

**Final Evaluation of the EU-IOM
Joint Initiative for migrant protection
and reintegration in the horn of Africa**

Final Evaluation Report, 17 March 2023

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EU-IOM
Joint Initiative for
Migrant Protection
and Reintegration
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1. Introduction

In 2016, the EU and IOM launched the *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration*, with as overall objective “To contribute to facilitating orderly, safe, regular and rights-based migration through the facilitation of dignified voluntary return and the implementation of development-focused and sustainable reintegration policies and processes”. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative in the Horn of Africa (JI-HOA)¹ commenced in March 2017 in the Khartoum Process countries, with a focus on *Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan*.² The programme was coordinated by a Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) based in the IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa region (Nairobi, Kenya).

In accordance with the programme planning, the JI-HoA underwent a Mid-Term Evaluation in 2019 and a **Final Independent Evaluation** in 2022/2023, covering the 2017-2022 period, conducted by PPMI Group and commissioned by IOM. The evaluation covered the four JI core countries in the HoA, namely Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti, as well as the RCU based in Kenya given regionally implemented and coordinated activities, looking at all pillars of the Action (migration data; capacity building; awareness raising; protection and voluntary assisted return; and individual and community-based reintegration).

The final evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability of the programme, with an eye on informing future programming. To this end, the evaluation assessed the achievements of the programme against its key objectives, including a re-examination of the relevance of the objectives and of the design. It also identified factors that have facilitated or impeded the achievement of the objectives.

To gather the necessary data, the evaluation relied on desk research, interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with beneficiaries, and a validation workshop. Furthermore, a range of monitoring and evaluation activities were already implemented under the JI-HoA. The results of these M&E activities formed an important data source for the current evaluation.

The current Report presents the findings of the evaluation against the evaluation criteria and provides holistic conclusions and recommendations to build on the achievements of the JI-HoA and improve future programming.

¹ Formal title: Facility on Sustainable and Dignified Return and Reintegration in Support of the Khartoum Process

² As per the project’s Description of the Action, some limited activities mainly involving assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) were also carried out in other Khartoum Process countries (Eritrea as conditions allow, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda) and from countries along the Southern migration routes (notably Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Tanzania)

2. Background of the JI-HoA

2.1. Context and design of the JI-HoA

According to data from the Migration Database of the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC), the African migration population has increased significantly between 2010 and 2019, from 17.2 million to 26.3 million. In the IGAD³ region, the migrant population grew from 3.1 million to 6.5 million during this time, which means migration more than doubled.⁴

The Horn of Africa has historically and presently witnessed significant flows of migration, both regular and irregular, voluntary, and forced, and temporary and permanent. Various factors affect migration, including economic development, conflicts, degradation of the environment, disasters, and poverty. Most emigrants remain within the IGAD region.⁵ Less data is available on irregular migration, even though irregular migration is widespread in the region.

In addition, the *European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa* (EUTF for Africa) was created in 2015 to address the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration and to contribute to better migration management. Funded under the EUTF, the *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration* aims to protect and save migrants' lives and strengthen migration governance, in full respect of international human rights standards and in particular the principle of non-refoulement. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative covers and closely cooperates with 26 African countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa.

The *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa*, launched in March 2017, assists countries in the region participating in the Khartoum Process (focusing particularly on Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan) to facilitate orderly, safe, and regular migration through the development and implementation of rights-based, development-based and sustainable return and reintegration policies and processes.

The initial budget of the programme was 25 million, funded by the EU through the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) – Horn of Africa Window, for a period of 36 months. Through a top-up system, the budget increased five times to a final total of 64.702.979 EUR for 66.5 months. This budget covered activities in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan, as well as regional activities.

