesses with job vacancies to fill. However, most beneficiaries had already been put in contact with relevant businesses before the fairs took place, so when meeting at the job fairs, the participants already knew each other. The concept of the job fair was thus adjusted and they were transformed into 'job and training fairs'. They included a jobseeker training component for the returnees, such as interview and CV writing skills, and involved vocational training centres and educational institutions which enabled beneficiaries to become informed of existing training opportunities. This proved to be particularly important as many returnees lacked the skills and qualifications desired by recruiting businesses. The job and training fairs still included a component in which returnees and company representatives could meet and exchange CVs.



2.6.3 Case study: Supporting returnees' employment in Guatemala

In 2019, 105,277 Guatemalan migrants were returned to Guatemala, most of them after being detained in the United States or Mexico - the highest number of returns in a year since 2015. Current trends suggest a similar volume of returns in 2022, with 68,663 Guatemalans having returned to the country between January and August.³⁹ Such a scale of returns presents many challenges, not only in terms of overall humanitarian situation, but also to ensure the sustainable reintegration of migrants, in which waged employment plays an essential role. Indeed, a survey conducted by IOM in 2020 revealed that Guatemalans' top reason to migrate is the search of waged employment opportunities,⁴⁰ but also that employment is their main concern when they return home. For that reason, the design and implementation of appropriate public policies and mechanisms, as well as of tailored programmes to foster returnees' employment, are fundamental.

To support migrant reintegration, IOM cooperates with Fundación Avina, a Latin America-based foundation that has designed innovative ways to support returnees' employment. Its vision to make "a hospitable and open Latin America where people in situations of human mobility can exercise their rights to improve their quality of life"⁴¹ drives a regional migration programme through which a multi-sectorial approach for returnees' employment is developed, promoting the participation of governmental institutions, academia, NGOs and the private sector.

Waged employment was a key component of the *Guatemala Incluye* initiative, a 3-year project (2015-2018) implemented by Fundación Avina that supported the economic reintegration of 1,895 Guatemalan returnees thanks to the coordination and contributions of 22 institutions. In 2022, Avina Foundation implemented another project, aiming to facilitate the economic reintegration of 1,250 returnees and to support the Guatemalan National Referral System for Reintegration Services for Migrants (SINAREM). Employment support has continued being a priority area of intervention, materialized among others by the development of the OportuGuate app through which returnees can easily identify job opportunities and receive tailored support and follow-up.

Swisscontact, a Swiss non-profit organization, has also contributed to migrant reintegration through employment. Promoting "inclusive economic, social and ecological development to make an effective contribution towards sustainable and widespread prosperity in developing and emerging economies",⁴² it created with the University of Lucerne (Switzerland) their own methodology for returnees' inclusion and employment: the Coaching for Employment and Entrepreneurship (C4EE) methodology.⁴³

³⁹ IOM, Unidad de información para los países del norte de Centroamérica: [Guatemala Dashboard](#) (2022).

⁴⁰ IOM, [Encuesta de Medios de Vida a Población Migrante Retornada en Guatemala en el marco del COVID-19](#). DTM Covid-19 Ronda 1 (2020), p. 7.

⁴¹ Fundación Avina, [Migration webpage](#) (2022).

⁴² Swisscontact, [Swisscontact's website](#) (2022).

⁴³ Swisscontact, [Successfully integrating young adults into the working world \(C4EE\)](#) (2022).



This methodology was implemented under the multi-country *New Opportunities (Nuevas Oportunidades)* project. In El Salvador, 313 returnees obtained a certificate for their skills in the construction and tourism sectors between 2018 and 2020, and 79% of certified returnees were successfully included in the labour market, including 156 returnees who benefitted from job placement.⁴⁴ In Guatemala, more than 200 returnees were assisted with their skills certification under the programme, mainly in the construction and cuisine industries, in close partnership with the Productivity and Technical Training Institution (INTECAP) and the private sector.

This case study focuses on the activities developed, results achieved, and lessons learned by these actors in terms of supporting returnees' employment in Guatemala.



Guatemala. © IOM 2022.

Methodologies for returnee employment

While Avina Foundation and Swisscontact have their own models to support returnees' reintegration through employment, both models include the five following steps:

First, returnee identification. To be able to identify and provide tailored assistance to returnees, Avina Foundation and Swisscontact envisage a one-to-three-month⁴⁵ period for initiative promotion and returnees' identification, in which the participation of local (municipal) governments, academia, NGOs and other stakeholders is key. The goal is to consolidate a data base⁴⁶ including returnees' contact details and basic profile information such as education, job experience and location for further follow-up.

Second, returnee profile analysis and grouping. Returnees' profiles are reviewed and returnees with potential for employment (based on their area of qualification/ expertise, job experience and years working in a foreign country, location, and education) are grouped. A minimum requirement for Avina Foundation to select returnees for employment support, is that they have at least two years of work experience in a foreign country, as the foundation assessed it is the time necessary to develop a new skill.⁴⁷ For Swisscontact the requirements are relatively similar: at least two years of work experience in a foreign country, and one year of local work experience. Regarding education, returnees need at least a middle school diploma. Based on these education and work experience criteria, 30% of the returnees identified under the *Guate te Incluye* initiative, were supported for employment.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Swisscontact, [Nuevas Oportunidades webpage](#); PADF, [Generación de conocimiento y evidencia para la reintegración económica-laboral de migrantes retornados en los países del norte de Centroamérica \(PNCA\)](#) (2020).

