



EU-IOM

Joint Initiative for
Migrant Protection
and Reintegration



EVALUATION OF REINTEGRATION ACTIVITIES IN THE SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD REGION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This reintegration evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative provides an assessment of reintegration outcomes after three years of program implementation, on the eve of the COVID 19 pandemic. It finds that the intervention has been both relevant and effective, with an 84 per cent beneficiary satisfaction rate and substantive evidence of positive outcomes for returnees in recovering their self-respect and re-establishing their livelihoods. The program's innovative 'integrated' approach shows strong results for the combination of economic and psychosocial assistance, however limited budgets and timelines for medical, shelter and education assistance were often insufficient in the face of large-scale needs.

The evaluation built on the evidence base of more than 10,000 surveys conducted with reintegration beneficiaries in the Sahel and Lake Chad region by gathering qualitative data during field missions in January and February 2020. A team of 10 internal and external evaluators conducted more than 350 in-depth interviews in total with frontline IOM staff, government officials and local NGO key informants and reintegration beneficiaries in Senegal, The Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, Ghana and Burkina Faso.

For individual reintegration projects, successful reintegration cases generally illustrated the importance of beneficiary skills and motivation combined with IOM training and ongoing case management support. Reintegration counselling is also vital to steer beneficiaries towards more sustainable but less popular forms of assistance, ideally using testimonials from returnees who have successfully completed the reintegration process.

The evaluation also sheds light on the outcomes of the newer collective and community assistance reintegration models, with mixed results. Vocational training and cash-

for-work projects were generally well-received, providing vital income and skills and representing a force for social cohesion when host community members were also involved. However, a number of negative unintended outcomes were reported for collective microbusiness assistance projects, where financial and protection risks often outweighed the benefits of combining returnees' funds and skillsets.

The Joint Initiative program has continuously learned and adapted throughout the program cycle. Notable adjustments include expanding IOM's field presence and geographic coverage in order to reach returnees in the main migration-affected regions, and streamlining procurement procedures to reduce delays. Managing beneficiary expectations and improving communication is a work in progress, with some missions providing mobile phones to returnees and ongoing efforts to refine messaging about the reintegration process.

Data from government and civil society representatives suggest that one of the program's most significant achievements to date has been to put reintegration programming on the map for national partners—both government and civil society—in Sahel and Lake Chad and raise awareness of returnees' specific needs and vulnerabilities. Through both formal and informal IOM capacity-building, national partners have gained valuable experience of responding to the economic and psychosocial challenges facing this previously underserved group. Buy-in from national governments has also increased, as they recognize the importance for economic and political stability of absorbing the wave of returning migrants. Nevertheless, while many national actors report increased engagement and improved skills, sustainability of funding remains the major risk for the continuation of reintegration programming after the Joint Initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Reduce assistance wait times for beneficiaries by enrolling them in cash for work and/or vocational training shortly after return or implementing other responses to immediate needs (such as cash-based assistance) for those whose microbusinesses may take time to generate income.
- 2) Expand community-based cash-for-work projects to promote social cohesion and reduce risk of creating migration pull factors.
- 3) Handle collective microbusiness assistance with caution, reserving for cases where collective members have a successful track record of business cooperation or other relationship of trust (such as family members).
- 4) Continue to build on the psychosocial assistance component of the programme and ensure equal access for returnees to counselling services across missions.
- 5) Continue refining messaging to beneficiaries to manage expectations of the reintegration process in coordination missions in host/transit countries.
- 6) Scale up successful practices such as on-site visits to trades workshops and personal testimonies from returnees who have completed the process, which have been shown to effectively correct misperceptions about economic reintegration.
- 7) Conduct a review of the applicability of IOM's globally standardized vulnerability criteria guiding beneficiary selection procedures to the West and Central African context and conduct capacity-building on the implementation of regionally consistent approaches with country offices.
- 8) To donor: Mobilize additional funding for social reintegration and allow provision of assistance addressing longer-term/more serious vulnerabilities.
- 9) M&E: Increase monitoring during the reintegration assistance process to complement the extensive beneficiary feedback already gathered at completion. This includes conducting an assessment of beneficiary retention rates and reasons for withdrawal from the reintegration process, in addition to stepping up real-time monitoring of supply of in-kind assistance, cash, training and psychosocial support activities. Further increases to M&E staffing may be required to boost field monitoring presence.



INTRODUCTION

Launched in December 2016 with the support of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration is the first comprehensive programme bringing together African countries, IOM and the EU around the shared aim of ensuring that migration is safer, more informed and better governed for both migrants and their communities. It is implemented in 26 countries of the Sahel and Lake Chad region, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative in the Sahel and Lake Chad region is implemented in 13 countries, namely: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Chad. As of the end of February 2020, a total of 76,767 migrants were assisted with post-arrival reception and/or reintegration assistance in countries of origin in Sahel and Lake Chad region.

The reintegration assistance approach implemented in the framework of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative builds upon IOM's 'integrated approach' to reintegration.

According¹ to this approach, a one-size-fits-all reintegration package determined by the host country's IOM mission is not a complete solution to the complex, multidimensional process of reintegration. Rather, a holistic and needs-based approach is required: one that takes into consideration the various factors affecting an individual's reintegration, including economic, social and

psychosocial dimensions across individual, community and structural levels. In the Sahel and Lake Chad region, the most common forms of economic reintegration assistance include microbusiness start-up support, vocational training, cash for work and job placement, while social assistance can include reimbursing medical costs, rent and school fees. Psychosocial assistance includes both one-on-one and group counselling in addition to recreational activities designed to improve returnees' wellbeing. Psychosocial support can also be mainstreamed into other kinds of assistance, for example An entrepreneurship training might include advice to deal with the stress of starting up a microbusiness. The shift to delivering tailored reintegration solutions in the countries of origin was also designed to increase the ownership of national governments and civil society partners in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions in the process, increasing sustainability.

This mid-term, thematic evaluation is designed to assess the progress made so far in reintegration programming, as well as identifying lessons learned and recommendations to inform ongoing programme implementation. A final evaluation is also planned which will cover reintegration as well as the other five thematic areas of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative (Protection, Data Management, Awareness-Raising, Community Stabilization and Capacity-building).

¹ For more information on the integrated approach to reintegration, please see [IOM, Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return, 2017](#). For more information on how the integrated approach to reintegration is applied within the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, please see the [first biannual report on reintegration](#).

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employed mixed methods, with a review of key documents, analysis of quantitative data and qualitative interviews conducted with IOM staff, partners, and beneficiaries of reintegration assistance. Data was collected in 11 out of the 12 countries in the

Sahel and Lake Chad region where IOM implements reintegration programming under the Joint Initiative. Only Mauritania was not included due to the relatively low number of Mauritanian returnees coming from Europe and North Africa.

DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION

Secondary data reviewed for the purpose of this evaluation include regional Joint Initiative-Sahel and Lake Chad and European Union Trust Fund programme documents and evaluations, as well as relevant project documents provided by the 11 IOM country missions.

The evaluation employed the IOM global reintegration M&E tools as the main quantitative survey instrument

(Reintegration Programme Monitoring, Satisfaction and Sustainability Surveys). Data was collected in the 11 countries by IOM staff and external enumerators from the beginning of the programme until February 2020. Targets for data collection were established to constitute a representative random sample of the overall population of returnees with a confidence interval of 95 per cent and a margin of error of 5 per cent.

Survey	Number collected
Reintegration Monitoring	3,373
Reintegration Satisfaction	3,900
Reintegration Sustainability	2,779
TOTAL SURVEYS	10,052

Fieldwork was carried by the evaluation team during January and February 2020, with two week-long missions to each of the 11 countries to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews. Evaluators included independent consultants as well as IOM M&E staff (see Annex II for evaluator bios).

To enable comparison of trends between countries, standardized qualitative data collection tools were developed by IOM's Regional Office, as well as specific

evaluation questions based on OECD evaluation criteria (see Annex I for evaluation terms of reference). Targets for qualitative data collection per country were at least 10 key informant interviews (IOM staff, government and civil society partners and/or community leaders) in addition to 20 in-depth beneficiary interviews. In total across the region, **160 key informant interviews** were conducted (includes 61 with IOM staff and 99 with partners) in addition to **199 semi-structured² qualitative beneficiary interviews**.

² Regionally-standardized interview guide tools were developed, however country evaluators also asked follow-up questions to explore the themes raised organically by respondents.

For internal learning purposes, field missions concluded with a presentation of quantitative data and initial findings from the fieldwork to programme management staff in the 11 country missions. An Evaluation Steering

Committee was also set up in each country to provide detailed feedback on country-level findings. At the regional level, a Data Validation and Lessons Learned webinar for IOM staff was held in June 2020.

DATA ANALYSIS

Prior to the field visit, evaluators conducted an initial analysis of the quantitative data, using SPSS, Excel and PowerBI to identify quantitative trends in the data and inform the approach and discussions with IOM staff in country missions. Further analysis was also conducted at a regional level.

Analysis of quantitative data was deepened in light of the initial fieldwork findings, with evaluators exploring the

themes raised by respondents themselves to develop findings on the intended and unintended outcomes and sustainability of reintegration assistance. Evidence for evaluation conclusions is presented in the words of programme beneficiaries and partners. The coding of interview transcripts was done at the regional level using the Nvivo qualitative analysis software.

LIMITATIONS

Quantitative data: issues with consistency and quality of the quantitative data were identified, many of which had resulted from data entry errors following pen and paper data collection. To mitigate this, in early 2020, the programme moved to electronic data collection using the MiMosa app. Capacity-building efforts for country M&E staff, as well as improvements to the Mimosa database are also ongoing.

Qualitative data: Some interviews with beneficiaries of reintegration assistance were conducted in local languages not spoken by the evaluators and translated by IOM staff and/or an external translator. This has limited the ability of the evaluator to fully understand the nuances and may have limited the ability of respondents to speak openly about their experiences.

Bias: Beneficiaries may express positive feedback about IOM services, or alternatively amplify their needs, in the hope of receiving further assistance ('demand bias'). This

was largely mitigated in qualitative data collection as evaluators were external to the mission and in some cases external to IOM. The limitations of beneficiary satisfaction as a measure of programme success should also be considered when comparing survey results across the region, as these can be influenced by cultural factors, beneficiary expectations and whether dedicated M&E or programme staff involved in implementation collect the data

Types of reintegration assistance: Due to the absence of a 'control group' who has not benefitted from the integrated reintegration model within each country it is difficult to draw rigorous quantitative conclusions about the impact of these newer forms of assistance. Instead, this evaluation relies on case study methodologies and qualitative feedback from beneficiaries and partners to examine the effectiveness of these approaches.

FINDINGS

RELEVANCE

Evaluation
Question

#1



Are the reintegration activities implemented under the Joint Initiative appropriately tailored to the needs (both immediate and longer term) and priorities of beneficiaries and their communities (include economic, social, psychosocial programming)?

Data indicates that the programme's 'integrated approach' of economic, social and psychosocial assistance is highly relevant to beneficiaries' needs. Both individual and community economic reintegration assistance are found to be highly relevant; however data suggests that collective assistance is less well-adapted to the target beneficiary group and region due to rampant mistrust between returnees, who are often under immense psychosocial and financial pressure.

Under the 'traditional' approach to reintegration, there was a fixed amount of reintegration assistance per beneficiary. Under the 'integrated approach', there is more flexibility to provide additional assistance to vulnerable beneficiaries – for example, a returnee can receive much-needed psychosocial support, or help with paying school fees or rent, without impacting the value of the economic reintegration assistance. Understanding the needs of returnees is a critical step in providing this tailored assistance.

RELEVANCE OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

All interviews with programme beneficiaries, partners and IOM staff stressed that the top priority of returning migrants is to rapidly generate income to provide for their household and family. Failing to achieve this considerably increases their chances to re-migrate irregularly, as a partner in Burkina Faso explained: *"Despite the hardship of their journey, return migrants often feel a certain urgency to leave again; one way to discourage them is to give them the means to create wealth, through training and the provision of a starting kit."*

The strong emphasis of the programme on promoting income-generating activities is therefore in line with this universal, urgent need. Key informants cited economic

opportunity and jobs as important needs for returnees, primarily because of the financial security they provide but also because of the sense of fulfilment and affinity with home soil associated with gainful employment. Not only did economic factors often trigger migration in the first place, but financial needs are often exacerbated upon return due to their having sold all their assets or incurred debt to fund the migration journey. As community representatives in Nigeria explained, *"they [returnees] are starting up again, from fresh, from scratch."* Interviewees also emphasized the need for returnees to build up skills for income generation opportunities. As one Nigerian partner added, *"some migrants have skills and need to enhance them. Others need completely new skills."*



IOM STUDY EXAMINES RETURNEE DEBT

A comprehensive IOM study on levels of returnee debt in the Sahel and Lake Chad region and its impact on the reintegration process is currently underway in the framework of the DFID-funded program Safety, Support and Solutions Across the Central Mediterranean Route. The study aims to better understand migrant vulnerability linked to debts, in order to improve IOM reintegration programming. The research includes a phone survey conducted during the first half of 2020 with a total of 2,483 returnees to Mali, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Senegal and The Gambia. The results of the research, which also includes a qualitative fieldwork component, are expected to be published by the end of 2020.

According to the preliminary results, almost two-thirds (64%) of returnees in the region come back burdened with debt. While in 98 per cent of cases these debts are less than 1,500 EUR, in The Gambia the amount of debt tended to be higher, with 23 per cent of those surveyed reporting a debt of between 900 and 1,800 EUR.

A Gambian government official also confirmed the relevance of the programme's emphasis on economic combined with psychosocial assistance: *"The number one [priority] is employment, they need employment when they get back. Skills, most of them are not skilled so they need that capacity. Apart from that is resources. Access to microcredit facilities to go into businesses. Forced returns have big issues [with] health and mental health. Some are forcibly returned against their will [by national authorities³]. They get trauma as a result."*

While the programme start-up was delayed in some countries due to governments' doubts about the

relevance of the programme's objectives to their migration policy approach, this evaluation found increasing recognition that remittances are no longer an easy answer to home-grown economic problems. For example, several government representatives in Niger mentioned that while migration has long been embedded in the Nigerien economy as a resilience mechanism, the context is now changing. A rapidly increasing youth population, less productive arable lands in Niger and less work opportunities abroad has led to increased pressures on the local economy and concerns that the youth, including returning migrants, may turn to criminality or religious radicalization.



"Migration is also a form of resilience for the people in the region. [...] Now all is in the red: people do not have the same opportunities in host countries as they did before. I met the diaspora in Ivory Coast recently and people live very badly, some of them are suffering, they don't have the same opportunities. When they come back there is nothing here and it is a time bomb." **Government representative, Niger**

³ IOM does not participate in the process of non-voluntary returns of migrants to their countries of origin, which are carried out solely by host governments. However, these caseloads may still be eligible for IOM post-arrival and reintegration assistance.

Training was found to be highly relevant to beneficiaries' needs, whether they were looking for a job or to start up their own microbusiness. The importance of entrepreneurship trainings was highlighted during an evaluation field visit in Senegal, where one returnee had opened a cosmetics shop after attending a short orientation training. More than one year later, his notes are still on his desk, illustrating how important this training was for him. But if he had to choose between this training and a higher reintegration grant, he would have probably chosen the latter. Many Senegalese migrants mentioned that poor management is the main obstacle to succeeding with their businesses, such as this returnee: *"We are now back and nothing is yet lost. Most of us are still young, but we*

need maybe evening courses or short trainings to not fail again with our activities." Vocational trainings are found to be a relevant complement to other forms of economic reintegration assistance such as microbusiness support or job placement. Such vocational trainings can also fill the gap between the arrival of the migrant and receiving the reintegration assistance, and connect new arrivals with other returnees or host community members. A small cash-for-training grant covers daily costs. Synergies with the DFID-funded Safety, Support and Solutions Project have also been found in this regard, with migrants in the Agadez transit centre provided with business skills training to capitalize on time spent in transit.