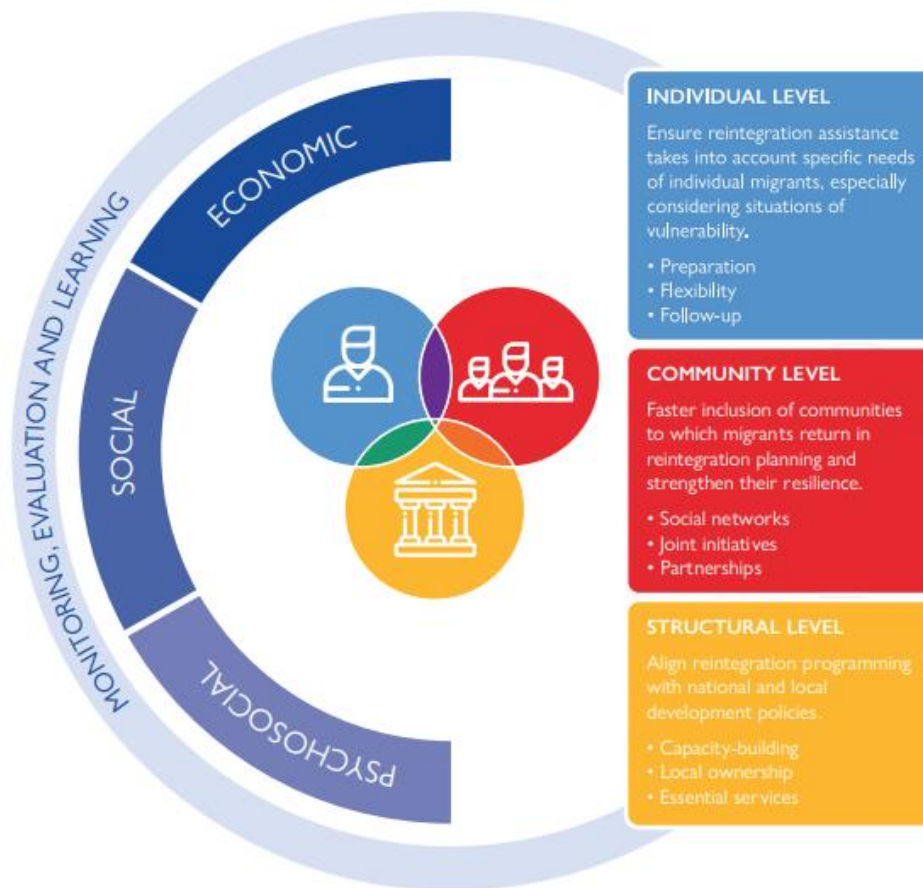
The overarching framework for the JI-HoA is IOM's "**integrated approach to reintegration**". The aim of this approach is to better connect various interventions supporting reintegration, in order to provide a holistic package of support to returnees and their host communities.

³ Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

⁴ IGAD (2021) IGAD Migration Statistics Report.

⁵ IGAD (2021) IGAD Migration Statistics Report.

FIGURE 1. IOM'S INTEGRATED APPROACH TO REINTEGRATION



Source: IOM Reintegration Handbook

As demonstrated in the figure above, the integrated approach targets three societal levels⁶:

- *Individual level:* Initiatives to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of returnees and returning family members. Reintegration support is provided to individual returnees, based on an assessment of their needs.
- *Community level:* Initiatives that respond to the needs, vulnerabilities, and concerns of communities to which migrants return, including returnee families and the non-migrant population.
- *Structural/system level:* Initiatives that promote good governance of migration through engagement with local and national authorities and stakeholders and supports continuity of assistance through adequate local public services.

Besides the three vertical levels, the integrated approach addresses reintegration from three horizontal dimensions:

⁶ IOM Reintegration Handbook, complemented with Inception Interviews and JI-HoA project document Annex I: Description of the Action.

The Economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration that contributes to re-entering the economic life and sustained livelihoods.	The Social dimension addresses returning migrants' access to public services and infrastructure in their countries of origin, including access to health, education, housing, justice, and social protection schemes.	The Psychosocial dimension encompasses the reinsertion of returning migrants into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbours) and civil society structures, as well as re-engagement with the host society's values, principles and traditions
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Source: IOM Reintegration Handbook

Each result is expected to be achieved through a variety of supporting activities, which are linked to the three main outcome areas, and to the five pillars of Action.

2.2. External factors affecting the implementation of the JI

Over the course of the Programme, multiple challenges outside the control of the IOM and its partners affected the implementation of the JI-HoA at the global and national levels.

The global **COVID-19** pandemic was first detected in each of the four programme countries in March 2020 and continued to spread after its initial discovery. The restrictions implemented led to some difficulties in the Programme's implementation as workshops and activities became harder to conduct or had to be postponed. Direct assistance was also hindered by lockdowns.