⁴⁵ Estimated periods based on interviews with the organizations.

⁴⁶ Fundación Avina, *Guate Te Incluye* final Project report (2018).

⁴⁷ Idem.

⁴⁸ Idem.



Third, supporting returnee employability through technical skills certification. Among the challenges that returnees face when applying to a job, is how to prove the expertise gained or skills developed in a foreign country to prospective employers.⁴⁹ For that reason, Avina Foundation and Swisscontact work with Guatemala's Productivity and Technical Training Institution (INTECAP) and the Ministry of Education, the only two authorized institutions in Guatemala to assess and provide returnees with a valid skill certification. Their cooperation has included supporting the creation of guidelines and methodologies for skills assessment, training competency evaluators, and working with private sector companies to establish frameworks of competencies for specific employment sectors.

The technical skills certification process consists of a standardized 4-hour test during which returnees must demonstrate their technical abilities. To prepare them for the test, returnees are encouraged to participate in a short skill adaptation training before the test. Such support was designed following Avina Foundation's first experience with technical skills certification, carried out in partnership with the non-profit housing organization Habitat for Humanity and with a construction company that provided certification for its own construction workers. As Avina was trying to include returnees with construction experience in the certification process, they realized that returnees' technique for house building were more advanced than the local's but required materials and tools that weren't available in the country. They thus designed and implemented a 64-hour training in which returnees rapidly learn to adjust their technique to local materials and tools.

Under *Guate te Incluye*, Avina Foundation supported the skills certification of 234 returnees, including 75 certified in construction and food preparation in cooperation with Swisscontact and INTECAP.⁵⁰ Swisscontact continues supporting the technical certification of those returnees with construction expertise (drywall and ceramic floor) and cuisine and plans to expand in 2023 to those with industrial gardening and waitressing experience. In addition, returnees have access to certification for more than 150 skills in several industry areas through the Ministry of Education.⁵¹

Fourth, supporting returnee employability through psychosocial support and soft skills training. Building on IOM's approach for psychosocial support, Swisscontact carries out psychosocial group discussions to help returnees reflect on their return and reintegration process and experience, and Psychological First Aid through individual meetings for those who require it. During this process, returnees identified as needing further psychological support, are referred to specialized institutions for tailored individual follow-up.



Guatemala. © IOM 2022.

⁴⁹ Many Guatemalan migrants work in irregular situations in their host country and do not have any formal documentation linked to their work experience. Upon return, they are unable to provide job references or relevant documentation.

⁵⁰ Avina Foundation, *Guate Te Incluye* final Project report (2018).

⁵¹ Ministry of Education of Guatemala, [Sistema de Certificación de Competencias, SCC](#) (2022).



Avina Foundation observed that returnees faced challenges related to job performance and relationships with their colleagues during their onboarding period in new jobs. This appeared to be partly due to the behavioural impact of their return journey and to difficulties to adapt to a different lifestyle and environment, in which differences such as those in the amount of the salary between what they earned abroad, and what they earn back in Guatemala, play a role. Therefore, partnerships were fostered under the *Guate te Incluye* initiative to empower more than 100 returnees through a soft-skills training developed in two phases. First, a 4-hour training course for returnees including topics such as self-confidence at work, tolerance to frustration, and responsibility. Second, a 4-hour training course for recently hired returnees and their co-workers including topics such as teamwork and leadership, among others, through companies specialized in raising awareness and promoting the advantages of being an inclusive company. Avina Foundation also worked with partners to design and implement a 3-month training course for unemployed returnees covering soft skills, basic skills and technical training to increase their chances to get a job. According to Fundación Avina's records, 50% of the training beneficiaries find a job afterwards.⁵²

Fifth, tailored job orientation and placement. As part of its Coaching for Employment approach, Swisscontact supports groups of up to 6 returnees (with similar profiles) to facilitate their path to employment through the accompaniment of a coach for four months. That path starts with the creation of individual development plans (life plans) that mainly answer two key questions: how returnees would like to make a living, and which steps are needed to get there.⁵³ From there, coaches accompany returnees in the process of preparing their resume, obtaining job interviews, and getting internships in private companies, among others. The coaches are not employed or contracted by Swisscontact directly: partnerships are fostered with Public Employment Services and relevant private sector actors, among others. In El Salvador, 25 coaches were trained on the C4EE methodology, including representatives of the Ministry of Labour, academia and recruiters from private sector companies.

Avina Foundation also works with partners to provide tailored support and assistance to introduce returnees to the labour market, providing tools to identify available jobs, apply and get interviews. For instance, in partnership with IOM, it has developed the OportuGuate mobile app through which returnees can easily connect with potential employers from the private sector. It allows returnees to register their profile, create a resume and apply to job vacancies. The app, developed to support the national referral mechanism for migrant reintegration (SINAREM), also connects returnees with organizations that can support them with skill certification opportunities.