While vocational training overall was found to be a highly relevant activity to help migrants gain employable skills, care needs to be taken to ensure that the capacity-

building activity is suitable for the beneficiary. Factors to be mindful of include:

- Different competence and educational levels of the participants (including illiteracy)
- Different languages spoken – ideally both the language of instruction and training materials should be in the participants' main language rather than in French or English
- Relevance to local labor market needs
- Relevance of the subject matter to the participants' goals and previous experiences. For example, in Burkina Faso an implementing partner expressed the view that business training is not adapted to the needs of all participants: *"Programme beneficiaries participate in the training, they understand their contents, but not everyone has what it takes to become an entrepreneur."* In Mali, a beneficiary reported that she was not offered the chance to learn any new skills, *"They suggested a training in tailoring, but I've always done this job and done it very well. I declined the training and I didn't receive any other assistance from IOM."* (In cases where returnees are assessed as already having viable vocational skills, according to IOM Mali procedures the beneficiaries should simply be given kits to help them practice their trade. However, some instances of staff insisting beneficiaries complete redundant training were discovered and addressed by the mission). In Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, organizing job fairs emerged as a best practice to cater for the diverse interests of beneficiaries with a single event.

In many countries, government partners and family members were involved in the design of reintegration assistance to help ensure its appropriateness, with mixed results. In Cameroon, there are different multi-sectoral thematic committees which assess the needs for

beneficiaries. The country's Ministry of Youth has dedicated 15 government employees to reintegration programming. The government team works with migrants to design their small businesses and provide them with initial coaching and mentorship. This ensures that projects

developed are adapted to the market conditions and have a solid foundation to succeed. However in Senegal, consulting family members about a young returnee's reintegration plan ended in implementing a microbusiness activity that was not relevant to his individual aspirations: *"The business is going well, but it is not exactly what I wanted. I wanted to have a real change in life. That's also why I tried to reach Italy...it's my brother who pushed to open a shop."* The returnee mentioned he still wants to study in Senegal but cannot go back to school as he needs to take care of his shop. *"I will certainly try again to reach Italy."*

There were different opinions among partners on whether the scope of economic reintegration activities is tailored to the long-term needs of beneficiaries. In Nigeria, some partners and returnees felt that assistance needed to go further in terms of amount and length provided to ensure successful reintegration. One partner explained this frankly: *"When the EU said they have rehabilitated [reintegrated] 600, I said it is nonsense...People who leave to make money do not want to stay on the lower rungs of society."* Likewise, in Ghana an IOM staff member pointed

out the migrants often return with large debts, meaning that reintegration assistance of approximately 1,000 EUR often pales in comparison. However in Cote d'Ivoire, one beneficiary explained that the assistance was still meaningful to him, *"It's always good to be home, to see everyone again, to see my country again. It does me good to see my children grow up in front of me. I'm happy to be here and participating in this project. When you are not in your home country, there are some very difficult things...We invested too much time and energy in migrating. This project in comparison is almost insignificant. But it assists us to recover financially and to re-enter society. It helps us..."* Likewise, a partner in Cote d'Ivoire underlined the importance of the programme: *"It's difficult for migrants to return to their families after coming back destitute – the migrants are isolated and marginalized...With these projects, they have the chance to get back their credibility and confidence. It's a very good project. We see what is happening, our children are dying in the water. Today the youth are returning and they have something to do – with IOM it's possible and positive."*

RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Qualitative interviews found returnees still emphasized needs for individual social support to make rent payments, pay for medical treatment, or to cope with shocks and unexpected expenses. IOM's flexible additional assistance demonstrates its relevance to these situations. As the challenges and needs returnees face are often recurring, even returnees who have managed to restore decent living standards or a steady stream of income still struggle to cope with the shocks of unexpected expenses. According to one returning migrant in Guinea Bissau: *"The situation of the house is good, the problem is the continuity of the rent payment, I am really experiencing difficulties in this chapter ..."* Likewise in Cameroon, those who came back

sick and received medical support expressed their gratitude to IOM for helping them recover their health before they could start their reintegration projects. However as will be explored in the following section, some vulnerable beneficiaries have medical needs beyond the programme's ability to assist, while national health systems are often weak and unable to step in.

Key informants note that very few migrants return without some level of psychosocial vulnerability, given trauma experienced during their journeys. Many struggle with the stigma of being a returnee and feel rejected by their **communities**, such as these two returnees in The Gambia:



"The community...I can't stay there, they talk behind my back and disturb me so I decided to move. They don't invite me to social activities, they don't trust me, sometimes they say I am a killer [i.e. a mercenary in the Libya conflict] or whatever. I don't know why. Some of my friends run away from me."



“There is a welcome you would appreciate and there is one you would not... I felt much of it was in their words but not from the heart. Some said I travelled and instead of money I brought back a child, that I can't build a house and I came back empty-handed and I feel all sorts of harassments.”

Overall, the programme's 'integrated approach' is an appropriate intervention as returnees face pressing economic, social and psychosocial needs.

RELEVANCE OF COLLECTIVE ASSISTANCE

As will be explored in the 'Effectiveness' section, collective microbusiness projects have generally proven to be less relevant and effective to the target beneficiary group (i.e. returning migrants) in the Central and West Africa region due to both cultural factors and the migration journey fueling distrust. As an IOM staff member in Ghana explained, “those who tried to cross the

desert were exposed to inhumane treatment and exploitation...these smugglers have been swindling them, so they will not have trust in anybody.” Likewise, a partner organization in the same country commented, “Our experience with them is that they prefer the individual approach. Coming together to form a group, they don't like that”.

RELEVANCE OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Community-based cash for work projects are found to be highly relevant as they provide both returnee and community members with a reliable income stream while also benefitting the community overall. In Cote d'Ivoire, a project to rehabilitate a community school gave local students a more conducive learning environment while also providing returnees and community members working on the project with skills and a salary. According to the school principal, “This project will help the students to follow their lessons all day. It has a double benefit – as well as rehabilitating the school, there is training, it helps the youth.” However, evaluation

findings in Cote d'Ivoire also highlighted the geographic challenges in identifying relevant communities for community reintegration projects. The need for most projects, and the opportunities to collaborate with local partners are in rural areas while most returnees come from the capital. The result is that agricultural projects or projects to improve rural infrastructure, although very relevant to participants on some levels as described with the school rehabilitation above, may take place in communities that are not particularly touched by the phenomenon of irregular migration.

Evaluation
Question

#2



Are coordination and capacity-building activities focused on reintegration of migrants relevant to the operational needs of IOM partners?

Data from government and NGO partners across the region indicates that overall they found IOM's capacity-building activities on the reintegration of migrants to be both relevant and useful. The only exception is Niger, where the first reintegration capacity-building activities for partners under the Joint Initiative were set to begin after the data collection period.

As well as training, key informants also appreciated the coordination structures and positive relationships that were established. In Nigeria, one partner stated, *"We learned a lot from the seminars. We are more enlightened.*

FORMAL CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Prior to the Joint Initiative, government agencies and local NGOs had limited experience dealing with the specific needs of returning migrants. They are a very distinct beneficiary target group, as their needs and vulnerabilities often include trauma suffered during the migration journey which can make them impatient or even aggressive when dealing with reintegration staff. Understanding the psychosocial challenges migrants face, building their trust and being patient is critical to delivering effective assistance. In Ghana, a partner organization representative recounted how capacity-building efforts had helped him through difficult situations with beneficiaries: *"We received a call from someone who was saying: 'Why am I even living...'. That conversation was about suicide. I am not a certified psychologist, but at that point I had to say something to calm him down".* He continued: *"That's when I felt like the training on psychological support was really beneficial. We are not psychologists, but now we know how to maneuver".* In Cote d'Ivoire, a governmental partner also confirmed the importance of capacity-building on psychosocial issues, but expressed the need for further support: *"There were some training sessions with social workers, but it's not enough for the workers to have the necessary skills to respond to the needs they are confronted*

We have a better way of doing reintegration and empowerment of Victims of Trafficking. That really helped us." In Cote d'Ivoire, several partners praised IOM's inclusive and hands-on approach to capacity-building: *"There is constant collaboration with IOM in the implementation of different projects. We discuss the objectives and the relevance of the resources and activities...it's a continuous dialogue. You could say it's joint management."* Likewise, partners in Guinea were also pleased with IOM's approach: *"We were consulted since the beginning. The state and civil society were involved, allowing the activities to respond to the needs on the ground."*

with. They are not psychologists, if we don't build their capacity, they won't be capable of doing the required follow-up. This training has been very useful, but after this single training, they don't have the necessary technical skills. We must keep having regular trainings." The psychosocial component of the Joint Initiative has been scaled up over the past three years of the programme and it is recommended to continue expanding this programmatic area by ensuring equal access for returnees across all Joint Initiative countries to psychological counselling, in addition to scaling up other activities such as support groups and recreational events

While partners cite positive relations with IOM, they also mention room for improvement in networking and exchange, to share ideas, lessons learned, cross-refer migrants, and generally network. Partners in The Gambia requested more exchanges of ideas with their counterparts: *"Being part of each other's workshops always has collateral benefit."* In Guinea-Bissau, IOM has established Technical Working Groups, the UN Migration Network, thematic groups, hosts meetings and events, and engages bilaterally with partners. However, there appears to be room for more informal networking or deeper communities of practice.

INFORMAL CAPACITY-BUILDING: Referrals and 'Learn by Doing' approaches

As well as formal trainings, government and civil society partners also emphasized the usefulness of joint implementation of projects or observing IOM reintegration staff at work in the field. In Nigeria, IOM has engaged local NGOs to support reintegration, with active referral contracts to handle 1,500 cases, and provides them with capacity-building in areas including protection, data protection, reintegration and M&E. Similarly, in Cote d'Ivoire, joint monitoring missions were found to be highly relevant to building capacity for government partners, while in Cameroon reintegration counselling and delivery of assistance is done jointly with the government reintegration staff. In Guinea-Bissau, IOM's sub-office in the capital is embedded with the General Directorate of Migration and Border to provide daily coaching for government partners, while civil society partners are also being engaged for referral services. In Ghana, formal capacity-building was reinforced by allowing local implementing partners to directly observe IOM's work. *"Sometimes, if we [IOM staff] are in the field, we go around with them [implementing partners], so they can learn first-hand how we deal with beneficiaries".*

Questions were raised in some countries regarding the relevance of the programme's emphasis on referrals amid varying local partner capacity and geographic coverage. For example, despite a referrals process being established in Burkina Faso, qualitative interviews with beneficiaries did not reveal any evidence of individuals within the sample actually applying for or receiving additional support from local organizations. In The Gambia, the referral system has focused primarily on finding synergies with other EUTF partners such as GIZ and Enabel. In

Guinea, IOM staff key informants were skeptical about the relevance of referrals, citing cases of partner activities with limited geographic scope or trainings offered that migrants did not view as relevant. In Senegal and Niger, negotiating partnership agreements with local NGOs has proved to be a slow process.

As well as the relevance to the country context, the role of referrals in the programme strategy of increasing sustainability needs to be more clearly defined. In Cameroon, civil society organizations are directly involved in implementation through pro-rata service agreements to serve beneficiaries, but the country evaluator observed that their full partnership potential and local expertise remains under-utilized in the design of reintegration assistance. In other countries such as Nigeria, government partners are extensively consulted and involved in coordination structures, but complain they are not sufficiently involved in direct implementation. If the goal is to empower local structures, the relevance of referrals to other international organizations to this strategy appears questionable, aside from perhaps the possibility of IOM involving a wider range of local NGOs and government agencies via the other international organization's partnership agreements

Local partners throughout the region have gained relevant and valuable skills through both formal training and 'learning by doing' with IOM support. However as will be explored in the 'Sustainability' section, the relevance of referrals needs to be better clarified before the programme ends and implementing partners need to seek other funding sources.

Evaluation
Question

#3



Are reintegration activities successfully targeting the most vulnerable beneficiaries and those where the assistance can have the most impact?

The stated beneficiary selection strategy for the programme is to provide basic reintegration assistance to the full returnee caseload, while singling out the most vulnerable and those most promising cases for additional assistance. This evaluation finds that the programme's integrated and flexible approach indeed allowed for additional assistance to go to the most vulnerable. Additional social assistance provided to vulnerable cases includes help paying medical bills, school fees or rent.

Returnees' needs, ambitions and expectations are very diverse. As one IOM staff member in Guinea-Bissau described it: *"Migration profiles are very individual. One of the most challenging things is to know your specific target. It takes time to assess the needs and to adapt Standard Operating Procedures that reflect the diversity of experiences."* Migrants' vulnerabilities are often shaped by the migration experience itself. As one IOM staff member in Nigeria explained, *"Even in Libya there are differences between those who stay in detention, and those who were living in the cities. They have completely different needs."* Those in cities developed more coping mechanisms and resilience, while those in detention are still in shock, and need psychosocial support and medical attention. Another IOM staff member at the mission pointed out that returnees from Europe were often more educated, tended to be from urban areas and had spent longer abroad. On the other hand, those who returned from Libya often migrated because of poverty, were from rural areas, spent less time abroad, and are looking for basic jobs. This can mean that those returning from Europe expect more on return, given the sense of failing to realise their dreams. While those from Libya may have suffered horrific experiences, they may also have lower expectations and the contrast of returning home is less extreme. Victims of trafficking face particularly complex needs. In other cases, victims may not want to return due to stigma, such as being perceived as prostitutes or failures. The need for protective shelter and targeted

assistance for these individuals is therefore extremely important.

A key lesson learned during the programme was that vulnerability assessments carried out in the host or transit country need to be complemented by a second screening process upon return. The timeframe for pre-departure counselling is often limited and the setting may not be conducive, for example vulnerability assessments are difficult to conduct in detail amid detention conditions in Libya. Often, it takes time for protection staff to develop a relationship of trust with returnees, who may be more comfortable discussing sensitive issues once they are back in their home country rather than pre-departure. In response to this challenge, Joint Initiative countries of origin stepped up their vulnerability screening efforts. Data suggests that progress was made at many missions in terms of identifying and responding to vulnerability. For example in Nigeria, the programme has overcome a high caseload with a balanced approach to large-scale basic support and flexible, in-depth support for vulnerable cases. Coordination structures for reintegration and supporting victims of trafficking, as well as capacity-building of local actors, have been improved significantly. Likewise in Guinea-Bissau, to identify unique needs and specific vulnerabilities, the programme has improved screening and reception processes, as a staff member described: *"We have changed, very much developed protection. When the migrant is vulnerable according to the criteria, we accelerate the process. We do not wait around."* However, the case of Niger shows that challenges with limited staff resources and geographic coverage can limit the ability of staff counsellors to identify individual vulnerabilities in far-flung areas. As an IOM staff member in Niger described, in more religious communities, vulnerability assessments can also be skewed by 'social acceptability bias' – meaning that people are likely to understate their personal difficulties for fear of seeming ungrateful to God: *"We tend to limit the additional support to the health and psycho-social situation but the economic*

situation is not sufficiently taken into account (debts, ransoms, time abroad etc.). The vulnerability criteria don't go far enough, and we really have to do case-by-case counselling. We also have to consider that Niger is a country of believers, and there is a culture of accepting your situation."