Although not explicitly named in interviews, **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** on the 24th of February 2022 is another factor that is likely to have impacted the final months as well as sustainability of the JI-HoA. The imposition of sanctions on Russia's energy sector led to a sharp rise in the price of hydrocarbons.⁷

Several country-level events influenced the implementation and impact of the JI-HoA as well:

- In **Ethiopia**, the conflict in Tigray which started in 2020 affected the return of migrants, distribution of reintegration assistance and conducting monitoring surveys in this region.⁸
- In **Djibouti**, risks to the Programme stemmed from the issues in other countries such as Ethiopia or Somalia spilling over into Djibouti.⁹
- In **Somalia**, the complicated security environment affected the smooth implementation of the Programme, e.g. continuous mortar attacks in airport compound.¹⁰
- In **Sudan**, the Programme was affected by rapidly rising inflation, political instability, a political coup and high turnover of government representatives.¹¹

⁷ IEA. (2022). Clean Energy Transitions in the Greater Horn of Africa, pg. 24.

⁸ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #1 To The European Union, pg. 6.

⁹ Interview with a stakeholder from Djibouti

¹⁰ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #3 To The European Union, pg. 8. And interviews with IOM staff

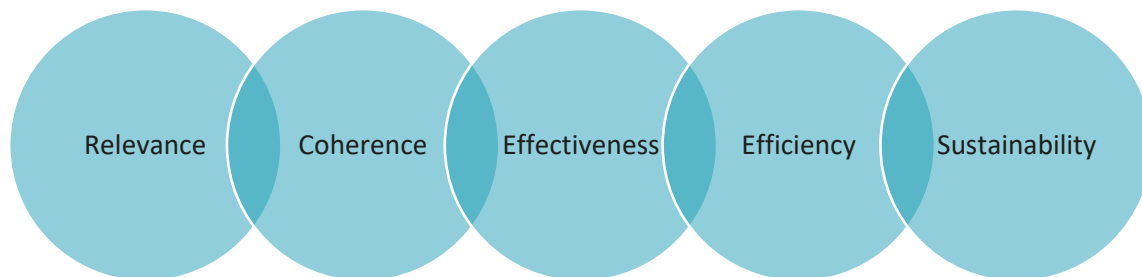
¹¹ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 To the European Union, pg. 10.

3. Methodology

The current evaluation comprises the **final¹², external** evaluation of the JI-HoA, as final component of the project closure. The primary users of the evaluation are IOM, the donor, and external partners engaged in future programming involving Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration. The evaluation has multiple purposes, namely **accountability** (summative evaluation, looking into the effectiveness of the JI) and **learning** (formative evaluation, looking to improve future programming). In particular, the evaluation provides recommendations for future migrant protection, return and reintegration programming.

The evaluation followed the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation criteria and quality standards. The evaluation considered individual interventions in the four countries as well as their interconnectedness and synergies with the programme as a whole. The evaluation will present the most visible trends, common strengths, and weaknesses across the countries.

FIGURE 2. OECD/DAC CRITERIA FOR EVALUATIONS



Each evaluation question includes the main data collection methods that will be used to collect information to answer the question, as well as key indicators that measure trends or the state of play/level regarding the change or situation the evaluation question refers to.

The evaluation was built on a mixed-methods data collection approach, including primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data. Given the volume of data collected and compiled by IOM, **desk research** comprised a first and important step of the data collection.

- **Initial desk research** was carried out in the inception phase to help the evaluation team better understand the initiative. Additionally, given the vast amount of research carried out during the programme implementation, the team aimed to structure this data to identify gaps and areas for validation, while avoiding duplication and disproportionate pressure on stakeholders.

¹² A final, or terminal, evaluation is undertaken at the end, or close to the end, of an intervention to examine the overall performance and achievement of results, also for the benefit of stakeholders not directly involved in the management and implementation of the intervention (such as donors and governmental entities). IOM Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines

- **Desk research for data collection and analysis** was carried out during the structured fieldwork stage. During this phase, the evaluation team focused on specific questions set out in the evaluation grid and focus on the triangulation of the secondary and primary data sources.

To gather the insights of key stakeholders of the JI, the evaluation team conducted **interviews** at country-level (led by national experts) and with regional and global stakeholders, IOM staff, and donors (led by the core evaluation team).

- Eight Inception Interviews were carried out, including four regional IOM staff interviews and four group interviews with the four IOM country teams.
- 52 interviews were carried out with 78 stakeholders, including six interviews with regional stakeholders and 46 interviews with 72 national-level stakeholders (in Ethiopia, most interviews were group interviews)
- 21 interviews were implemented with 30 IOM staff at national and regional level

To gather more comprehensive, in-depth qualitative insights on the experiences of the beneficiaries (migrants, returnees, and community members), the evaluation team organized **focus group discussions** in each country. Four FGDs were held in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia, and one FGD in Djibouti.