Guatemala. © IOM 2022.

⁵² Avina Foundation, *Guate Te Incluye* final Project report (2018).

⁵³ Swisscontact, [Project: Coaching for employment and Entrepreneurship –C4EE](#) (2018).



While technological solutions offer good perspectives to support returnees' employment, human follow-up remains essential in many cases. Under the *Guate te Incluye* and *SINAREM/OportuGuate* programmes, Avina worked with the NGO Te Conecta, the social arm of a human resources and recruitment company, to provide returnees with the personalized assistance of a "recruiter" who helps them solve different questions regarding job placement, and in some cases also provides basic legal assessment. Recruiters also organize group orientation sessions in which returnees are supported to prepare their resume, learn about available job boards (and how to use them), and are informed about where and how to obtain the civil documentation required by employers. In addition, recruiters identify job opportunities based on returnees' profile and assist them to get interviews, preparing them in one-on-one sessions with tips to communicate effectively and in some cases providing clothing to dress professionally. If needed, the recruiters-coaches follow-up after interviews and provide feedback so that beneficiaries can improve in view of future interviews. Te Conecta also supports returnees to replace civil documentation and works with lawyers to provide legal services if needed.⁵⁴ Under *Guate te Incluye*, Avina donated computers which allowed Te Conecta to open a computer lab where returnees could improve their computer, English and typing skills. Leveraging the NGO's connections, especially with call centers, 231 returnees were successfully placed in job.⁵⁵

Avina Foundation also supports returnees' employment at a more structural level with chambers of commerce and industry, raising awareness and promoting returnees' inclusion.



Guatemala. © IOM 2022.

⁵⁴ Such services can include the search for diploma or certification obtained abroad, or the obtention of job references from former employers abroad, among others.

⁵⁵ Avina Foundation, *Guate Te Incluye* final Project report (2018)



CONCLUSION

Avina Foundation and Swisscontact present a win-win strategy to promote returnee employment and successfully respond to their reintegration needs. From returnees' perspective, opportunities to successfully apply and get into a job is maximized by closing critical gaps such as the lack of documentation, job references, skills certification and networks. From employers' perspective, the recruitment process is facilitated through the availability of a pool of candidates and access to skilled and experienced profiles.

For this strategy to work, the role of an intermediate that can support both returnees and employers, is vital. In the programmes implemented by Avina Foundation and Swisscontact, such role was played by recruiting and public employment agencies. They guided or coached returnees and facilitated their employment process by identifying available job opportunities, providing insights and feedback, and supporting them developing personal plans and setting professional goals. For employers, they constituted convenient focal points helping identify the best candidates for their job opportunities, easing profile review and candidate follow-up. These recruiting and public employment services also helped identify barriers for returnees' employment and potential responses, which then translated in initiatives aimed to address these gaps.

When supporting returnees' reintegration and employment process, it is important to consider the impact of return as it can influence their job performance and relationships, especially during the onboarding period in a new job. It is therefore important to foster safe environments for psychosocial support, to help returnees to reflect on their migratory journey, build self-confidence and even tolerance to frustration. Soft skills training can provide an excellent opportunity for this, as it enables a safe space to build-up teamwork among returnees and their workmates, promoting their inclusion, raising awareness, reducing stigma and discrimination.

This is further strengthened by both Avina Foundation's and Swisscontact's efforts to change companies' mindset about migration and to reduce returnee stigma and discrimination in the assistance and recruitment process.

Finally, although employment is among the top priorities of Guatemalans upon their return, it is not always a viable option as it requires a profile meeting employers' needs in terms of education and job experience. It should thus be considered as one among different options to support returnees' reintegration, and returnees and organizations supporting their reintegration process, should assess what the most viable options are. For Guatemalan returnees with no or limited work experience abroad but who still consider employment as their preferred option, TVET programmes can help develop the skills required by the labour market (including by leveraging the educational and training programmes implemented by private Guatemalan companies under their Corporate Social Responsibility).



3. CREATING JOBS

As mentioned above, the lack of employment opportunities is a major challenge in many return contexts. To address this, **programmes can contribute to create jobs that can then be filled by returnees** (among other potential categories of beneficiaries).

Jobs can be created through short-term, temporary schemes (cash-for-work) or through activities aimed to increase employers' demand for workforce (among other aims), for instance by increasing SMEs' production capacity, by supporting the establishment or development of medium or large enterprises or by supporting the development of specific economic sectors. In these cases, programmes do not only support returnees' employment and sustainable reintegration, they also contribute to sustainable development.

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Ambitious **job creation interventions may need to be accompanied by structural interventions** at the legislative and governance level, including by revising or developing policies, improving coordination between stakeholders, setting labour standards, and so forth, as well as through public investment.



Chad. © IOM 2018/Amanda NERO.

BOX 5

Decent work

Any reintegration programme aiming to foster returnees' employment, should seek to provide decent work opportunities to returnees.

“Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their

lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. [...] Decent work and the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda – employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue – became integral elements of the [...] 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”⁵⁷

According to IOM, “decent jobs and safe and secure work environments for migrants are essential if they are to become productive members of society and contribute to economic growth.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ A previous knowledge paper produced by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, [Knowledge Paper #2, Fostering and strengthening interlinkages between sustainable development and reintegration programmes](#) (2021)) looked into the multiple synergies and interlinkages that exist or can be fostered between reintegration and sustainable development. Employment constitutes an important area of intervention where reintegration and sustainable development programmes can and should cooperate and combine efforts, including in view of creating jobs and making sure the jobs created benefit both returnees and communities at large.

⁵⁷ ILO, [Decent work webpage](#).

⁵⁸ IOM, [SDG 8 webpage](#).



Green jobs

“Green jobs are decent jobs that contribute to preserve or restore the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.⁵⁹

Reintegration programmes promoting green jobs do not only contribute to returnees' employment, but also to protecting environment and to sustainable development.⁶⁰



Table 3. Creating jobs for returnees: types of support

Support activities	Consists of	Key actors	Example of methods/ tools
<i>Temporary subsidized employment schemes</i>	Employing returnees for a short period, typically to carry out labour intensive works of relevance to the community (e.g., rehabilitation works, building of small infrastructure, cleaning of public spaces)	IOs/ NGOs Local authorities	Cash-for-work (daily or weekly payment for works carried out under the programme)
Increasing the employment offer			
<i>Creating employment opportunities in SMEs</i>	Supporting small and medium sized enterprises to grow and create job openings (that can then be filled by returnees)	IOs/ NGOs Local and national authorities Chamber of commerce and private sector	Expanding companies' production capacity through technical assistance, investment in equipment, etc., and support hiring of returnees as a condition for the support
<i>Supporting growth for decent jobs</i>	Supporting the private sector in general, or sectors of the economy, to grow, and supporting returnees filling new job opportunities	IOs/ NGOs Ministries (Labour, Commerce, sectoral) Regional and national authorities International financial institutions	Supply/ value chain support Area-based development initiatives Investments in sectors of economy to create new activities and jobs on a large scale

⁵⁹ ILO, [What is a green job?](#) (2016).

⁶⁰ See EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, Knowledge Paper #2: [Fostering and Strengthening Interlinkages Between Sustainable Development and Reintegration Programmes](#) (2021).



3.1 Temporary subsidized employment schemes

Cash-for-work schemes usually last for few days or weeks and provide quick earnings to their beneficiaries. They often regard labour intensive works that have a relevance to the community, such as rehabilitation works, building of small infrastructure, or cleaning of public spaces.

While cash-for-work provides its beneficiaries with an income for their work, it cannot really be considered as waged employment. It is temporary by nature and thus **does not offer any economic self-sufficiency**, though it can provide badly needed income to help returnees get back on their feet after return. It can also provide an “entry point for more sustainable livelihood development”.⁶¹

This type of activity is not further described in this paper, but interested readers can find more information and tips in the [first good practice factsheet published by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub on cash-for-work in Guinea](#).

3.2 Increasing the employment offer

A longer-term and more sustainable way to foster returnees' employment is by **increasing the offer of jobs, and reserving (some of) these jobs for returnees**.

3.2.1 *Exploiting the growth potential of selected small and medium sized enterprises to create employment opportunities for returnees*

Increasing the employment offer can be done by **investing in existing businesses with a growth potential to boost their production capacity, which can in turn translate into new jobs**.

Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in productive sectors are particularly relevant in this regard. Microbusinesses usually do not have relevant employment potential, and the type and amount of support that most reintegration and employment programmes can offer do not match large enterprises' needs. **Mid-sized businesses that are linked to a productive sector** (e.g., manufacturing) are more likely to be able to hire more employees as a result of increased production, than other types of businesses (e.g., trade) whose expansion would not necessarily translate into new jobs.



El Salvador. © Unsplash 2018/Max PANAMÁ.

The selection of enterprises to be supported should follow a **due diligence process**, and their progress should be very closely monitored and potentially accompanied by complementary support (such as business management training, support to improve marketing or increase business efficiency, or linking with customers/ market opportunities) to ensure that the investment produces growth in the business and generates additional job opportunities.

⁶¹ ILO, [Employment Intensive Investment Programme: Creating jobs through public investment](#) (2018)



Programmes can complement investments in SMEs' production capacities with **other support activities in view of optimizing their growth potential**. This includes supporting them with management and/or technical training, as well as with regard to marketing, packaging and market penetration, supporting them to improve their business model, and supporting them to access additional funds.



In **Iraq** and **Afghanistan**, IOM has supported the expansion of SMEs through investment in their production capacities (equipment, machinery, etc.). The new jobs made available thanks to the expansion, benefitted to returnees (among other target groups). In Afghanistan, a hundred of returnees were placed in jobs created in SMEs supported through the RADA project. To receive such support, the company owners had to agree to train the returnees on-the-job and to pay an agreed-upon salary for at least one year. More details on these practices can be found in the Good Practices Factsheets [#9](#) and [#10](#) developed and published by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub.