In many countries, the lack of implementation and awareness of clear, regionally standardized criteria and unified tools for identifying vulnerability (or on the flip side, the most 'promising' cases) risks leaving the programme open to allegations from migrants of unequal treatment. While IOM has recently launched new institutional criteria and tools at the global level for assessing migrant vulnerability, these were either not widely understood, not universally applied or deemed not sufficiently adapted to the West and Central African context. To address this challenge, regional trainings on the new vulnerability criteria were in the process of being rolled out at the end of the data collection period. A number of IOM missions also developed specific vulnerability criteria and tools. However in Mali and Cote d'Ivoire, key informants suggested that vulnerability was too narrowly defined in their respective country-level processes and there was a risk of vulnerable migrants who did not fit strict categories falling through the cracks.

When assessing vulnerability, data suggests that both gender and debt should be more carefully considered in the programme's screening of beneficiaries. In Niger, programme procedures do include the woman's level of empowerment within the household as a factor impacting reintegration. For example, the woman's household may not be comfortable with her running her own business or interacting with male customers, or she may face pressure to give items provided as part of her reintegration support to male family members. For example, in one case a woman was provided with two fridges to launch an ice-selling business but one was handed over to her husband and another to her husband's brother. Another gender issue that emerged in interviews with beneficiaries in Niger was that men's responsibilities towards their families were not sufficiently weighed after their return,

meaning that reintegration assistance may be insufficient to meet the scale of their dependents' needs. Beneficiaries with large households may either bear the burden of providing for all or share this burden with other family members – this is especially the case for young unmarried men. Older men could have more than one wife and several children to provide for.

Data in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria also suggests that some aspects of male vulnerability were going undetected, leaving unaddressed financial, shelter and psychosocial needs. A partner organization in Nigeria mentioned that as culturally men do not like to be seen as vulnerable, they are less likely to admit to sleeping rough: *"There was someone sleeping in a bus stop. But he would not tell you he was homeless."* Another case mentioned by the same partner also showed a need for sensitivity in accommodation arrangements due to male sexual abuse: *"...there was another case of a male sharing a room at the hotel for the business skills training. The males normally share two to a room. But for this guy, it was a problem. When he found out he was sharing, he was really upset. Later, he explained he had been molested by a man in Libya, so sharing a room with another male was out of the question for him."* In Guinea, key informants highlighted that some men may also be more vulnerable upon their return due to incurring debt to finance their migration journey, but due to cultural pressure to be seen as capable they will be reluctant to disclose economic, social or psychosocial vulnerabilities. Psychosocial support groups for men in similar situations, as well as close follow up with a caseworker or counsellor are needed to encourage vulnerable male beneficiaries to open up about their situation.

While a systematic analysis of the correlation between rate of success and vulnerability of the migrant was not carried out, key informants report that assistance given to the most vulnerable beneficiaries often has the most impact: *"For example, a woman with three children, if you give her a place to stay, she will get her independence and dignity back. That will change everything for her."* Another

summed it up, *“Some beneficiaries know what they want to achieve, they just need some support to get things off the ground*

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR VULNERABLE BENEFICIARIES

The most common forms of social assistance provided under the programme are medical, shelter and educational assistance, designed to address returnees' most immediate needs and allow them to focus on the economic and psychosocial reintegration process. However, given that some migrants have serious medical needs, this evaluation raised questions about the scope and scale of the medical assistance that the Joint Initiative programme can or should provide. As one IOM staff member in The Gambia noted, *“If we offer assistance of EUR 1,065 [average] and only an additional [budget of about] EUR 200 of that is medical, with a vulnerability caseload, at the back of my mind I think ‘how far does that really go’? Diagnostics alone are expensive and then medicines, and these are not one-time antibiotics.”*

While referrals can also play a key role here, many local partners have limited funding, as the staff member continued, *“From the government side the social protection programmes aren’t there.”* Data collection in Mali highlighted a case where immediate social assistance was provided under the programme, but barely made a dent in addressing medium or long-term vulnerability: *“I suffered enormously in Libya. I gave birth without medical assistance just before my departure. Upon my return, my newborn was given medical care, but not me, nor my other young child. Some initial aid for my newborn was given by IOM, but it didn’t meet the baby’s needs— just one box of formula and diapers.”*

IOM key informants have remarked that the Joint Initiative was not originally designed to provide prolonged assistance in this regard to returnees with chronic and/or severe ailments. Experience over three years of programme implementation has demonstrated the downsides of this approach, with monetary allocations for urgent medical assistance quickly exhausted. Other forms of social reintegration such as paying school fees or rent also face the same challenge. The timeline is also an issue, as for example two years of school fees often need to be disbursed at the time of school registration, a longer period that would provide some stability for returnees struggling to afford to educate their children.

Where possible, beneficiaries are being referred to partners and government-led services, however in many instances the lack of these national services and infrastructure represent some of the push factors encouraging outward migration in the first place. As such, the social assistance component with its currently restricted budget, timeline and referral opportunities is of limited relevance to beneficiaries' needs. This evaluation recommends allowing longer term assistance, having an earmarked fund for beneficiaries' serious medical needs (separate to economic reintegration funding) and advocacy to government and donors to reinforce medical structures and access to social services in the Sahel and Lake Chad region for returnees and host community members alike.

EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation
Question

#4

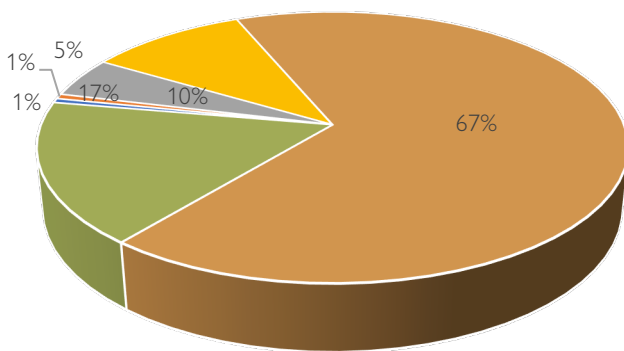


How effective is Joint Initiative assistance in improving the reintegration of returning migrants (includes basic, additional and community-based assistance)?

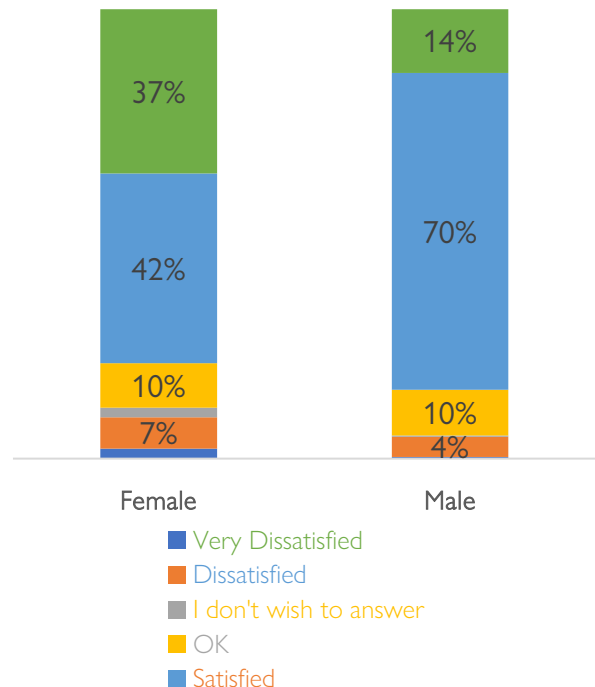
Measured in the eyes of Joint Initiative beneficiaries themselves, the programme's reintegration assistance has proven to be effective for the vast majority of returnees. Regional reintegration satisfaction survey results ($n=3,900$) reveal that 84 per cent of beneficiaries are satisfied with their reintegration assistance, including 17 per cent who report being very satisfied. Of the remaining number, 10 per cent described their **assistance** as 'OK' while 6 per cent were dissatisfied. Some differences were observed when breaking down results by sex, with more women giving feedback that they were very satisfied (37%) compared to 14 per cent of men.

How satisfied are you with the reintegration assistance?

More substantial differences were observed along country lines. Close to 100 per cent reported that



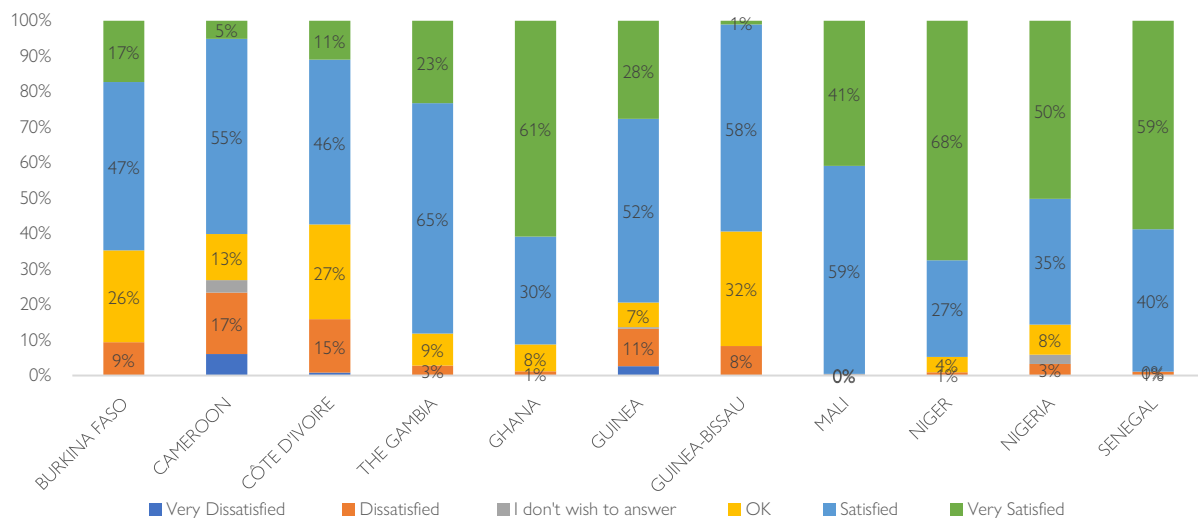
■ I don't wish to answer
 ■ Dissatisfied
 ■ Satisfied
 ■ Very Dissatisfied
 ■ OK
 ■ Very Satisfied



they were satisfied in Mali and Senegal, an unrealistically high result that suggests the presence of ‘demand bias’ (beneficiaries deliberately voicing only positive feedback because they believe it will increase their chances of receiving future assistance). Data collection in Mali by reintegration staff who are also involved in implementation, and the collection of many surveys via phone rather than in person in Senegal has likely increased the level of bias. To address these limitations, the programme is boosting M&E staffing to enable independent data collection in all countries and interviewing beneficiaries in person wherever feasible. However qualitative data collected in Mali during the evaluation mission did confirm that the vast majority (if not 100%) of reintegration beneficiaries do appear satisfied. One Malian returnee stated, *“I’m very satisfied with the help from IOM which was very useful. I don’t regret having come back [from Algeria] and I don’t know how I would have made it without IOM’s help.”*

Nigeria and The Gambia, where data is collected independently by dedicated M&E staff, also enjoy high satisfaction rates with 85 per cent and 88 per cent respectively. Cote d’Ivoire has the lowest beneficiary satisfaction rate with 55 per cent (with another 27% describing the assistance as ‘OK’ and 16% dissatisfied): however beneficiaries in this country not only are more likely to feel comfortable voicing frank feedback due to independent field data collection by dedicated M&E staff, but also may reflect cultural issues which shape high expectations. This trend was highlighted in key informant interview data collected, such as this explanation from a Cote d’Ivoire partner: *“It’s a sociological question – they want an activity of their own, immediately. It’s cultural, a general sentiment – they want everything yesterday.”*

Reintegration satisfaction rates by country



Drivers of dissatisfaction with economic reintegration assistance include continued financial struggles, often related to debts from the migration journey and family expenses outweighing microbusiness profits. A female beneficiary who had opened a grocery store in The Gambia complained, *“Not happy, I have trouble paying bills...[I] Owe the landlord three months...and owe the woman who sponsored me out to Libya, and the business man who supplied me with materials for my business.”* Relevant to the case above, she mentions *“the business I opened, I am using to feed my extended family too and my brothers also are not completing their education. The other is meant to go to university and I don’t have the money for that. I am not making any money for myself or for the house.”* Delays in receiving assistance are another factor fueling dissatisfaction, an issue that will be explored in the ‘Efficiency’ section.

Many returning migrants were satisfied due to their financial independence being restored with the programme's microbusiness support. Two women running a thriving business together in Cote d'Ivoire said, *"Thanks to God, because the money I paid to migrate, now, after one year and four months, I've earned double the amount."* Others were enjoying more modest success, such as this returnee with a catering business in Nigeria: *"It is not easy... but I put in a lot of effort to make it work."* However, even with a solid business and financial situation, he did not feel satisfied with the profits and wanted to scale up further: *"I make about 30,000 Naira [68 EUR] per day...I make enough, but the expenses are high: tax, lighting bills, rent. At the end of month there is just a little bit to put in my pocket."*

Even without paid employment, for some, undertaking a vocational training activity boosted their optimism and social credibility. *"Since we started this training, our parents are proud of us,"* said one Guinean migrant. Others were satisfied due to psychosocial support provided, such as this Gambian returnee: *"When I arrived, I had difficulties because I was living with regrets. Before I left, I had a shop. When I went there [Libya] I spent 150,000 Gambian Dalasi [approx. 2,500 EUR] that I lost and that's why I was disturbed. With the help of IOM, I have been able to stabilize my mind and focus on something different."*

According to the Reintegration Programme Monitoring Survey, 80 per cent of beneficiaries surveyed in the region (n=3,373) state that they do not regret their decision to return. Only 2 per cent say that they are taking concrete steps to re-migrate, such as saving money. The most common aspiration for the future, expressed by 49 per cent of beneficiaries, is to expand their business, while 25 per cent want to launch a new business and 7 per cent wish to pursue further education. Another 7 per cent want to find a new job. While the programme's awareness-raising efforts (which are outside the scope of this thematic evaluation) may also play a role in influencing decisions to remain in their country of origin, along with the first-hand experience of the migration journey, it is reasonable to attribute at least part of this return satisfaction to reintegration programming. In the words of a partner organization representative in Nigeria: *"There has been a lot of success. They [IOM] have brought back a huge number of people from being left to die. They are reintegrating people, fewer are re-migrating, monitoring and follow up has improved. It is even encouraging some to come back when they hear about it."* A Nigerian local community leader also confirmed the trend: *"There has been a lot of reduction recently because of the IOM intervention. Before the rate was very high. It has been drastically reduced. We appreciate it. A lot of our people died in the sea."*

Overall, returnee satisfaction rates with IOM reintegration assistance and the return decision are high and beneficiaries report that the assistance enables them to meet basic needs and help support their families, although to varying extents. The following section will explore in more depth the observed outcomes and best practices of the different forms of assistance offered under the Joint Initiative.

Evaluation Question

#5



What outcome has this intervention had on returnees and the host community (includes positive/negative, intended and unintended outcomes).

Individual microbusiness assistance is felt to be effective in most cases. Collective projects have sometimes faced delays, communication difficulties, and a lack of commitment or trust from migrants. Though temporary, community cash for work projects have also been effective, not only in terms of generating employment, but also in raising awareness and community dividends. Cash for work schemes tend to be resource-intensive which reduces the amount available for longer-term economic reintegration assistance such as microbusiness projects, however there is scope to combine cash for work with savings schemes or training. Beneficiaries may receive training before

beginning the cash for work activity, during which they receive on-the-job experience. Part of the salary can be set aside in trust for them so that they have funding to invest in a microbusiness or other economic reintegration activity upon completion.