The final debriefing workshop, focused on dissemination of the findings and conclusions of the evaluation, helped the evaluation team to validate the findings of the evaluation and collect valuable reflections from IOM staff. The findings from the debriefing were integrated to the final evaluation report.

The evaluation was based on numerous consultations with stakeholders and IOM staff, and extensive review of documentation. However, certain **external and internal factors influenced the implementation of the evaluation**:

- The *political and security situation* in the programme countries prevented the team from exploring some of the programme implementation localities. In Ethiopia, the Tigray region and Amhara region were deemed not safe to visit, and in Somalia, the FGD in Burao was cancelled due to renewed security/political risks. Similarly, restrictions on travel in Sudan led the team to conduct one online FGD, one FGD where returnees were brought to Khartoum, and one region to be replaced with another FGD in Khartoum.
- Not all selected *stakeholders* were able or willing to make themselves available for an interview. Fortunately, these only comprised a few stakeholders across the region.

4. Findings

4.1. Relevance

4.1.1. Relevance of programme activities for migrants, returnees, and communities

Overall performance score for relevance: 3.9/5
Robustness score for the evidence: 4.5/5

4.1.1.1 Needs of migrants

Desk research and interviews confirm that the programme responded to the most pressing needs of migrants. The JI-HoA enabled them to return from dangerous environments, such as detention, where no other support was available. Migrants shared that they suffered on their irregular migration journeys, had acutely distressing experiences¹³, and highlighted that their families and communities could not help them¹⁴. Stakeholders supporting migrants in Djibouti stressed in this regard that the most urgent problems were prioritised, such as hunger, thirst, and fatigue. The JI-HoA, first of all, tried to save their lives by providing the necessary means to survive, such as food, water, clothing and shelter¹⁵.

However, the survey among migrants in MRC indicated that, while 68% of respondents were satisfied with the MRC services, **only 39% reported that the MRCs met all or almost all their needs**. IOM explained this number by noting that a large majority of respondents were surveyed while still waiting for their Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), which suggests that the support was not provided immediately. Therefore, quicker service provision and AVRR were among the most listed elements for improvement by the respondents.¹⁶

4.1.1.2 Needs of returnees

The JI-HoA responded to a large extent to the needs of returnees in terms of their reintegration. Namely, upon arrival, returnees are faced with a lack of economic resources to sustain themselves, face stigma and exclusion from community members and experience effects of their distressing migration experiences that affect their ability to rebuild their lives. Therefore, the integrated approach to economic, social, and psychosocial support was of a great relevance to the challenges faced by returnees.

¹³ Kan, Merve. (2022). EU-IOM Joint Initiative Horn of Africa Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Research Report. Pg. 40-49 and FGDs with returnees in programme countries

¹⁴ Covid-19 Natural Experiment Report, pg. 63 and FGDs with returnees in programme countries

¹⁵ Interviews with stakeholders from Djibouti

¹⁶ IOM MRCs Regional Dashboard, May 2022

According to the RA Monitoring and Satisfaction surveys, 56% of the surveyed returnees were satisfied or very satisfied with the reintegration assistance support provided by the JI-HoA¹⁷.

Focus Group Discussions highlighted the importance of the **economic** assistance to enable returnees to develop sources of income (e.g. through start-up businesses or employment). Since returnees are coming back usually “empty-handed”, they are experiencing shame, guilt, and are stigmatised by their communities and relatives. The economic support offered by the JI-HoA not only provides them with resources to start their business but also restores their dignity and self-trust¹⁸.

In the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), **some returnees pointed out that the overall value of the economic assistance was not enough**.¹⁹ This was also confirmed by a stakeholder from Sudan, who suggested that returnees needed more money to satisfy their livelihood during the time of planting, growing and harvesting, since they put most of the microbusiness support into the producing and often have no other sources of income²⁰. The microbusiness assistance did not always correspond to the knowledge of the recipient or the local context. Namely, a few of the returnees revealed that they were not consulted or received different support than they selected, so they had no other option, but just to accept the support²¹.

In terms of **psychosocial needs**, research results presented at the Research and Evidence Facility (REF) conference of June 2022 indicated that the incidence of Common Mental Disorders (CMD) is significantly higher among JI-HoA beneficiaries in Ethiopia when compared with non-migrant control group²². The high prevalence of CMD among returned migrants from the Middle East was also found in another study²³. This indicates that irregular migrants are much more affected by the CMD compared to people who do not migrate. The specific focus of the JI-HoA on MHPSS therefore addresses key difficulties faced by migrants.