3.2.2 Supporting growth for decent jobs

More broadly, to increase the demand for jobs, programmes can focus on **improving the business and employment environment** through support to address some of the weaknesses or bottlenecks related to private sector development and employment, on **supporting specific sectors of the economy with a growth potential**, that could lead to new jobs, as well as on **intervening on value and supply chains, market systems, and so forth**. For instance, the ARCHIPELAGO programme, that largely focuses on TVET (cf. programme description in section 1.2), also seeks to strengthen the capacities of chambers of commerce to support their members in various areas, such as on export capacities.

This type of support can be provided under reintegration programmes, for instance through **area-based development initiatives and community-based reintegration**, but it can also go way beyond what reintegration programmes can do. **Programmes driven by investment and reforms** aiming to improve the business and employment environment, or to develop infrastructure, are indeed usually implemented by states with the support of international financial partners.

Identifying key sectors of the economy whose growth could contribute to create decent jobs, and supporting these sectors, can significantly contribute to create jobs. Sectors that are tradable, have potential for productivity growth and scale economies, and require a low to moderately skilled workforce, are particularly relevant, especially in the context of reintegration. While impossible to generalize globally, sectors such as the agro-industry, tourism,⁶² or transport and logistics, are sectors that can match these parameters, and thus have the potential to generate large scale employment for a low-skilled workforce. For this to happen, they must receive robust support to grow and improve their productivity, and any obstacle to maximize their potential should be addressed.⁶³ The green economy is another sector of great potentialities in terms of jobs, though a large part of new jobs will regard the middle- to high-skilled occupations.⁶⁴

⁶² "Tourism industries are largely labour intensive and provide jobs for many people. They include well trained professionals, but also a large number of workers with difficulties to find a job elsewhere, such as newcomers to the labour market (young people and migrants), women with family responsibilities who can only work part time, and workers with little qualification in general." UNWTO, [Employment and Decent Work in Tourism - ILO-UNWTO Joint Project](#)

⁶³ This type of analysis has been conducted by the Africa Growth Initiative at Brookings, whose early findings from a pilot case study (South Africa) can be found at: Asmal, Z., H. Bhorat and J. Page, [Exploring new sources of large-scale job creation: The potential role of Industries Without Smokestacks](#) (2020), in Foresight Africa, Top priorities for the continent 2020-2030, Brookings

⁶⁴ ILO, [Skills for a Greener Future: a Global View](#) (2019)

⁶⁵ ILO, Employment intensive investments [webpage](#)



BOX 7

Employment-intensive investments

Improving infrastructure (such as roads, buildings, water facilities or irrigation canals) can have a significant impact on people's lives. It contributes to improve access to basic services and can "contribute to reducing (rural and urban) poverty".

Employment-intensive investments "link infrastructure development with employment creation, poverty reduction and local economic and social development. In

using local labour and resources they create much needed employment and income, reduce costs, save foreign currency, and support local industry while increasing the capacity of local institutions. The combination of local participation in planning with the utilization of locally available skills, appropriate technology, materials and work methods has proven to be an effective and economically viable approach to infrastructure works and jobs creation in many countries.⁶⁵

Linking returnees to national development programmes and booming economic sectors, can provide significant job opportunities for high number of returnees and other vulnerable groups. For instance, in countries where industries are fast developing, and where return migration is a significant phenomenon, a quota of returnees can be envisaged in the newly developed industries.



A similar idea, though rather focused on refugees, was behind the Ethiopian "Jobs Compact" supported by the Government of **Ethiopia** and international partners including the World Bank, the United Kingdom, the European Investment Bank and the EU. The Compact was meant to support the country's industrialization agenda and to create jobs, as well as to improve the living conditions of refugees. It envisaged the creation of 100,000 jobs, including 30,000 for refugees, mainly in the manufacturing sector.⁶⁶ However, the limited evidence reviewed when developing this paper suggests that a number of challenges have prevented this promising example from being a success. These challenges, that are not restricted to refugees, include very low salaries, poor working conditions, geographical issues (people had to relocate to take the jobs), jobs not matching individuals' skills or aspirations, and ultimately massive quitting.⁶⁷



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⁶⁶ See for instance: UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Jobs Compact Ethiopia, [Ethiopia Jobs Compact Business Case](#); EIB, [EIB President pledges support for "Jobs Compact" in Ethiopia tackling migration and refugee challenge](#) (2016)

⁶⁷ See for instance: Barrett, P. M. and D. Baumann-Pauly, [Made in Ethiopia: Challenges in the Garment Industry's New Frontier](#) (2019), New York University Stern Center for Business and Human Rights



TIPS

- ◇ Reintegration programmes have a role to play in identifying and referring returnees with the required skills and qualifications, to job creation programmes.
- ◇ Coordination between implementing organizations as well as with donors on synergies, quotas of returnees and referral mechanisms should already start at programme design stage, to the extent possible.
- ◇ Market assessments are essential to identify the enterprises or economic sectors to be targeted.
- ◇ Interventions should not only support the production growth (and resulting workforce increase) of targeted enterprises and economic sectors, but also support compliance with legal standards and decent work principles, if relevant, including in terms of wage and safety. Companies supported should also be formalized/ registered.
- ◇ Even if programmes supporting entire sectors of the economy or industrial development largely go beyond the scope of reintegration programmes, reintegration programmes can play a key role in advocating for employment for returnees and for decent work conditions, as well as in providing returnees with the required skills and qualifications to take the jobs created.
- ◇ When placing returnees in the jobs created, attention should be placed on averting tensions with or frustration by non-returnee members of the communities. Programmes should thus avoid visibly targeting and favouring returnees and consider supporting other groups, too.