Overall, returnee satisfaction rates are high and host community outcomes include stronger awareness and reduced stigma. Evidence points to the success of the 'integrated approach' for reintegration assistance, in particular the combination of economic and psychosocial assistance. Addressing psychosocial issues has proven a prerequisite for the success of economic reintegration, while being engaged in a productive activity has been key to restoring returnees' self-esteem after the perceived 'failure' of the migration journey.

OUTCOMES OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING ASSISTANCE

Vocational skills training is an innovative and effective solution given the high caseload, and returnees often reported it to be useful. One returning migrant in Guinea-Bissau stated: *"I was referred to an institution that gave us a course in business management and it was very interesting. I was treated very well by both the training centre and IOM"*.

Vocational training is particularly useful where returnees can obtain widely recognized trade certificates, such as drivers licenses. Successful graduates improve their access to employment and/or further training and education opportunities. From a programme strategy side amid large returnee caseloads, it is an effective way to reach large volumes of beneficiaries in a timely manner.

For example in Burkina Faso, returnees hoping to start microbusinesses follow a six-day entrepreneurship training, which covers basic management principles and motivational modules. Technical training is also offered, ranging from one week in the livestock sector to lengthier training in vocational trades such as construction. IOM partner training providers were positive about the effects of participating in the entrepreneurship training. They

highlighted some behavioural change in terms of entrepreneurial mindset: *"Many return migrants with little or no competences have been capable of setting up a business in 3-4 months thanks to the adapted training offered by IOM"*. A beneficiary stated, *"The [entrepreneurship] training made us understand that we can provide for ourselves with breeding here in Burkina, without having to go elsewhere: we can gain money, thanks to the cattle that we received."*

Vocational training has the potential to be most effective when combined with job placement. However despite the potential for long-term sustainability, job placement was often not a popular form of economic reintegration support among beneficiaries. For example in Ghana, one partner organization, explained the difficulty of persuading beneficiaries to accept a job placement instead of a microbusiness grant: *"Even when you do the calculation, how much they would earn from the business, it would be less than the employment. But they don't quite understand what we are telling them"*. Beneficiaries tended to think in terms of the immediate value of the assistance they would receive rather than the long-term benefits of a modest salary.

OUTCOMES OF INDIVIDUAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

Significant variation was observed in the level of revenue generated by individual microbusinesses. Successful microbusinesses generally exhibited some or all of the following factors:

- Business owners have pre-existing competences in the domain. Some had well-established businesses before leaving their country of origin and were able to continue or expand them upon their return through IOM's reintegration assistance
- Business owners followed the training(s) offered as part of the reintegration process
- High motivation to succeed in the chosen sector
- Follow-on support is provided to the beneficiary, for instance in the form of veterinary services in the livestock sector, research of additional funding and one-to-one discussions with implementing partners. This is not only important for the additional technical advisory they receive, but also for the continued motivational support, which further reduces dropouts.

On the contrary, businesses that have shut down or that are struggling tend not to exhibit these success factors.

In addition, most interviews with programme beneficiaries, implementing partner and IOM staff documented that the key value-add in IOM's reintegration process lies in its integrated approach, incorporating professional orientation, skill development, technical advice for business planning, in-kind contributions and follow-on support. As a local implementing partner in Burkina Faso explained, *"If you ask beneficiaries, most will say the delivery of animals and equipment is the most important component; however, everything is linked: we need to strengthen their skills and provide advisory support."*

The following case study from Ghana illuminates some of the best practices in a successful individual reintegration project:

CASE STUDY: INDIVIDUAL REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE IN GHANA



When asked about the effectiveness of counselling returnees on reintegration assistance, an IOM staff member stated that returnees often require multiple interactions to help them make an informed decision about the kind of reintegration support they want to receive. This observation was echoed by the staff members of an implementing partner involved in the economic reintegration of 'Felicity'.

Initially, Felicity wanted to start a business in the wholesale of water, but the implementing partner explained to her that you need large volumes of water to turn it into a sustainable business: "We went into a conversation with her and said: 'Listen, this is a very tricky area. What do you think?'". She then explored the idea of selling yam, because "I thought that one would be giving me more profit", Felicity explained. When this idea also fell through due to the supplier's inability to provide her with an invoice, Felicity decided to invest in a cold stone shop where she currently sells meat and fish alongside other foods and household products.

Besides counselling her on the feasibility of her business ideas, the implementing partner provided Felicity and other returnees with skills training. She explained that the training has helped her a lot. “If someone buys something on credit, I will write it down. I have a credit book, so I won’t forget. Next time I see you, I know that you owe me and remind you to pay me back”, she explained. Her shop was previously owned by another person, but she didn’t want to continue selling the same items, “because I didn’t know if I would profit from it or not”. Instead, she asked the people in the area “what they want and what they need” and started small instead of investing everything at once. Indeed, the implementing partner provided her business start-up support in three stages, stating that “it has been a long journey, but we really enjoyed the learning process”.

As her business expands, Felicity continues to adapt to customer demand. “Sometimes, someone will park his car here and ask: ‘Do you have a toilet roll pack?’ They ask for a big pack, but I only have single rolls...So, I need that for when they come and ask for it”, she explained. Her vision for the next few years is to fill all the shelves in her shop and expand the sale of her own original products. She explained, “Emmanuel’s Mixed Fruits is my product and people come to buy it. It is natural juice and tastes very good, so people come and ask for it. The man that was here earlier bought two bottles. He comes here every morning”.

While Felicity’s story is not unique, it demonstrates the importance of extensive counselling, training, and continuous support over a prolonged period of time, especially for those who did not run successful businesses prior to their departure or whilst abroad. An IOM staff member explained, “that is why we have enhanced the psychosocial counselling, as it is through this phase that you really get to understand the individual needs of these returnees”.

Across the region, it was observed that returnees have a strong preference for individual reintegration activities revolving around buying and selling such as grocery shops. As a community facilitator in Senegal explained, “*Migrants want their assistance as quick as possible and they don’t want us to make the choice for them. Some just set-up the business and try to recover the cash.*”

The preference to choose these activities has been described by IOM staff, partners and beneficiaries, as owing to the belief that buying and selling has a quicker profit turn-around time, as well as a general mistrust of other returnees and collective or community forms of reintegration. Although these individual shops can be successful, they typically have increased risks, and less transferable skills when compared to longer term vocational trainings and assistance. Although it will be

difficult, IOM will have to increasingly manage beneficiaries’ expectations and underline the benefits of longer-term vocational activities.

Organizing on-site visits to the different trades workshops and bringing in testimonies of successful people in target sectors appear to be good practices to change the participant’s mind about profitable economic opportunities. Seeing for themselves what it takes to engage in trades has made beneficiaries reconsider some of their preconceptions; as has listening to the testimonials of role models who they can directly relate to. Using returnees who have successfully completed the reintegration process as ‘ambassadors’ for newer returnees also reinforces the message that reintegration takes time, but with perseverance they can obtain a sustainable income.

OUTCOMES OF COLLECTIVE PROJECTS

Return migrants tend to prefer individual microbusiness projects, which they perceive more as *their own* activity, despite receiving smaller in-kind support. On the other hand, collective microbusinesses appear to be potentially most impactful (larger in-kind support, bargaining power), but bear higher risks linked to their collective management. (Similar risks likely apply to community-based microbusiness initiatives as will be described below, however fewer negative outcomes have been recorded

as many community projects to date have focused on cash for work.) In cases where collectives are formed between close or trusting returnees, there is potential for them to be effective.

In Nigeria, few collectives, however, remained together, as one or more members usually preferred to take their share for individual purposes. Businesses predominantly split amicably, though occasionally business dissolution causes tension or risks.

Many interviewees shared their experiences of splitting the collective businesses:



“Four months after the training, IOM called again. They said the business would be paid... It is an electronics business in a group... Then the group just wanted to take the money... After I got my share of the business money, I opened a small barber's salon. It is just small. I am managing.”

In one case, a returnee explained how a member of the collective had disappeared with all the money. Another woman recounted facing serious protection risks in her group setting, which ended in the collective being split with each party taking their share of the money:



“The training was OK but the grouping was not good. It was a husband and wife, and me. They only wanted to take the money and split it... I want to be a hairstylist. The group business was to sell horsehair for extensions, but we had to split it. They threatened to kill me if I would not... I told IOM about the issue. They said to take the money and save my life. In July we got the money and they [the couple] made sure I gave their share to them.”

After the death threats, this returnee moved area and was able to make some basic revenue doing ad-hoc hairdressing jobs with a kit paid from her individual share, but was still struggling after the ordeal. IOM learned from this case and incorporated lessons into its counselling and monitoring processes, notably to avoid similar power imbalances in collective groupings (for example not combining a third party with family members.)

Issues with collective projects were also observed in The Gambia and Ghana, where various collective businesses have discontinued due to insufficient trust between beneficiaries and the cultural context which is viewed as not conducive to collaboration between strangers. Similar problems were observed in Guinea-Bissau, where this returnee also complained of implementation delays and communication issues affecting his collective project:



“I wanted to do an agriculture project. IOM told me I should find people to do it with. I was connected with someone in Baoré. There are now seven people in the agricultural collective project. But it is still in the design phase, we have not started yet. It is taking time, it has been five months since we designed the project... I can't say much about the project design because I am not the project leader. The leader is the main focal point for IOM. All the contact is with him. I am waiting to hear what the project status is... The problem is that the colleague does not call me. IOM does not call me directly, only him. Can you tell me the status?”

In Burkina Faso, returning migrants also preferred individual projects, which they perceived more as *their own activity*, despite receiving smaller in-kind support. There was mixed evidence of the success of collective projects. One successful case of a collective poultry farm emphasizes that running a business pilot with minimum investments can be a good practice to test the compatibility among group members and build trust. Before embarking on their collective project, the two members of the group, who had met during the entrepreneurship training, decided to run a test of their

poultry farm, using their personal savings and funds from the training attendance stipend given to meet basic expenses. Only when they had established that they had the right mix of skills, work ethics and motivation, they scaled up their efforts and investments with IOM support.

Less successful experiences show that having known the other business associates for a long time is not a sufficient condition for success (see for instance case study below). Getting the competences, ethics and motivation right seems to be a more salient determinant of success.

CASE STUDY: Collective Livestock Project in Burkina Faso



This case study sheds light on the reasons why a collective microbusiness in the livestock sector (aviculture) did not succeed. The group members are two young return migrants based in the Centre-East region. Both had expressed their interest in commercial activities such as retail sale of electronic appliances and car spare parts. Launching an egg-laying farm was only a third-order choice. IOM staff explained to programme participants that commercial activities such as the ones they would have wanted to engage in were too risky. Often, such activities cease right after the sale of the first batch of products received as in-kind contribution, with the revenues sometimes reinvested to re-migrate. At the same time, egg-laying hens would have required more substantial initial capital (and technical competences) than the two associates could access. Neither group member had already worked in the livestock sector.

The final choice fell on chicken broilers. The business plan envisaged the delivery of 86 local broilers, along with additional equipment including feed, waterers and charcoal. “If IOM can only assist us this way, then it’s better than nothing!”, they said to themselves.

Despite not having any expertise in the sector, neither of the associates could participate in the one-week technical training on rearing - according to IOM staff, due to lack of motivation.

Moreover, the business counsellor in charge of preparing the business plan reportedly omitted to include a chicken coop among the equipment to be delivered as in-kind support. When the beneficiaries received the chickens, they had no other choice but to keep them in their house. They contacted IOM, but unfortunately it was no longer possible to procure a chicken coop, since the procurement process had already been triggered.

Even though the two associates had grown up together, the work collaboration between them did not work out as planned. They mutually blamed each other for not spending enough time looking after the poultry, which became a source of tensions between them. Both had other activities they prioritized.

Lack of adequate equipment and continuous care soon exposed the chickens to diseases. They reached out to the local veterinary service, but without success. The whole stock rapidly got ill: no chicken could be sold. After the stock was totally depleted, the two had neither the means nor the willingness to reinvest in the livestock sector. On a positive note, the former beneficiaries have managed to find an employment in their community of origin, in a money transfer boutique and a petrol shop respectively. They keep looking for opportunities in the area and do not wish to leave the country.

This case study highlights some **key conditions for success** which the programme in Burkina Faso has learned from:

- 1) Matching beneficiary preferences to a relevant business sector to boost motivation: low motivation meant lower chances of participating in trainings, business plan development and day-to-day supervision of business activities;
- 2) Providing follow-on support in the form of veterinary services;
- 3) Matching business plans to beneficiaries' pre-existing skill sets;
- 4) Prioritizing individual projects (or other forms of collective assistance such as cash for work and vocational training) unless there is a strong relationship of trust and compatibility among collective microbusiness group members.

In sum, with the exception of collective vocational training activities which are explored in a separate section, the risks of collective microbusiness assistance often outweigh the benefits if not handled carefully. Combining unrelated returning migrants who often do not trust each other with money, are dealing with debts and trauma from the migration journey and are under immediate pressure from their family to provide is a pressure cooker waiting to explode.

As explored below, evaluation data suggests that cash-for-work projects are a less risky and more effective alternative to group microbusinesses

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY-BASED ASSISTANCE

Community-based cash-for-work schemes have proven to be effective in bringing together returnees and host community members and providing income to beneficiaries in a transparent and timely manner. It is faster than individual assistance as no microbusiness plan is needed and enables the delivery of reintegration assistance on a larger scale. Fixed wages also reduce returnee suspicions that other beneficiaries are receiving more assistance. While the work is temporary, returnees often save up enough money to start other income-generating activities.

Successful community-based projects implemented under the Joint Initiative include cash-for-work construction activities for Burkina Faso's National Day celebrations. In Guinea-Bissau, short-term community-based public

works projects, such as street cleaning or tree planting, provided cash-for-work to a large number of employees. Local authorities in Gabu felt the projects were positive and reflected local needs, and also felt confident to continue this type of project without IOM support in future. Meanwhile as explored in the case study below in Nigeria, community projects were felt to be highly effective. Overall outcomes were generally positive for returnees and host communities, with only limited cases of regret about returning and reduced levels of stigma and discrimination in the community. Similarly in Guinea, cash for work activities demonstrated positive outcomes for social cohesion, as one participant noted: *"We became friends through Cash for Work...Between the migrants and the community, we became like a family."*



CASE STUDY: Community-Based Assistance in Nigeria

In Nigeria, a pineapple-processing factory being launched at the time of data collection was widely regarded as a success by both returnees and community members.

IOM Nigeria emphasized the effectiveness of community projects' participatory approach, which involves identifying and targeting local socio-economic needs and opportunities, factors inducing migration and challenges of reintegration. They also explained, however, the importance of feasibility studies to ensure a strong economic basis for each project. Community leaders explained that they were included in the process and felt "pleased to have this privilege in our community." They also appreciated the job creation for locals. Of the 40 employees at the pineapple factory, 70 per cent are returnees while the other 30 per cent are previously unemployed youths from the community. Community representatives showed enthusiasm:



Photo : © IOM Nigeria

"Because we are farmers, it is good the factory will process our products. Before the products were perishable, sometimes we lost them. Now they can be collected and preserved...It is an important area of development for the community...When it opens, it will be an improvement for famers and help cooperation. There will be more labourers, more production, more people needed to attend to customers."

Another aspect the community appreciated was preventing further dangerous migration:

"The pineapple processing factory gives Iguobazuwa a lifeline, because the community has been suffering. We really appreciate it. It has given us an open eye. The community is looking up to that pineapple factory now. It offers a lot to returnees and also to those planning to leave. It encourages them to stay."

While beneficiary feedback indicates that the activity is highly successful, the Nigeria pineapple factory community project is somewhat resource-intensive with costs averaging 3000 EUR per beneficiary.