However, in the execution, **some gaps were found in the correspondence of specific activities to returnees’ psychosocial needs**. The JI-HoA Programme’s Lessons Learned from the Psychosocial Support Component Report noted gaps in the post-return psychosocial support (e.g., lack of MHPSS service, unclear information about compensation of the treatment, high cost, stigma, and low awareness about MHPSS needs among communities)²⁴. The post-return psychosocial support was not well-integrated into the main documents of the JI-HoA programme²⁵. This lack of attention led to the lack of

¹⁷ Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union, pg. 59.

¹⁸ Kan, Merve. (2022). EU-IOM Joint Initiative Horn of Africa Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Research Report. Pg. 51-52

¹⁹ FGD in Somalia

²⁰ Interview with a stakeholder from Sudan

²¹ Covid-19 Natural Experiment Report, pg. 72, FGD with returnees in Ethiopia

²² IOM RDH. (2022) Partnerships for Migrant Reintegration, pg. 7.

²³ Tilahun, M., Workicho, A., & Angaw, D. A. (2020). Common mental disorders and its associated factors and mental health care services for Ethiopian labor migrants returned from Middle East countries in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia BMC Health Services Research 20:681 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05502-0>

²⁴ Kan, Merve. (2022). “Lessons Learned from the Psychosocial Support (PSS) Component of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative Programme in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia”

²⁵ Mid-Term Review of EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa, pg. 15.

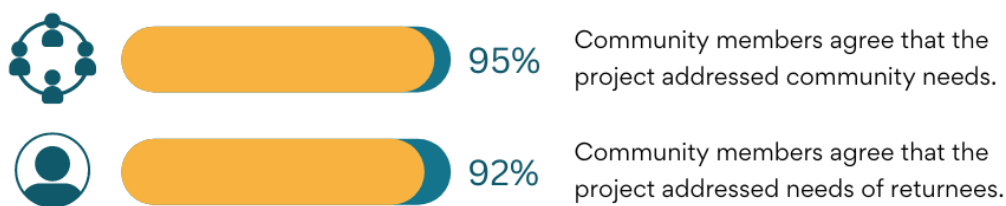
guidance and tools for the MHPSS in each programme country, which in turn led to the unclear monitoring of the MHPSS interventions.²⁶

4.1.1.3 Needs of community members

The interviews and the desk research analysis revealed that **the programme addressed many priorities of communities in terms of reintegration and livelihoods support**. One of the main drivers of migration is the lack of economic opportunities to secure a livelihood, combined with the prevailing perception that jobs are available elsewhere. The creation of economic opportunities within the community reduces the risk of social conflict (e.g. negative attitudes to returnees who receive financial support as described above), while simultaneously decreasing the drive to migrate out of economic necessity among other community members.

According to the community participation survey administered to 1,232 community members (221 in Ethiopia, 745 in Somalia, and 266 in Sudan) between November 2019 and July 2022, the majority of the respondents believed that the community projects under the EU-IOM JI-HoA addressed the needs of the community and of returnees.²⁷

FIGURE 3. PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITIES ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE JI-HOA



Source: JI-HoA's Community-Based Reintegration survey, administered to 809 (476 male, 333 female) respondents..

The evaluation revealed that **not all targeted communities received the same support from the IOM while implementing their projects**. There were some communities where a needs assessment was conducted with the local government and not community members directly (which would take a large amount of time).²⁸ As a result, some interviewees revealed that they *“needed to work on projects that were not based on our skills or that were more beneficial to the government”*.²⁹

4.1.2. Programme’s relevance to the needs of stakeholders

4.1.2.1 Needs of governments

Overall, most of the relevant interviewees indicated that the **governments of participating countries were highly interested in the JI-HoA and committed to its objectives** although urgent problems such

²⁶ Covid-19 Natural Experiment Report, pg. 65, multiple interviews from Sudan

²⁷ Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union.