3.3 Case study: Partnering with the private sector to improve employability, facilitate employment and create jobs in Nigeria

In Nigeria, IOM has partnered with private sector companies to foster returnees' employment. Through various projects and approaches, returnees were provided with on-the-job training opportunities which improved their employability. Returnees were also placed in private companies, and employment opportunities were created for returnees via the establishment of small factories.

Improving returnees' employability through on-the-job training

Since February 2019, IOM has piloted an on-the-job training approach for Nigerian migrants returning from Switzerland. Forty returnees have been trained in companies for a period comprised between one month and one year, depending on the sector of activity, and have received a certificate from their employer confirming the vocational training.

To make this possible, IOM identified potentially interested companies, contacted their managers, assessed the workplace and supported the establishment of contracts. IOM has paid a training allowance to the respective facilitators, purchased necessary material (e.g., angle grinder, safety boots or basic set of tools depending on the respective activity), and paid out a subsistence allowance to the beneficiaries (NGN 30,000 per month).

An assessment of the impact of this intervention, carried out in August 2021, revealed that all respondents considered that they acquired good experience and were confident to apply what they learnt in the future. Some of the trainees have continued working for the same company, with a regular contract, after the training period.⁶⁸

Placing returnees in jobs: negotiating with the private sector and leveraging their corporate social responsibility

One of the main issues faced by IOM when supporting returnees' employment in Nigeria, is their lack of relevant skills or the mismatch of returnees' skills with the private sector requirements. Returnees most often do not have the education, training, skills and job experience requirements to qualify for jobs in the private sector. Furthermore, the private sector being predominantly driven by profit maximisation, employers often keep their hiring of new employees limited.

⁶⁸ IOM, Final Report to the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration, Facilitating Sustainable Reintegration of Voluntary Returnees through Business Support in Nigeria (Phase 3 – 2019-2021) (unpublished), and updates from IOM Country Office in Nigeria through exchange of e-mails.



To address these challenges, IOM engaged with private sector companies and advocated to soften job entry requirements for returnees, and to consider employment of a significant number of returnees and unemployed local youth at once, based on humanitarian grounds. An agreement was reached with Wells Hosa Greenhouse Farm Limited, Nigeria's biggest greenhouse farm company. The company agreed to offer a job to 50 returnees and other community members selected by IOM⁶⁹ regardless of the company's usual job entry requirements.

The agreement, signed in 2022 for a duration of five years, envisages that beneficiaries receive a salary allowing to cover their basic needs, corresponding to at least Nigeria's minimum wage, with periodic upward review of salaries. Any beneficiary leaving the company (due for instance to better job opportunities, moving, sickness or death) is numerically replaced by another beneficiary selected by IOM.

This agreement was reached following strong and continuous advocacy, leveraging the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR). It was combined with one-off material support to the farm through the purchase of fertilisers, which helped the company expand its operations.



Numen Nigeria. © IOM 2021/Natalie OREN.

Creating jobs for returnees: setting up a small factory

In Edo State, a state known for its pineapple production and where almost 40 per cent of all Nigerians returning from abroad settle back, IOM cooperated with the Edo State Government and a local business partner to establish a pineapple factory employing 42 beneficiaries made up of returnees and local youth.

As part of a community-based reintegration project, a pineapple processing plant was built in Iguobazuwa and returnees and local unemployed youth received training on pineapple fruit processing after being supported to establish a cooperative, the Iguobazuwa Pineapple Multi-Purpose Cooperative.

The private sector was engaged in the project to support the economic sustainability of the factory, including by supporting the definition of a successful and sustainable business model, supporting the marketing and branding of the products, and strengthening the management of the business.

⁶⁹ Selection is done through the Migrant Resource Center located in Benin City, Edo State, based on criteria such as proximity between place of residence and the farm; age; motivation and commitment.



A local company, experienced with pineapple transformation and already known on the market, Efedosa Catering Services Limited, was identified, and discussions started. Key to those discussions was reaching a common language and shared understanding. Indeed, the gap between the IOM-promoted humanitarian or development perspective regarding business and employment (in this case consisting of providing a number of returnees and unemployed youth with economic opportunities and livelihoods and building their capacity to manage the factory through progressive transfer of management, marketing and other relevant skills), and a business-focused approach (that usually seeks to maximize profits), had to be narrowed.

Following intensive advocacy, a seven-year agreement was signed between the cooperative and the company. According to it, the company manages the factory and pays dividends to the cooperative members, who are co-owners and shareholders of the factory. Interested members of the cooperative can also be employed in the factory, thus directly earning an income from their work in addition to the dividends received. These beneficiaries are thus both the factory's co-owners, and its employees. During these years, the cooperative members are also expected to learn how to run a company and at the end of the period, the management of the factory is expected to be handed over to the cooperative.