It should be noted that community-based reintegration activities that bring together beneficiaries to form a microbusiness face similar risks to collective projects, heightened if there are tensions between the host community and returnees. As returnees still often dominate these projects, community members may perceive it as favouritism. Alternatively, some returnees may miss out on this project due to the need to reserve some places for host community members and feel

excluded. Little negative feedback on community-based projects was received in the course of this evaluation, however the programme is continuing to monitor and respond to these risks. The Joint Initiative's awareness-raising activities, although outside the scope of this thematic evaluation, are one way that the programme complements community-based economic reintegration activities with messages to promote social cohesion and reduce stigma against returnees.

OUTCOMES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Data collected for this evaluation reveals that the effectiveness of the programme in achieving economic and psychosocial reintegration is closely intertwined. Beneficiaries often feel stressed due to financial pressures and being unable to provide for their families – while unaddressed trauma from the migration journey often hinders successful economic reintegration. The programme in Cameroon scaled up the psychosocial component in 2019 after staff observed that many reintegration projects were failing due to undiagnosed psychosocial and mental health issues. A staff member describes one such case: *“I did a monitoring visit to one specific lady. She told me that ‘my reintegration did not work, honestly, because every evening I was spending most of the money in bars drinking alcohol.’ When we dug deeper, we found that she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder that should have been properly diagnosed at the beginning so that it could be dealt with before she received her reintegration package.”*

Overtime and based on reintegration monitoring data, the Cameroon mission has learned that psychosocial issues including post-traumatic disorder can emerge at any time in the process and has the potential to damage the most promising reintegration project. Therefore, the team in Cameroon has increasingly made efforts to ensure thorough mental health screening and support before and during implementation, as psychosocial wellbeing is a key precondition to a successful

reintegration. To reach more beneficiaries with psychosocial assistance, the programme in Cameroon has now mainstreamed this form of support into the overall assistance process, for example by integrating activities aimed at mental wellbeing into vocational training. As well as the difficult experiences of the migration journey itself, family/community pressures and the stigma of returning from abroad empty-handed, the ups and downs of launching a new business can in itself be very stressful. One beneficiary in Ghana described how IOM training had helped to strengthen his psychosocial resilience in the face of self-doubt and pressure to succeed: *“Sometimes, I can sit down from morning until evening without a single person entering my shop. Then I think to myself: ‘Will this business that I chose work or not?’ During days like that, ‘I need to exercise patience, and tell myself that everything is gradual’”. He continued that “during the training, we drew a diagram how the business will develop from scratch. Sometimes you gain, sometimes you lose. So, that has helped me not to worry too much”*

The programme's ‘integrated approach’ of providing both economic and psychosocial assistance often led to a shift in mental health and more positive outlook: many of the beneficiaries interviewed in The Gambia described being ‘disturbed’ or ‘thinking’ about their experiences during migration and what they had lost. There was a strong sense that livelihoods provision enabled them to have a more positive outlook on life and focus on their

future, for example: *“When I came back, I felt disturbed. When IOM started helping me I felt better, and got my brain back and am able to stay.”* Meanwhile in Guinea-Bissau, almost all migrants interviewed during the evaluation mission had taken advantage of the opportunity to speak with a psychologist and reported positively about the experience, describing it as “calming”, “motivating”, “helpful” and “useful”.

In Cote d'Ivoire, beneficiaries spoke how IOM support had boosted their morale and made them feel respected: *“People pointed at me in the neighborhood, each one gossiping that I hadn't succeeded in Europe. I was miserable! My family accepted me with an open heart, but others*

humiliated me. They said that I was cursed. They didn't realise that we had risked our lives. With IOM we talked openly, they gave us confidence.” Another returnee added, *“Here in Africa, if you are the ‘little brother’ [the youth] they don't listen to you. At least when IOM comes, they listen to us.”*

In some missions, psychosocial support appeared to be less well-established. In Mali, most beneficiaries interviewed during the evaluation mission appeared not to be aware of the psychosocial support services offered. In Senegal, there was also limited capacity to provide psychosocial support.

OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

The most common forms of social reintegration assistance are short-term support for accommodation, education, and medical bills. As explored in the ‘Relevance’ section, many returning migrants often have substantial, long-term needs in these areas and the limited average total funding available per beneficiary (approximately 1,000 EUR) and limited programme timeline raises the question of the place of social assistance within the Joint Initiative. However despite its limitations, the ability to provide at least basic short-term social assistance is a key plank of the programme's integrated and flexible approach, with a focus on assisting the most vulnerable beneficiaries. For beneficiaries in the Reintegration Programme Monitoring Survey sample who had received medical assistance, 93 per cent reported that the assistance met their needs ($n=319$).

In Ghana, several examples were highlighted of how social assistance had made a difference in the reintegration journey. One beneficiary receiving IOM accommodation support stated, *“It [the dwelling] is very nice and neat too. We have water, we have light... and it is very secure. Especially the children like it, so we like it too”*. Beneficiaries were equally grateful for the school fees that IOM paid

for their children's education. One beneficiary stated that her children are attending a “very good” school. She explained that *“before, the children were not good, but now they are learning well, and they are coming up”*.

In Guinea, IOM staff were concerned about the potential for social assistance to create a dependency, given that the programme cannot provide long-term support in these areas. One key informant stated, *“For accommodation it's the most difficult, everyone asks for it but we can't give accommodation assistance to everyone. That could create an additional need and increase vulnerability.”* In both Guinea-Bissau and Ghana, returnees expressed worries about how they would continue to pay their rent once IOM support ceased.

For returning migrants, one issue constraining the effectiveness of social support is access to documentation. In Ghana, it was noted that migrants often have to re-do medical tests (eating into the funds needed for treatment) due to previous medical records not being available in-country. For school fees, cases were reported in Guinea-Bissau of migrants not having birth certificates for their children, which are needed for school enrolment and to access IOM support with school fees.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

POSITIVE OUTCOMES:

- **Providing economic opportunities to potential migrants to provide sustainable alternatives to irregular migration**

In Ghana, there were a number of examples of successful returnee microbusinesses providing employment opportunities to potential migrants. One beneficiary running a tailoring shop said of his employee: *“This man was planning to go to Libya, but I told him: ‘No. Wait and stay with me’. I keep him here so he can help me do the business”*. Another Ghanaian beneficiary has a total of eight apprentices in his carpentry business who he provides with food and accommodation. Four of them are potential migrants: *“I got a hint that these guys wanted to go to Libya, so I called them, spoke with them, and told them that it is better if they join me and do something here in Ghana”*, he recounted. The other apprentices were brought in by their parents, who had asked him if he could support them as well.

- **Fighting stigma by increasing returnees' self-esteem and status within the community:**

Economic assistance is effective in improving reintegration, as work and money significantly improves social status, in particular for men. Family and community relationships, as well as the sense of self-worth, are dependent on the ability to contribute to the family's needs. A male returnee in Niger stated, *“Since I received the assistance, my life changed. Before no one would help me, now I have an activity where people are forced to be nice to me because of the credit they have in my shop.”*

- **‘Multiplier effect’ even from modestly successful reintegration projects**

One positive unintended outcome observed was that several beneficiaries reported having additional economic activities alongside their reintegration project. One migrant in Guinea stated, *“I’m satisfied as I have several activities as well as IOM’s... with these activities, I manage to make ends meet.”* While this suggests that the income from the economic reintegration project alone may be insufficient to meet these beneficiaries' needs, it points also to the likelihood that the initial support generated income to reinvest in other economic activities, rebuild their confidence and re-establish their personal networks.

NEGATIVE OUTCOMES:

- **Risk of increasing migration pull factors**

In Burkina Faso, both an implementing partner and a local government authority raised concerns about the potential risks of encouraging people – who would otherwise have not considered migrating – to leave the country with the sole objective of benefitting from IOM assistance. Such concerns were also raised by an IOM staff member in Senegal: *“By now accelerating the assistance exclusively to all migrants on an individual basis, we may create an image that you need to depart to get support”*. The risk is particularly high when combined with visibility efforts, for example when programme beneficiaries are provided with T-shirts bearing IOM or EU logos.

Another possible drawback of successful, high-visibility reintegration assistance could be tensions with other community members. Several interviewees in Niger spoke about “jealousies” being expressed, and a community member in Ghana stated, *“When returnees tell us, potential migrants, not to travel [irregularly], we think it is because they don’t want us to get the*

same opportunity”. Community-based projects are one way of reducing both the risk of tensions with locals and pull factors, as assistance is provided both to returnees and host community members who have not migrated. Another way to minimize pull factors is keeping the amount for individual economic reintegration assistance relatively low, however the dilemma is that this may reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of the reintegration process. Likewise, providing assistance to host community members reduces the overall budget remaining for assistance to returnees.

- **Financial hardship from feeding livestock:**

In Niger, unintended negative outcomes were observed among vulnerable beneficiaries who were provided with livestock as reintegration assistance. The livestock provided is young and unproductive until it grows. For the beneficiaries who do not have any other source of income to feed the animals, the cost of feeding is an additional burden once the in-kind livestock feed provided by IOM runs out. Insufficient feeding in turn leads to insufficient production (of eggs, milk etc.). This was observed in two cases of individual assistance in Niger where the livestock was unproductive, and the beneficiaries were finding it very difficult to feed them. In both cases, the families had no access to support networks, lived in rural areas with no access to basic services, especially water, and could not address their health issues, compounding the issues of their initially identified vulnerability.

- **Gender, community and family dynamics undermining reintegration**

It was observed in Niger that female beneficiaries tend to be less successful with their microbusinesses than men due to family pressure to ‘share’ their reintegration assistance. Married women who returned alone live with their children under their parents’ roof or another male family member, while men tend to receive less family support upon return. This can offer crucial support, especially with regards to childcare, but also less autonomy regarding decision-making for the business. As a result, IOM Niger examines the woman’s level of empowerment within the household when assessing the viability of reintegration projects.

It is important to note that men may also face family or communal pressure to share their reintegration assistance which risks undermining their fledging businesses. In The Gambia, this man deliberately set up his reintegration project away from his community: *“I thought about setting up in my village, but many people have problems and I wouldn’t be able to say no [to supporting them] and that would not be good for the success of my business. So, staying here I make more money.”*

EFFICIENCY

Evaluation Question

#6



What challenges have been faced in the delivery of reintegration assistance under the Joint Initiative and how could implementation be improved?

Qualitative and quantitative data gathered in each country has outlined the Joint Initiative as an adaptive and flexible programme, capable of being tailored to country-specific dynamics. Despite this however,

HIGHER-THAN-EXPECTED RETURN MOVEMENTS

Initial projections for returnees across the region to be served under the Joint Initiative were proven to be underestimated. Nigeria for example had an initial projection of only 3,800 returnees. To date, over 16,000 migrants (321% increase) have returned under the programme, a phenomenon driven at least partly by the upsurge in the Libya conflict. Although additional funds have been made available to IOM in some instances, missions in the region still report an inadequacy of financial resources to meet the magnitude of the needs of returning migrants. For example, IOM staff in multiple missions reported the need to engage in greater follow-up with returnees, which is hampered by the low staff to beneficiary ratio and the high numbers of returns. Community-based reintegration, while a promising programmatic approach, adds additional beneficiaries (the host community members) to the total caseload which needs to be assisted and monitored, consuming extra resources.

From an efficiency perspective, high costs and long waiting times remain the most pressing issues. Long waiting times have frequently been mentioned by all stakeholders as discouraging beneficiaries to engage in the reintegration process, undermining trust in the programme and causing dropout. Based on regional survey results, 28 per cent (n=3,373) report that their assistance was not provided

common challenges were identified in the implementation of Return and Reintegration programming in West Africa. These include:

in a timely manner, with the average time frame almost six months. Nine per cent of beneficiaries reported that it took more than a year for them to receive assistance. A Guinean beneficiary lamented, *“The reintegration process is too slow. Mine took seven months. Some of my friends who returned waited for months to be reintegrated, then they decided to leave again.”* The strongest results for efficiency were Guinea-Bissau, where 94 per cent of returnees reported that their assistance was received in a timely manner, followed by 86 per cent in The Gambia.

To address this, IOM has shifted focus from individual modes of reintegration to community and collective groups, allowing for a larger number of direct and indirect beneficiaries to be assisted, while maintaining close links to communities of return. These activities include group counselling and information sessions, vocational trainings, cash for work programming and job fairs. Additionally, cooperation and capacity-building of local and government partners has been a key component of the Joint Initiative in order to promote longevity and sustainability of reintegration programming. However, absorbing the high beneficiary caseload in the tight timeframe before the programme's closure will be the key challenge. With less than a year to go on the project, the highest rate of completion vs. target in the region is in The Gambia (78%), followed by Guinea-Bissau (64%) and Cameroon (45%).

GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED BENEFICIARY POPULATION

The scattering of returnees across large distances, along with often poor public transport and road networks has presented a major challenge for the project. In a country such as Niger where many regions lack this infrastructure, it can take an entire day to travel a relatively short

distance. This means either an onerous journey to IOM offices for beneficiaries to claim their assistance, or a lengthy field mission by IOM staff or partners. Additionally, the late delivery of the programme's initial mapping of the main areas of return, outsourced to the

Samuel Hall research company, meant that needs assessment data was not available to inform the initial programme design. In the course of project implementation, it became clear that IOM needed to increase its geographic coverage to be closer to the main areas of return. In response, IOM opened a number of

sub-offices, such as Edo State in Nigeria, Gabu in Guinea-Bissau and Tahoua in Niger. In Senegal, two sub-offices in Tambacounda and Kolda and a nationwide network of 50 community facilitators promote outreach and communication with returnees.

TIME INVESTMENT TO SECURE GOVERNMENT BUY-IN

In a number of countries, it took time to reach cooperation agreements with national government, which in turn led to a longer timeframe for programme start up.

In Senegal, an MOU with the government was finally signed in 2019 following disagreements over the project modality. Until signature, migrants could not be assisted which also impacted the programme's burn rates. Since the MOU has been signed, the IOM Senegal office worked hard to accelerate the assistance to the migrants. This work has been done under difficult conditions, especially with a lot of pressure from the migrants themselves, but also donors, authorities and other stakeholders. Reintegration for a first caseload of over 500 returnees

has now been completed, leaving approximately another 4,000 who are not yet assisted or in early stage of the reintegration process.

In Ghana, it took more than a year to establish coordination mechanisms with the government due to perceptions that participation would mean endorsing forced returns from Europe. Through regular dialogue, it was eventually clarified that the primary purpose of project is to provide humanitarian assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance to stranded migrants. Since government buy in was secured, implementation has been running at full speed.

PROCUREMENT CHALLENGES

Reintegration Programme Monitoring Survey results show that 74 per cent reported that they received their assistance with no problems. For those who reported issues with the process, the main difficulties were with providing documents requested by IOM and payment delays. On a regional level, 3 per cent of respondents reported that they did not receive their assistance in full while 3 per cent also reported problems with local bureaucracy/corruption. Burkina Faso received the worst score for respondents perceiving they did not receive their assistance in full (16%), although there is insufficient data to confirm whether this is due to a genuine shortfall or a communication issue. Guinea received the most worrying score on local bureaucracy/corruption with 12 per cent of respondents alleging this issue. However, no

specific details of these claims are available within the survey data and qualitative interviews with beneficiaries during the evaluation mission did not reveal similar concerns. Nevertheless, this evaluation recommends stepping up spot checks of the supplies beneficiaries receive, and new monitoring tools (adapted to remote monitoring during COVID 19) were implemented by May 2020.

Lengthy internal procedures have been highlighted as a persistent challenge in providing reintegration assistance to returnees. These have been reported to be linked to the high volume of beneficiaries (caseloads) per staff, lengthy procurement and service provider/partner contract approvals, difficulties in aligning with partner calendars, and beneficiary follow-up upon return.