Besides the 42 direct hires, the project is indirectly benefitting approximately 250 individuals and their families, as well as farmer associations and other community members who can sell their harvest to the factory. It also contributed to improve the community's perception of returnees as they are perceived as having driven the establishment of the factory in their area.

Anticipating future trends: exploiting remote work opportunities

Recently, IOM has observed that remote work modality, diffused during the COVID-19 pandemic, has created new job opportunities. Building on Edo State Government's efforts to create jobs for youth and supporting its plan to create coworking spaces in the region, IOM is equipping some of these spaces. It is also training returnees in IT skills with the objective to allow them working remotely from these coworking spaces, for employers anywhere in the country or beyond. Outcomes of this plan are still to be verified.



CONCLUSIONS



What did we learn and what can reintegration programmes do?

While migrants' countries of origin are often characterized by a prevalence of the informal economy and significant unemployment rates (which may contribute to people's decision to migrate in the first place), returnees often face even greater challenges in finding and securing jobs than other members of their communities who did not migrate. Therefore, there is a need to implement specific interventions to support returnees' employment.

Programmes can do so in many ways, as described and illustrated in this paper. They can intervene on the supply of labour, on the demand for labour, and on the interface between both. Measures can target returnees' skills and employability, employers' willingness and capacity to employ returnees, and the functioning of skills and employment systems more widely. Training systems and employment services can be strengthened and better adapted to returnees' profiles and needs.

While specialized local services and programmes should support or take the lead in this process as much as possible, reintegration programmes can further support returnees' employment by complementing the above in a variety of ways:

- They can facilitate coordination between key stakeholders, including local authorities, local employers, training institutions and programmes, and civil society organizations (which is key not only for the system to work but also for it to be sustainable).
- They can inform stakeholders on the specific needs and profiles of returnees to support better tailored services, and advocate for their inclusion as beneficiaries of these programmes or services.
- They can act as an intermediary between returnees and training and employment stakeholders, or accompany returnees through the different steps and activities.
- They can provide technical and material support, both at operational and policy level, including by supporting the integration of employment considerations in reintegration policies and strategies, and of considerations related to returnees in employment policies and strategies.
- They can support employers in establishing decent working conditions.

Defining how reintegration programmes can best support returnees' employment and which support measures should be designed and implemented, depends on several factors and should be based on an informed context analysis (including labour market assessment and stakeholder analysis), on a needs analysis (of returnees, but also of employers and communities), and on an assessment of resources available.

Reintegration programmes are well placed to support returnees' employment, but cooperation and synergies with various actors is essential to optimize the support provided and increase its impact. This includes synergies with development and employment programmes, as well as with local and national authorities, chambers of commerce and industry, employers, and so forth.



Beyond the economic prism

Throughout this paper, employment has largely been considered through the prism of economy and of its contribution to the economic self-sufficiency of returnees. While this economic impact is essential, supporting returnees' employment goes beyond, in that it can also contribute to returnees' feeling of stability, sense of agency, and well-being.

Moreover, focusing on returnees' skills or actual recruitment might not be sufficient to foster their sustainable employment. When necessary, reintegration assistance should support this process by contributing to place returnees in the right physical and psychological conditions to work. Employment support should thus be combined with medical assistance, psychosocial support, or other forms of support according to returnees' needs. Where stigmatization against returnees is widespread, interventions should be carried out to change communities' perspectives on returnees and create an environment where returnees are not stigmatized.

Reintegration, employment and sustainable development

Returnees' employment cannot be considered in isolation. The distinction made in this paper between waged employment and self-employment is somewhat artificial and progress in one sector can contribute to improvements in the other sector. Reintegration and employment programmes often support and link both aspects. In addition, some of the measures described in this paper are also relevant to support returnees in self-employment (e.g., training).

Most interventions presented in this paper are not specific to returnees; they can also be relevant – and are actually used – to support any population sub-group with the aim to establish a more inclusive labour market. Adequate employment support measures do not only contribute to returnees' sustainable reintegration, but can also contribute to more inclusive societies and, ultimately, to sustainable development.



RECOMMENDATIONS



A number of tips on specific types of intervention are provided throughout the paper. Some general recommendations can also be made for reintegration programmes seeking to foster returnees' employment.

1. Engage and closely involve the private sector

When it comes to (returnees') employment, the private sector is key. It can both benefit from and contribute to interventions aiming to foster returnees' employment. Employers can **benefit** from such interventions as, for instance, adequate TVET produces a workforce with the skills required to respond to the labour market needs, and job matching and job placement can help employers in their recruitment process. At the same time, employers can (and should) strongly **contribute** to such interventions. For instance, consulting employers is essential to understand the market needs and adjust support activities accordingly. Employers can also contribute to designing or adapting training curricula to actual needs in a given sector, or to providing training (both through class-based and work-based training). Finally, employers are fundamental as they are ultimately those potentially employing returnees.