To reduce the risk of potential collusion between beneficiaries and vendors, IOM has largely relied on an internal procurement approach (including for individually-designed microbusiness projects) which has placed a large workload on procurement and finance units, although some missions such as Burkina Faso have attempted to address this by standardizing in-kind kits, and increasing coordination with implementing partners in an effort to reduce bottlenecks and waiting times.

Data collected in Cameroon illustrated gaps with the supply of items for returnees' microbusinesses. 12 out of 18 beneficiaries interviewed during the country evaluator's field mission complained about one or more issues related to the quality of the reintegration goods received. These included, expensive supplies or reduced assistance, delays, not being properly consulted in the process on the final package or quality. One beneficiary's case allegedly combined all of these shortcomings: *"I waited for very long time...then one day boom! They called me and told me they were dropping the goods. I had already identified better and cheaper goods, but they decided I do not know what I want. Yet I am the one supposed to run that*

business...I was promised 4 boxes, but I only received three...Imagine, when I opened the box, I found these XXL size robes for winter. Who is going to buy that in Cameroon where it is always hot? You see I was doomed from the very beginning."

While Cameroon was the only mission where issues with supply of in-kind assistance were detected during the course of this evaluation, it is recommended to intensify monitoring efforts in this area, as well as reinforcing regional complaints and accountability mechanisms. New monitoring tools and regional training on complaints and feedback mechanisms are planned for the second half of 2020. Another procurement-related issue identified in Cameroon was the need to clarify in implementing partner agreements the need to provide basic supplies for training, as the evaluator observed that a training venue was not equipped with stationery for the participants, and also lacked general programme branding and visibility material. While these may seem like obvious requirements, such details need to be explicit to avoid partners cutting corners on these items.

MANAGING BENEFICIARY EXPECTATIONS

Partners and staff interviewed across the region highlighted the importance of providing beneficiaries with reliable information regarding the modality and availability of reintegration assistance on offer to them. In the regional Reintegration Programme Monitoring Survey results ($n=3,373$), a total of 92 per cent of beneficiaries report that the process of receiving reintegration assistance was clearly explained to them. However, in qualitative data collection many examples were recorded of excessive beneficiary expectations, or incorrect information on the types of assistance they believe will be offered. Compounding this is the popular belief that IOM provides cash assistance as opposed to in-kind assistance. As a partner organization representative in Guinea explains: *"When the ill-informed youth arrive at the airport, they think sometimes that 2,000 EUR will be transferred to*

them automatically, while there are procedures to follow. This breaks the confidence between IOM and these young people." Likewise, a partner in Cote d'Ivoire mentions, *"Some want us to give them a farm and then afterwards hire staff to work for them. It's not about that!"*

The flexible nature of some programming in the region and the availability of extra funds for activities deemed to have potential has also fueled expectations and subsequently frustrations, that all will be entitled to additional funding through word of mouth. For example in Burkina Faso, the initial intervention model envisaged broad flexibility in the level of in-kind support offered, with a view to reward innovative business plans and to avoid crowding out more ambitious projects. In practice, this meant some beneficiaries have received (substantially)

more in-kind support than others. At the business plan preparation stage, beneficiaries are explained that the in-kind support they will be receiving will only include a limited share of all the equipment needs indicated in the business plan. Despite this communication, return migrants often feel frustrated at delivery; sometimes they go as far as suspecting some of the funds had been misappropriated or diverted to other migrants. Specific criteria to qualify a project as 'promising' or 'innovative' should be better communicated to beneficiaries for transparency purposes.

In response to this IOM has responded by stressing the types of assistance available during counselling sessions, creating additional information sessions, increasing follow-up where possible and developing a standard flyer for the region which can be adapted for specific country contexts. The flyer outlines migrants' rights and entitlements on return in a clear manner and distributed in host and transit countries. However, colleagues from host country missions in North Africa indicated during a Lessons Learned Workshop that there is room to simplify the language used in these brochures, use more local

languages and to use more engaging communication formats. Some migrants are also illiterate and require other forms of communication. In one promising practice to date, short videos developed in migrants' countries of origin have been created and shared via WhatsApp and are also available on a YouTube playlist for use in host countries during counselling and orientation. In another good practice in the Gambia, colourful posters to manage beneficiary expectations are posted outside the office in the capital Banjul with the message 'Reintegration Takes Time.' Likewise in Niger, bright posters are on display to explain that reintegration assistance is not given in cash. Other best practices to better manage beneficiary expectations include organizing meetings between returnees who have completed the reintegration process and new beneficiaries, in addition to organizing presentations on reintegration assistance by IOM staff in transit centres and in host countries (with migrants sometimes speaking directly to IOM missions in their countries of origin via phone and Skype.)

BENEFICIARY FOLLOW-UP

According to the regional reintegration monitoring survey, 86 per cent of respondents ($n=3,373$) report that it was easy to contact IOM after their return, while 5 per cent either did not remember or did not answer. For those 9 per cent who reported it was difficult, this was due to either not knowing IOM's contact details, living far from the IOM office, finding the phone number busy or calls unanswered, or having to call multiple times. Nigeria had the highest rate of respondents reporting difficulty contacting IOM with 16 per cent, followed by Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire both with 15 per cent.

However, in qualitative interviews, returnee follow-up has been described as a serious challenge affecting the implementation of the Joint Initiative. Following their return, beneficiaries are often prone to internal migration,

or changing contact numbers. Often returnees provide family members' contact details posing further challenges in reaching individual beneficiaries. Compounding this is the poor network coverage in some instances, and the distance between IOM offices and communities of return. Additionally, the ease of communication also differs throughout the reintegration process, with reports of some beneficiaries ignoring calls from IOM following the provision of in-kind assistance hampering monitoring and evaluation efforts. In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, feedback given by beneficiaries in qualitative interviews indicates the need to enhance communication around the role of IOM vs. local implementing partners.

IOM has taken steps to remedy this through the setting up of sub-offices where possible, but also providing

returnees with SIM cards and phones upon arrival in order to promote increased communication. In one interesting practice in Mali, returnees sign a membership form which is designed to increase their ownership and

commitment to the process. However, there is no evidence to date if this non-binding document has an impact on returnee retention rates.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND MIMOSA

A recurrent challenge encountered by IOM Missions across the region has revolved around the accurate and timely management of migrant information. It had initially been envisaged to adapt IOM's MiMOSA software to capture and manage information pertaining to return and reintegration programming. Due to delays in the software being made operational for the Joint Initiative project, missions were forced to compliment MiMOSA with their own systems and databases tailored to the context of the country in question. Other challenges have included

unreliable and/or slow internet, and questions of data ownership and sharing between IOM and partners on the ground due to data protection principles.

In response to this, IOM has been working centrally to assist in the updating and tailoring of MiMOSA, while simultaneously working on the transition of country-level databases into the software to aid in real-time information management.

SUSTAINABILITY

Evaluation
Question

#7



Has the programme contributed to strengthening national and/or local authorities and/or CSO capacity to manage reintegration in a dignified and sustainable manner?

NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

A lot of programming has focused on building capacity and coordination with government partners in implementing return and reintegration activities, but concerns remain at the operational level with regards to budgetary allocations and long-term capacity. As a partner in Cote d'Ivoire expressed, *"At the moment, we have the support of partners, but this support cannot be sustainable. (...) We need to take ownership of this issue, that's what we*

are doing. If we are well trained, in a few years we will be able to do it (...)."

Securing government ownership of new approaches to reintegration was a challenge within the relatively short three-year period. Despite this, there was a consensus among country offices that there was still time to do more before the end of the programme, focusing on consolidation of activities and mechanisms established to

date. Another challenge for ensuring long-term retention of knowledge and skills was the high turnover of staff in government and partner institutions.

Despite the challenges outlined above, data gathered throughout the region found that all partners benefitted from activities aimed at strengthening local and national capacity to manage reintegration in a dignified and sustainable manner. Training providers, such as this

partner in Burkina Faso, who had not specifically targeted return migrants as part of their ordinary actions in the past, say they are more aware of their training needs and of appropriate ways to interact with this particular target group: *“We have learnt to deal with individuals who see themselves as failures. Often return migrants have had a harsh history. The family’s investment for sending them abroad and the fact that they asked to be sent back home causes a lack of confidence.”*

SUSTAINABILITY, COORDINATION, AND REINTEGRATION MANAGEMENT

Partners and government representatives interviewed highlighted the formation of coordination and management structures and the inclusive process of establishing country-level Standard Operating Procedures on return and reintegration.

Three notable examples include:

1. Cote d'Ivoire has formed the Case Management Committee (CMC), that brings together several government departments as well as governmental and para-governmental agencies working on reintegration.
2. Nigeria saw the establishment of Reintegration Committees, Case Management Expert Teams, and Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Means, which, although initially established by IOM, are run solely by Nigerian partners, thereby mainstreaming government engagement and interlinking local actors on the ground.
3. The coordination structure established in the Gambia consisting of a Steering committee, and three sub-working groups on reception, reintegration, and awareness-raising.

“Coordination structures are our best achievement. We work closely with government and non-government partners. I have never seen so many partners come together to want to help their population. The commitment is great.” IOM Staff Member, Nigeria

Although each mechanism differs, being suited to the local context, these coordination structures allow for regular meetings to discuss project updates as well as reintegration assistance policies. The participation of many government representatives also allows for the coordination of activities and ensures that they are aligned with the long-term policies and priorities of the different agencies and ministries.

In many countries in the region, these structures have helped to mainstream government and partner referral services for migrants, with the Gambia beginning to pilot an outward referral mechanism where returnees will be

able to view available referral options using an innovative online platform.

Operational presence was flagged as a major initial challenge, with low capacity and lack of IOM presence in many areas of high return in the region. For example, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, 90 per cent of returnees were concentrated in the Gabu region far from the main IOM office, posing a challenge for reaching returnees. The creation of a sub-office in Gabu was instrumental in improving communication and outreach, as an IOM staff member explained: *“It was unforeseen in the beginning, but we needed two sub-offices in Guinea-Bissau: one in Bissau*

and one in Gabu. This has been beneficial in terms of proximity – getting closer to migrants, communities and their needs.” Likewise in Nigeria, a similar scenario was found in the opening of the Benin sub office, and in the Gambia an office was established in Basse.

CSOS/ PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The involvement and capacity of CSOs and partner organizations involved under the Joint Initiative varies depending on the local context. Generally speaking, there has been positive involvement of actors working on the ground to further programme activities. Partner organizations have demonstrated a significantly improved capacity to manage reintegration activities in a dignified manner, with IOM staff in Ghana commenting that they are “able to refer a number of cases to them with the confidence that they will be able to handle them”. In all cases, organizations expressed confidence in their technical capacity and expressed interest in expanding their work.

Nevertheless, data and interviews indicate that continuous follow-up with partner organizations and CSOs is a necessity, with coordination posing challenges in itself. One partner in Nigeria pointed out that they are unable to coordinate with some local actors because many are unregistered, and the ease of opening an NGO means that rigorous quality control is required.

In addition to this, many partner organizations stated the need for additional funding in order to continue their work. A partner organization in Ghana commented “we have the technical know-how, but to continue with this programme, we need to partner with those who have the funds”. An IOM staff member in Guinea expressed the opinion that it would be sustainable for local NGOs to continue awareness-raising activities, but supporting returnees to launch microbusinesses would be out of their reach after the Joint Initiative ends: “They don’t have the same funding. Civil society can continue to talk about irregular migration, but won’t have the means to reintegrate returnees like IOM.”

The creation of additional offices has also served the purpose of expanding partner and governmental networks in areas of high return for the long-term management of return and reintegration programming in-country.

However, the private sector was mentioned as one possible source to ensure longer-term funding for reintegration. In Burkina Faso, one implementing partner expressed willingness to carry on actions targeting return migrants, building upon the training received and the heightened awareness of return migrants’ needs: “Having participated in the reintegration programme with IOM made us discover a new target group, with specific needs. Even without support, we could integrate this target to promote private entrepreneurial initiatives. We could reach out to other partners in this respect.” A civil society partner in Cote d’Ivoire mused, “The risk is that no organization will work with returnees when IOM leaves. This leads our interest in the private sector, which is much more responsible. In the private sector, there’s no joking around...if the private sector is engaged, the machine will not stop... We need to play on the sensibilities of social responsibility and the public image of businesses.”

In conclusion, staff and partner interviews revealed that the creation of coordination structures and the capacity-building of national, regional and grass-roots actors had contributed to the sustainability of the long-term management of return and reintegration programming in the region. For many missions, this was reported as being among the best achievements of the programme, with trainings conducted being specifically tailored to each actor. As a result, many partners expressed confidence in being able to continue programming on a technical level. However, resource constraints are still a commonly cited challenge facing government and civil society actors at large, with questions of where financial and in-kind support will come from following the conclusion of the Joint Initiative programme.

Evaluation
Question

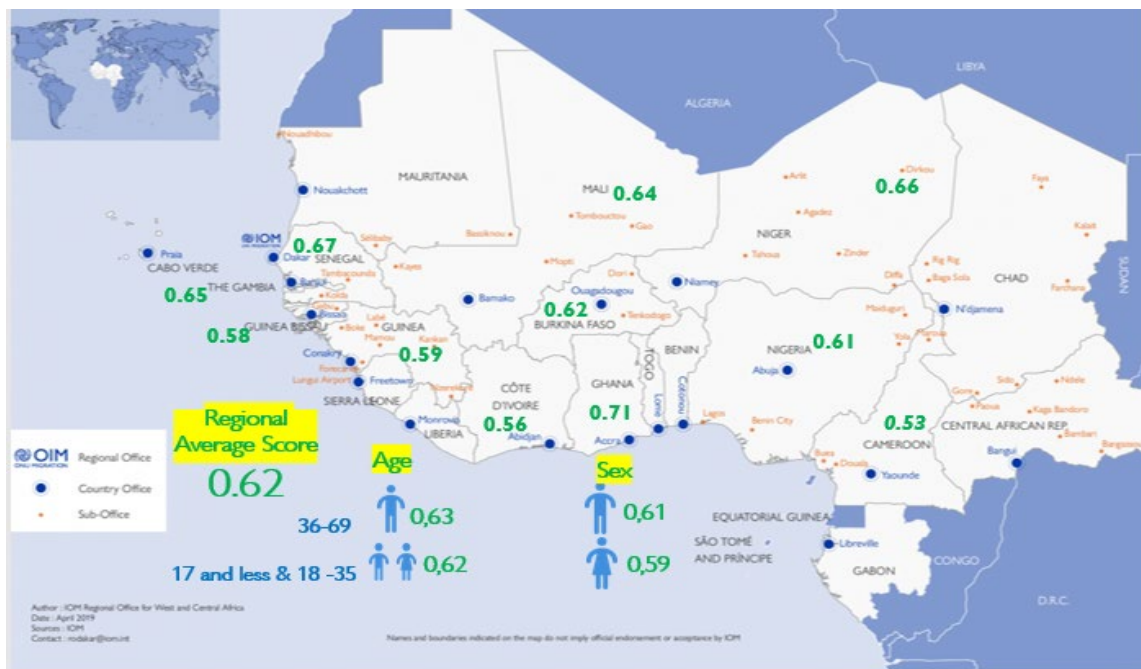
#8



Do beneficiaries report sufficient levels of economic independence, social stability, and psychosocial wellbeing in their community of return?

IOM's institutional definition of sustainable reintegration is as follows: *"Returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity."* These levels are measured using the Reintegration Sustainability Survey, a global IOM assessment tool which calculates a score between 0 and 1 based on returnees' responses to questions related to these three aspects.⁴

All missions in the region reported sustainable levels of reintegration, with scores exceeding the 'composite reintegration sustainability score' of 0.5 considered by IOM to be the threshold at which reintegration may be considered sustainable. The region scored 0.62 on average, with the highest score 0.71 (Ghana) and the lowest 0.53 (Cameroon). The composite score consists of three separate dimensions: 'economic self-reliance', 'social stability' and 'psychosocial wellbeing'. (n=2,779)



⁴ For more details, please see IOM's *Reintegration Handbook: Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance*: <https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration>.

When each of the average dimension scores are weighted alongside each other, the report found that the best performing dimension was the psychosocial (0.79), followed by the social (0.64), and finally the economic (0.61). Each score also differed in its variability, that is highest – lowest score discrepancy, with the Social dimension showing the highest level of variability (0.31), followed by the economic (0.26) and finally the Psychosocial (0.19).

Males were generally found to slightly outperform females when the data is disaggregated by sex, with regional

scores of 0.61 and 0.59 respectively. Females did, however, outperform males in Guinea-Bissau (0.63 to 0.58) and Nigeria (0.62 to 0.60). It should be noted however that caseloads are overwhelmingly male with a regional beneficiary ratio of 88 per cent male to 12 per cent female. In addition to this, some female caseloads in the region were as low as 1 per cent (Guinea-Bissau with only one female beneficiary) and therefore no statistically valid conclusions can be drawn as a result. The table below highlights missions with especially low female caseloads.

Composite Score Disaggregated by Sex and Caseload							
Country	Male	Female	Overall Caseload	Male Caseload	%	Female Caseload	%
Burkina Faso	0.63	0.53	184	181	98	3	2
Cameroon	0.54	0.52	354	258	73	96	27
The Gambia	0.66	0.59	240	236	98	4	2
Ghana	0.71	0.7	200	166	83	34	17
Guinea	0.6	0.56	134	126	94	8	6
Guinea-Bissau	0.58	0.63	109	108	99	1	1
Cote d'Ivoire	0.55	0.58	345	251	73	94	27
Mali	0.64	0.63	259	221	85	38	15
Niger	0.66	0.64	314	295	94	19	6
Nigeria	0.61	0.62	610	441	72	169	28
Senegal	0.68	0.55	30	29	97	1	3

When disaggregated by age, most returnees fall between the ages of 18-25 at 78 per cent with the next most populous between the 36-69 range at 17 per cent. Lastly, those aged 17 and under, or minors made up 5 per cent of the total caseload, and those aged 70 and over made up less than 1 per cent.

The best performing age group was found to be 70+, scoring 0.66, although it should be noted that only three missions (Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger) had returnees

from this category, with a total caseload of 4 between them. This renders any statistical conclusions made on this age group invalid.

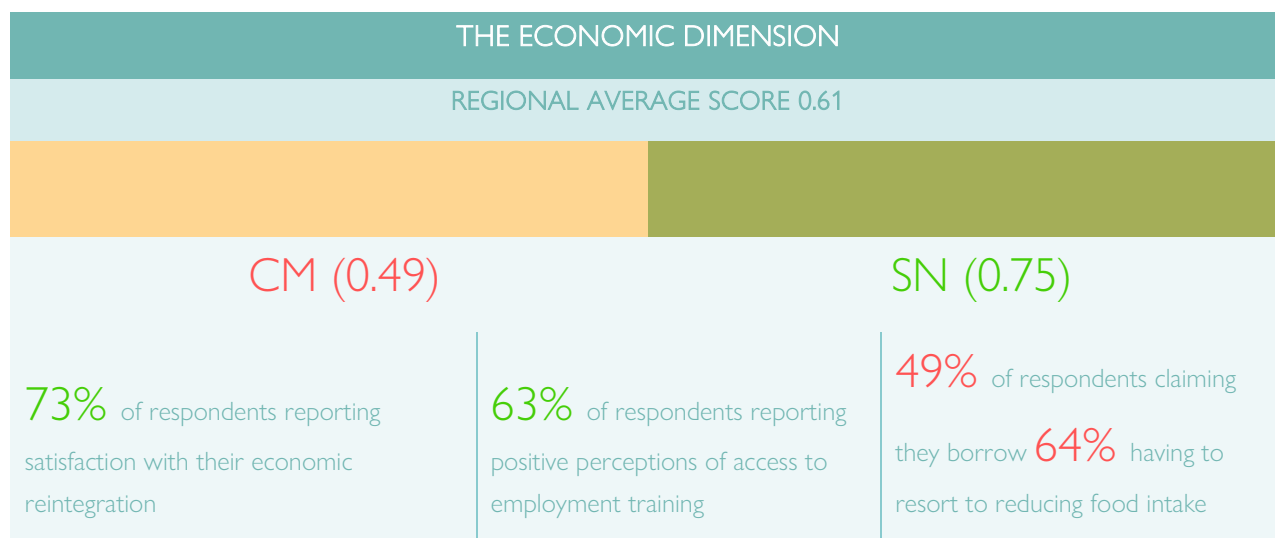
The next best scoring group was that of 36-69 at 0.63, and finally, 18-35 and 17 and under scoring 0.62 respectively. It is worth noting that neither Burkina Faso, nor Guinea-Bissau reported any minor caseloads in the databases provided.

Composite Score by Age									
Country	Overall Caseload	Minors (17-)		18-35		36-69		70+	
		Caseload	Score	Caseload	Score	Caseload	Score	Caseload	Score
Burkina Faso	184	0	n/a	151	0.63	33	0.6	0	n/a
Cameroon	354	44	0.52	256	0.53	54	0.54	0	n/a
The Gambia	240	6	0.7	213	0.65	21	0.67	0	n/a
Ghana	200	25	0.69	127	0.71	48	0.72	0	n/a
Guinea	134	14	0.56	113	0.6	7	0.78	0	n/a
Guinea-Bissau	109	0	n/a	94	0.58	15	0.56	0	n/a
Cote d'Ivoire	345	4	0.57	278	0.56	62	0.54	1	0.64
Mali	259	27	0.6	187	0.64	43	0.63	2	0.6
Niger	314	7	0.66	235	0.66	71	0.66	1	0.74
Nigeria	610	13	0.56	496	0.61	101	0.59	0	n/a
Senegal	30	1	0.7	24	0.67	5	0.66	0	n/a
Total	2779	141	0.62	2174	0.62	460	0.63	4	0.66
%		5%		78%		17%		0%	

ECONOMIC

The **economic dimension** of reintegration covers aspects of reintegration which contribute to economic self-sufficiency. These include the ability to borrow money, the debt-to-spending ratio, need for food rationing, adequacy of employment, ownership of productive assets, etc.

All missions but one in the region reported sustainable levels of economic reintegration. Cameroon, however scored 0.49 – one point below the sustainable threshold. Despite this, the region scored an average of 0.61, with the highest score being 0.75 (Senegal).



ECONOMIC SATISFACTION

Regional evidence also highlights these findings, with 73 per cent of respondents reporting satisfaction with their economic reintegration as 'OK' or better. The remaining respondents reported being 'dissatisfied' (21%), 'very dissatisfied' (4%), and 'don't wish to answer' (2%).

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

When asked about perceptions of access to employment and training, the region reported results above average with 63 per cent reporting 'fair' and above, with the remaining reporting 'poor' (22%), 'very poor' (10%), and 'I don't know' (5%). When analysing the regional rates of employment, the report finds 65 per cent of beneficiaries are currently in employment, 35 per cent not currently employed, and 1 per cent respectively claiming, 'I don't know' and 'I don't wish to answer.'

Despite an above average rate of employment, the report found that 39 per cent of returnees claimed they were actively searching for a job - whether in employment or not. Of those searching for new jobs who were currently in employment, the following reasons were given: 'other' 27 per cent, 'unhappy with salary at current job' 26 per cent, 'unhappy with work at current job', 25 per cent, and 'unhappy with work conditions - location, working hours etc.' 21 per cent.

DEBT

Data extracted from the regional database revealed that debt was a major element in nearly half of all beneficiaries surveyed, with 49 per cent claiming they borrow money. When asked about the frequency, 4 per cent claimed they borrowed money 'very often', 10 per cent 'often', 20 per cent 'sometimes', 25 per cent, 'rarely', 40 per cent 'never' and 3 per cent 'I don't wish to answer'.

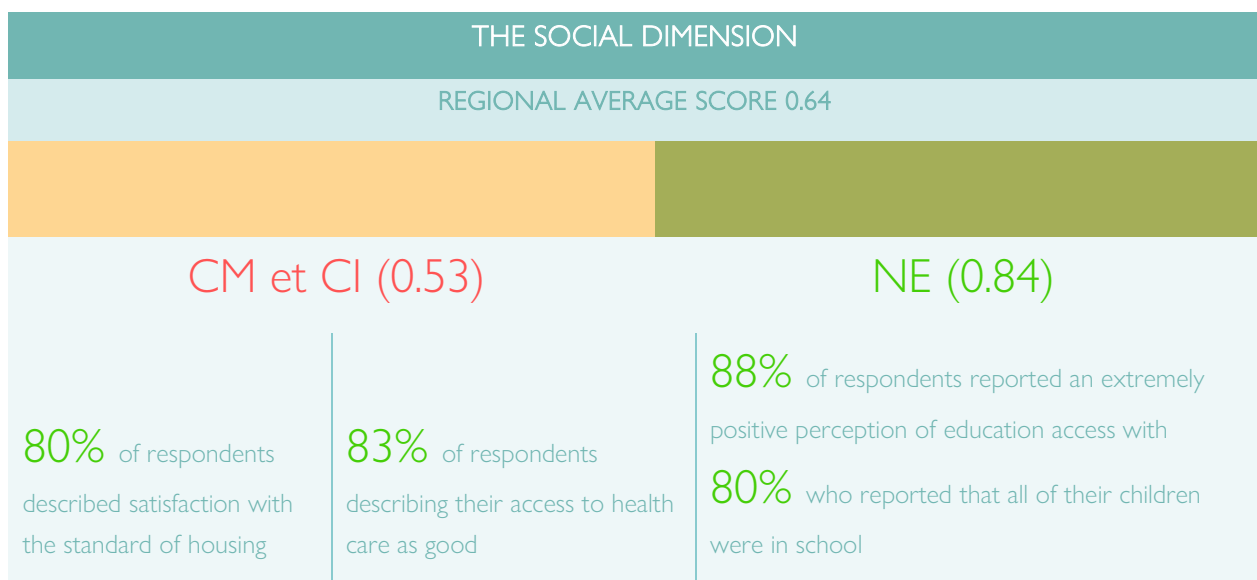
FOOD SECURITY

Food security was also flagged as a concern, with a majority of beneficiaries (64%) having to resort to reducing food intake, with 32 per cent of beneficiaries having to cut down on food often or very often, and an additional 32 per cent sometimes reducing food.

SOCIAL

The social dimension reflects the extent to which returnees have reached social stability within the community, including access to services relating to housing, education, justice, health, and other public infrastructure services.

All missions in the region reported sustainable levels of social reintegration. The region scored 0.64 on average, with the highest score being 0.84 (Ghana) and a joint lowest score of 0.53 (Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon).



Continuing the trend, males outperformed females on average with regional scores of 0.64 and 0.61 respectively. Notable exceptions include Guinea-Bissau (M:0.62, F:0.68), Cote d'Ivoire, (M:0.52, F:0.53), and Nigeria, (M:0.62, F:0.67). However, Guinea-Bissau's one female beneficiary renders conclusions drawn unreliable.

HOUSING

When looking at housing circumstances, we can see that the majority of respondents (80%) described satisfaction with the standard of their housing with 6 per cent describing their standard as 'very good', 33 per cent reporting it was 'good', and 41 per cent 'fair'. Negative perceptions made up for 20 per cent with 4 per cent claiming their standard of housing was 'very poor', 15 per cent claiming it was 'poor' and 1 per cent stating, 'I don't know'.

Ghana and Guinea-Bissau scored the highest, with 99 per cent claiming satisfactory housing standards, as opposed to only 1 per cent claiming unsatisfactory standards. Three countries scored the lowest, claiming poor standards of housing ('very poor' + 'poor'): Niger (30%), Burkina Faso (29%) and Cameroon (29%).

HEALTHCARE

Perceptions of access to healthcare within the region were found to be extremely high, with 83 per cent of respondents describing their access to health care as 'very good' 10 per cent, 'good' 37 per cent, and 'fair' 36 per cent.

Ghana once again tops the satisfaction rate with 98 per cent of respondents claiming satisfactory access to health care, followed by The Gambia (96%), Guinea-Bissau (95%). The three lowest scores for access to health care, claiming poor standards of access to health care were Niger (30%), Burkina Faso (28%), and Cameroon (25%).

EDUCATION

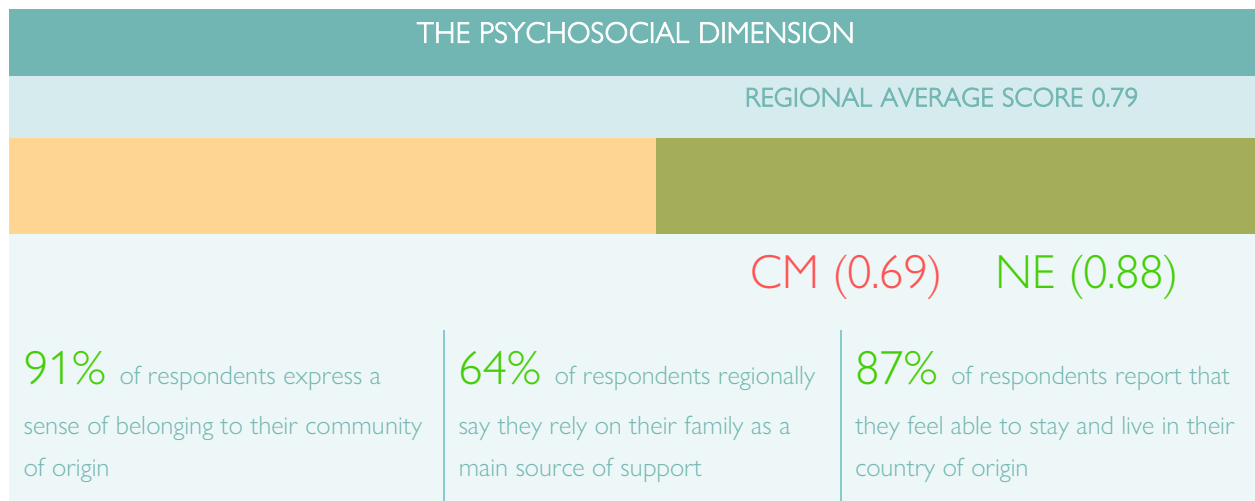
Data extracted from the database reveals that perceptions across the region with regards to access to education are positive, with a total of 88 per cent of returnees outlining access as either 'very good' (14%), 'good' (38%), or 'fair' (36%). Senegal (total 100% 'very good', 'good' or 'fair'), Ghana (98%) and Mali (98%) were found to be the top three leaders in the region. The highest levels of dissatisfaction were found in Burkina Faso (25%), Guinea (14%), and Cameroon (13%).

The region also saw high levels of school enrolment, with 80 per cent of all returnees surveyed reporting that all of their children were in school. The rate was highest in Senegal with 97 per cent and lowest in Mali and Niger (76%).

PSYCHOSOCIAL

The **psychosocial dimension** encompasses the emotional, mental, and psychological elements of reintegration. "Psychological"-related needs, such as the need for therapy due to a mental health concern - are just one component of the broader psychosocial dimension.