To maximize the private sector's engagement both as potential beneficiaries and as potential contributors, employers (including professional organizations, chambers of commerce and industries, and so forth) should be **sensitized** on reintegration. Reintegration programmes and organizations should sensitize them on the humanitarian or social objective of employing returnees (including by leveraging employers' corporate social responsibility, where it exists) and provide them with objective data and evidence on returnees' profiles (including on their skills or by challenging assumptions that returnees are unstable, untrustworthy or criminals) so that employers can take informed decisions. Programmes can also stress the potential convenience of cooperation (e.g., adapted workforce, facilitated recruitment process).

2. Use and strengthen national and local training and employment services

Programmes aiming to support returnees' employment should as much as possible cooperate with and rely on existing TVET institutions and programmes and employment services, rather than substitute them or create parallel systems focusing on returnees. Employment agencies usually provide many of the services described under the sections "improving employability" and "facilitating employment". When these services are not effective, in general or for returnees more specifically, programmes should support them in developing their capacity, instead of replacing them. Thanks to their unique knowledge of the return phenomenon and of the specificities of returnees, reintegration programmes have an important role to play to make these services and programmes more adapted and effective for returnees.

3. Combine different types of support to maximize their impact

As largely illustrated in this paper, fostering returnees' employment requires, in most cases, a combination of support measures, which constitute a process leading to improved employment opportunities and, eventually, a proper job. Vocational training alone contributes only up to a certain extent to sustainable employment, while when combined with soft skills training and job matching services, for instance, it constitutes a more robust form of support.



4. Consider all dimensions of reintegration

Employment support should not be seen in isolation; it is part of a wider reintegration process and thus needs to be addressed with other aspects of reintegration. Returnees with health issues or facing psychological troubles or housing difficulties, for instance, may struggle to find or keep a job. Returning migrants may also lack identity documents, that are necessary for any formal job. Tailor-made measures to support returnees' physical and psychological well-being and access to services should be implemented along with the economic support provided. In many return contexts, the stigma against returnees should also be addressed so that the community, including employers, accept them as members of the community with capacities and resources.

5. Consider returnees' communities of return

Employment support activities should, when possible, extend to migrants' communities of return. While reintegration programmes can support better targeting returnees, attention should be paid not to create a perception that returnees are advantaged or that support is unfair, which might in turn create tensions in communities of return and fuel resentment against returnees. Above a certain number of returnees employed through a reintegration programme, it is recommended to make sure that the local population (for instance persons from vulnerable groups or unemployed youth) can also access jobs and receive support to do so. When assistance consists of supporting SMEs to grow so that they can employ returnees, attention should also be paid not to create any unfair competition with other businesses.

6. Know the local context

Employment support activities and objectives must be strongly linked to the local context. Return contexts can be characterized by more or less formal or informal economies, weak or booming economies, unstable (including post-crisis) or more stable contexts. Employment support cannot be one-size fits all; it must be adapted to the socio-economic context and to the specificities of each country's – and each community's – labour market.

Support should thus build on relevant mapping, labour market assessment, and awareness on anticipated evolutions of the labour market. It requires an analysis of the needs, opportunities and absorption capacity of the local labour market, including an analysis on how returnees can fit in it. Private-sector opportunities and training facilities should be assessed or mapped, with regular reassessments to continuously adapt to evolving trends. Job counsellors and other staff involved in employment support must remain aware of developments in local labour market, training opportunities and promising employment sectors.



7. Adopt a gender- and age-sensitive approach

Tailored support should be provided to women, young people, and more broadly individuals in vulnerable situations or part of marginalized groups, to facilitate their access to the labour market. It may comprise including specific provisions in employment policies and plans, but also more directly planning complementary support activities in line with beneficiaries' needs (for instance facilitating employment in jobs adapted to the social role of women, or envisaging child care support or home-based decent jobs).

8. Make sure to clearly advertise employment support options, but manage expectations

Both returning migrants and potential employers must be aware of available support measures. Programmes should thus ensure wide communication and outreach through the most adapted channels. Social media is often an important source of information for returnees, including before their return actually takes place, but advertisement can also be done during counselling sessions with returnees, job fairs, meetings with relevant stakeholders, and visits to companies.

Advertising the opportunity to find stable employment goes with challenges. In particular, it might raise returnees' expectations. Their expectations should thus be well managed, starting in the host country and again after return in the country of origin.



Dhule, Maharashtra, India. © Unsplash 2019/Gyan SHAHANE.



Rationale of the Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Papers Series

This report is part of a series of Knowledge Papers focusing on aspects of migrant reintegration that have been largely under-researched, not fully implemented, or that have consistently been identified in reintegration programmes' evaluations as programmes gaps or opportunities. Complementing the series on 'Good, promising and innovative practices in reintegration assistance' as well as the KMH-led studies, the Knowledge Papers aim to take stock of the state of the art in various areas related to reintegration assistance and programmes, and propose leads for future reintegration programmes implemented by Governments, International Organizations and NGOs worldwide.

EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub

This Knowledge Paper is developed by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) established by IOM in late 2017 under the EU-funded Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration, with the aim to provide support to the EU-IOM Actions addressing migrant protection and sustainable reintegration in Africa and in Asia.