The highest scoring dimension was found to be that of the psychosocial. On average all missions in the region reported a sustainability score of 0.79. The highest scoring mission was that of Niger with 0.88, with the lowest scoring mission (Cameroon), coming in at 0.69.



Males also outperformed females in this dimension with an average scoring of 0.80. The only mission where females scored higher was that of Guinea (M:0.75, F:0.81), although the low female caseload and ratio should be taken into account when considering these results: M:126, F:8.

GENERAL BELONGING

When breaking down the psychosocial dimension into its constituent elements, General Belonging scored highly. This is evidenced by 91 per cent of returnees expressing a sense of belonging in their communities of origin, with 65 per cent describing that they 'felt strongly that I am a part of the community' and 26 per cent claiming they 'somewhat agree' that they have a sense of belonging in the community.

Countries that scored highest with perceptions of belonging included: Guinea-Bissau (99%) and Niger and The Gambia respectively (98%). The highest negative perceptions of belonging were found in Cameroon (7%), Nigeria (5%) and Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea (4%) respectively.

FEELINGS OF DISCRIMINATION

According to survey results, levels of discrimination per country varied quite considerably. For example, although 60 per cent of respondents claimed they 'never' felt any discrimination, 23 per cent reported that they were subjected to discrimination 'rarely', whereas 9 per cent were subjected 'sometimes', 5 per cent 'very often', and 2 per cent chose not to answer. When broken down to account for any level of negative discrimination

experienced, the following top three countries score the highest: Senegal (77%), Cote d'Ivoire (63%), and Nigeria (45%).

The countries with the highest proportion of returnees saying they were 'never' discriminated against were Niger (85%), Burkina Faso (82%), and The Gambia and Ghana (75%) respectively.

STRENGTH OF SUPPORT NETWORKS

Family was described as being one of the major support networks that returnees fell back on, with 64 per cent of returnees confirming they turned to family members in their communities for support. Only 13% of returnees reported often experiencing conflict with their families.

Returnees also ranked IOM equally highly as a support network with 64 per cent regionally saying they relied on IOM as a main source of support. Friends were considered as an important support network for just over half (52%) of returnees in Burkina Faso and Ghana, but for only 17 per cent of surveyed returnees in Senegal. Support from religious networks and institutions regionally was low, at just 4 per cent however at the country level a clear outlier was Ghana at 20 per cent

indicating a much stronger religious element to the country's reintegration process.

Despite the generally positive scores seen above with regards to belonging and social activities in communities of return, community support was regionally ranked very low (3%) as a support network. Fellow returnees also don't appear to offer much of a support network, according to the data extracted from the database, scoring at just 3 per cent regionally. It is worthy of note that when disaggregated by country, Ghana scores 18 per cent as an outlier suggesting that returnee groups are more supportive of one another. Support from local NGOs was mentioned as a source of support for only 2 per cent of returnees regionally, with no country scoring above 4 per cent.

INTENT TO RE-MIGRATE

When surveyed as to intentions to re-migrate, 87 per cent of returnees report that they feel able to stay and live in their country of origin. The highest scoring countries in the region were found to be Mali (99%), and Ghana and Guinea-Bissau (98%) respectively. Those countries that the highest levels of returnees claiming they did not feel they were able to stay and live in their country

of origin included: Guinea (14%), Cote d'Ivoire (13%), and Cameroon (10%). It is of value to note that two of the countries with returnees that scored high with regards to negative perceptions of staying in their countries of origin, also scored high with uncertainty for the future – Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

TO IOM AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

- 1) **Reduce assistance wait times for beneficiaries by enrolling them in cash for work, vocational training shortly after arrival or implementing other measures (such as cash-based assistance) to respond to immediate needs** for those who whose microbusinesses may take time to generate income. Microbusiness reintegration plans take time to develop and for the returnee to receive assistance and even once the in-kind assistance is received the microbusiness make take time to turn a profit. Some returnees cannot afford to wait and may become discouraged, reducing beneficiary retention rates.

- 2) **Expand community-based activities projects to promote social cohesion and reduce risk of creating migration pull factors.** Involving community members reduces the risk of returnees' assistance creating jealousy or encouraging others to migrate in order to receive assistance. However as assisting host community members was not initially factored into the programme budget, this would need to be matched by corresponding resources to avoid depleting the funds available for reintegration.
- 3) **Handle collective microbusiness assistance with caution,** reserving for cases where collectives are family members or have a successful track record of business cooperation. Besides choosing collectives where members have an existing relationship of trust, other good practices to mitigate risk include involving the collective in group activities (for example vocational assistance) before starting the microbusiness. However the case of Nigeria, where cases of negative protection outcomes and split collectives were recorded despite returnees undergoing business training together illustrates that there are no guarantees with this high-risk assistance modality.
- 4) **Further improve and refine messaging to beneficiaries to manage expectations of the reintegration process in coordination with IOM missions in host/transit countries.** The initial intervention model envisaged broad flexibility in the level of in-kind support offered, with a view to reward innovative business plans. In practice, this meant some beneficiaries have received (substantially) more in-kind support than others. Word of mouth among beneficiaries have fueled expectations and frustrations. Defining a range for economic reintegration assistance per beneficiary (minimum and maximum while still allowing some case-by-case flexibility) may help better manage this expectation issue. Specific criteria to qualify a project as "promising" or "innovative" should also be more clearly communicated to beneficiaries for transparency purposes. Communications materials and messaging on the reintegration process to beneficiaries should also continue to be reviewed in coordination with the missions in host and transit countries.
- 5) Scale up successful practices such as on-site visits to trades workshops and testimonies of success stories from returnees who have completed the process, which have been shown to effectively correct misperceptions about economic reintegration. Matching beneficiary's motivation and existing competences to relevant business sectors is a key prerequisite for success: overall, the current process is effective but faces several challenges which affect the directing of beneficiaries towards the most impactful pathways. These challenges include: returnees' preferences biased towards unprofitable or risky microbusiness sectors, family pressure, limited duration of the workshops and difficulties to assess beneficiary's motivation and competences.

IOM-SPECIFIC

- 6) **Review of the applicability of standardized migrant assistance vulnerability criteria** to the West and Central African context, drawing on best practices from country-level vulnerability assessment processes and continue to conduct capacity-building with country offices. While IOM institutional guidance exists at HQ level, field data suggests it is not being widely implemented.
- 7) **Continue to build on psychosocial assistance component and ensure equal access for returnees to counselling services** across missions. Evidence from the evaluation suggests this varies from complete coverage in Guinea-Bissau, to returnees in Mali and Senegal being largely unaware of the availability of psychosocial assistance.

- 8) **M&E: Conduct an assessment of beneficiary retention rates and reasons for withdrawal from the reintegration process, in addition to stepping up supply monitoring of in-kind assistance.** Current M&E tools largely focus on returnees who have completed the reintegration process. While current efforts to gather beneficiary feedback allow lessons learned to be fed into the programme cycle, it limits the ability for issues with the implementation of individual reintegration cases to be addressed in real time. Increased M&E staffing and field visits are key to achieving this recommendation, in addition to continuing efforts to build country-level capacity on accountability and feedback mechanisms.

TO THE DONOR

- 10) **Increase budget and allowable timeline for IOM and partners to provide social assistance to address longer-term/severe vulnerabilities.** Guaranteeing beneficiaries' rent and school fee payments for periods of up to two years would give returnee families greater stability and time to get back on their feet. Increase budget availability for medical assistance would allow more serious or chronic health needs to be addressed.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

EVALUATION CONTEXT

The European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have developed the Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Africa (hereinafter "Joint Initiative"). Implemented in 13 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia), it aims to protect the security, dignity and rights of migrants along this important and dangerous migration route and to help improving the reintegration of returnees through an innovative approach.

IOM is expected to conduct mid-term evaluations of reintegration activities in 11 of the 13 Joint Initiative countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mali,

Nigeria, Senegal and Niger. Based on the original contracts, every country with the exception of Chad is expected to conduct a reintegration evaluation at country level, while an exemption was also made for Mauritania during a meeting with DEVCO in November 2019. See the following excerpt from Ghana contract: "Particular attention will be paid to monitoring and evaluation of reintegration activities, and piloting new methodologies for measuring the impact and sustainability of the reintegration support, and to the extent of the impact of capacity-building activities. In principle, a specific evaluation on the reintegration activities will be carried out in each country and will be published in a regional report." The results of the evaluations are to be published in a consolidated regional report.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

Following up to two years of programme implementation, the donor has requested this evaluation to assess the outcomes of Joint Initiative reintegration activities for returning migrants in the West and Central Africa region. The evaluation will also serve to highlight reintegration best practices, lessons learned and recommendations to improve future reintegration programming under the Joint Initiative.

EVALUATION SCOPE

Focusing specifically on reintegration programming, the evaluation will cover 11 out of the 13 Joint Initiative countries and cover a representative sample of returning migrant beneficiaries, taking into account factors such as sex, age, region of return and country of destination. The time period being evaluated will cover from the beginning of programme implementation in May 2017 until the present, including feedback from beneficiaries at different stages of the programme cycle.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The reintegration activities will be assessed based on the following OECD evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability.

Relevance

- Are the reintegration activities implemented under the Joint Initiative appropriately tailored to the needs (both immediate and longer term) and priorities of beneficiaries and their communities (include economic, social, psychosocial programming)?
- Are coordination and capacity-building activities focused on reintegration of migrants relevant to the operational needs of IOM partners?
- Are reintegration activities successfully targeting the most vulnerable beneficiaries and those where the assistance can have the most impact?

Effectiveness

- How effective is Joint Initiative assistance in improving the reintegration of returning migrants (includes basic, additional and community-based assistance)?
- What outcome has this intervention had on returnees and the host community (includes positive/negative, intended and unintended outcomes).

Efficiency

- What challenges have been faced in the delivery of Joint Initiative reintegration assistance and how could implementation be improved?

Sustainability

- Has the programme contributed to strengthening national and/or local authorities and/or CSO capacity to manage reintegration in a dignified and sustainable manner?
- Do beneficiaries report sufficient levels of economic independence, social stability, and psychosocial wellbeing in their community of return?

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will employ a mixed-methods methodology. For quantitative data, the evaluation will employ the established global reintegration M&E tools as the main quantitative survey instrument (Tools Annex 6, 7 and 8, Reintegration Monitoring, Satisfaction and Sustainability Surveys). Enumerator resources from the evaluation budget will be used to boost data collection using the survey tools to ensure a sufficient, consistent and representative sample is gathered across all countries covered by the evaluation. A stratified random sampling technique will be used, with the sample in each country calculated either as a percentage of total beneficiaries (e.g. 20-30% in all countries) or as a statistically representative sample with a confidence level of 95 per cent and a margin of error of less than 5 per cent (whichever is most feasible in light of resource constraints). Survey data will then be entered in Mimosa and analysed in Excel or SPSS.

To complement this quantitative data collection, qualitative tools will be developed for this evaluation, including key informant interviews with programme managers, field staff, partners and community leaders in addition to interviews and focus groups with returnees.

EVALUATION DELIVERABLES

- The key deliverable is **one regional level report for external publication**. Country level reports will also be drafted for internal learning purposes. The reports should be approximately 15 pages long excluding annexes and drafted using a common template developed by the RO to ensure a consistent approach and style. Sections should include: Executive Summary, Introduction to Reintegration Programming in Country X, Methodology, Findings and Lessons Learned/Recommendations. Each evaluation should include at least one case study of a beneficiary or innovative programme activity. These should capture the 'so what' factor – the actual impact of activities on the beneficiaries— in addition to analyzing the best practice for programme learning. Attention should also be paid to data visualization of key findings.
- At the end of each country mission, evaluation consultants should also deliver a presentation to **debrief** country offices on the data collection process and highlight any initial findings.

ANNEX II: EVALUATION TEAM

REGIONAL EVALUATION

SARAH DRURY, Regional M&E Officer, IOM West and Central Africa

Sarah Drury is the regional M&E lead for the EU-IOM Joint Initiative. Previous IOM assignments include heading the M&E unit for a flagship USAID community stabilization programme in Pakistan, as well as conducting research in Iraq on displacement and drivers of irregular migration to Europe. Before joining IOM, she focused primarily on the Syria crisis, completing evaluations for the Norwegian Refugee Council and Adam Smith International on community stabilization, education and shelter/WASH programming as well as research briefs on displacement for the Brookings Institution. She holds a Master's degree from Georgetown University School of Foreign Service (US) and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney (Australia).

LAMINE KANE, Regional M&E Officer, IOM West and Central Africa

A sociologist by training, Lamine Kane is a Regional M&E officer. Before joining IOM, Lamine worked at OneWorld as Project Officer where he has participated in several assessments in Senegal in sexual and reproductive health with Oxfam and Stop Aids now. Lamine has worked as project officer for electoral governance projects in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau. Lamine holds a Master's degree in Sociology focusing on Social Intervention and Expertise from the university of Poitiers (France).

JACK CHITHAM, Independent Consultant:

Jack Chitham has widespread experience as a migration management consultant with a history of working in the international humanitarian sector including positions in the Middle East, South East Asia, and West and East Africa. He has skills in many fields, including: Livelihoods and Return & Reintegration, Emergency Relief and Coordination, Security Sector Reform and Capacity-building, P-CVE, Project Development/Donor Liaison, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Jack currently manages the IOM Egypt allocation of the Regional Development and Protection Programme North Africa – Development Pillar, funded by EUTF DG NEAR.

COUNTRY EVALUATORS

CEDRIC DEKEYSER: Cote d'Ivoire

An anthropologist by training, Cédric developed a specific expertise on the reintegration of migrants returning to their home country, managing, coordinating and contributing to harmonize transnational projects mainly in North and West Africa, but also beyond in other regions of Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Building on more than 10 years working for the International Organization for Migration, Cédric gained experience in various fields of migration management, including in AVRR, capacity-building, fight against trafficking in human beings, irregular migration and displacement and migration crises. Recently, Cédric has contributed to develop the reintegration approach under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Africa.

ROSELINDE DEN BOER: Ghana

Roselinde has been a staff member with IOM since early 2015. She spent three years at the Donor Relations Division at IOM's headquarters in Geneva, after which she moved to IOM Nigeria as the Project Development Officer in Abuja. Among others, she supported the development of various projects that complement the IOM-EU Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in Nigeria. Currently, she works on IOM Nigeria's Transition and Recovery portfolio, most notably with regards to the Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation (DDRR) programme. Roselinde was accredited by IOM as an internal evaluator during a regional training in Nairobi in November 2018 and has been the mission M&E focal point since.

ANDREAS DE BOER: Senegal

Andreas de Boer joined IOM Belgium in 2012 as AVRR counsellor and focal point for EU funded reintegration projects such as MAGNET, MOTUSE and the RE-START project. He replaced the Head of Migrant Assistance and oversaw monitoring visits with governmental counterparts in Kazakhstan, Tunisia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Congo DRC and Iraq. In 2017 he rolled out the EU IOM Joint Initiative protection and reintegration activities in Burkina Faso. Since September 2019, Andreas de Boer works as an international consultant with short assignments for IOM HQ, IOM RO Dakar and in Saudi Arabia.

JACK CHITHAM: The Gambia

See under regional evaluation team

ALEX ODLUM: Nigeria and Guinea-Bissau

Alex Odum has five years' experience in the humanitarian sector focused on research and analysis, needs assessment, information and knowledge management, and monitoring and evaluation. He has worked with organizations including ACAPS, the International Organization for Migration, Lessons Learned Simulations and Training, and the Mixed Migration Centre, and conducted research on displacement and return migration. Alex holds a Master of Public Policy from the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, and Bachelors of Law and International Studies from the University of Adelaide.

MARCO VALENZA: Burkina Faso

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