²⁸ FGDs with returnees and IPs from Ethiopia

²⁹ FGDs with returnees from Ethiopia

as COVID-19, security issues and economic crises prevented them from treating return migration as a priority throughout the implementation of the JI-HoA. Before the implementation of the JI-HoA programme, in most countries, there were limited frameworks or mechanism for migration, governments had no tools, and no national capacity building strategies which in turn led to limited capacity to facilitate return and reintegration. The JI-HoA programme addressed this gap through capacity building activities and tools such as the SOPs and various guidelines.³⁰

Interviews revealed that the efforts of the JI-HoA regarding migration data were of particular relevance and importance to the stakeholders. Namely, there was a clear lack of data on migration and existing tools and methods to collect such data were not harmonized across the region. Therefore, data between countries could not be compared.³¹

4.1.2.2 Needs of other stakeholders

Generally, **the interview analysis revealed that the needs of the other national stakeholders were identified and addressed by the programme.** The survey of partners, presented in the Partnership Analysis assessment that was conducted under the programme, showed that 82% of partners believed IOM's local capacity building activities were useful.³² The partnership analysis report concluded that the differences between implementing partners (IPs) on "technical capacity, work experience with international organisations, and reporting ability" were prominent from the beginning of the programme. Therefore, IOM's training for IPs on various topics were necessary to mitigate these differences³³.

However, despite this support, **some partners identified areas where the programme could improve.** Some of the IPs found the active guidance of the IOM less relevant, as they perceived themselves as having more experience and knowledge than the IOM³⁴ or that the capacity building was not necessary since they already had enough capacity³⁵.

4.2. Coherence

Overall performance score for coherence: 4.3/5
Robustness score for the evidence: 4/5

³⁰ Multiple interviews across the participating countries

³¹ Interview with a stakeholder

³² IOM RDH. (2022) Partnerships for Migrant Reintegration, pg. 29-30.

³³ IOM RDH. (2022) Partnerships for Migrant Reintegration, pg. 40.

³⁴ IOM RDH. (2022) Partnerships for Migrant Reintegration, pg. 41.

³⁵ Interview with a stakeholder from Somalia

4.2.1. The JI-HoA's alignment with the objectives and standards of IOM, and objectives of the EU

The EU-IOM JI-HoA aligns with the **purpose of IOM** as described in its constitution. Providing assistance services for voluntary return migration is a core function of the organisation to ensure safe, orderly and dignified migration³⁶. IOM's international norms and standards regarding AVRR are centred around protecting migrants' rights (to a safe and dignified return) and achieving sustainable reintegration. One of the main principles for IOM regarding AVRR, namely voluntariness, was followed by organizing information sessions of the AVRR programme.³⁷

The JI-HoA corresponds to the existing **EU foreign policy** documents and political trajectories. The EU-IOM JI-HoA contributed to the objectives of the *EU Trust Fund for Africa* to emphasise greater economic and employment opportunities and improve migration management in countries of origin and transit. The JI-HoA is also aligned with the *Valletta Action Plan*, a framework for migration governance between Europe and Africa specifically addressing irregular migration in three regions, including the Horn of Africa, aimed at tackling migrant smugglers, fostering safe return and reintegration, migrant protection and effective governance of irregular migration³⁸.

Similarly, the JI-HoA contributed to the *European Agenda on Migration's* objectives, namely the focus on reducing incentives for irregular migration. The objective aims to track and eliminate the causes of irregular migration by developing regional cooperation frameworks, such as the *Khartoum Process*. A specific objective of the European Agenda, addressed by the JI-HoA, is the improvement of the EU's return system through the sustainable approach to assisting return migration.³⁹

Lastly, while the project countries did not have comprehensive return and reintegration policies in place for the JI-HoA to strengthen/align with, national governments had developed broader strategies such as development plans, poverty reduction strategies and similar documents, to which objectives the JI-HoA would also ultimately contribute.

4.2.2. Alignment with other initiatives

The analysis of interviews with IOM staff, stakeholders and desk research revealed that **IOM put sufficient efforts in mapping activities of different actors in each country to avoid duplication**. Therefore, generally there were no duplication across different projects, rather examples of complementary support initiatives.

³⁶ IOM. (2017). *Constitution and Basic Texts*. Geneva: IOM, link: <https://www.iom.int/iom-constitution>, IOM. *Migration Governance Framework Brochure*, link https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/about-iom/migof_brochure_a4_en.pdf

³⁷ Itad. (2021). *Methodological Report. Impact Evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Rewintegration in the Horn of Africa region*, link https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/IOM-METHODOLOGICAL-REPORT-26-05-2021_Itad.pdf

³⁸ Valletta Summit on Migration. (2015). *Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP)*.

³⁹ European Commission. (2015). *Communication From the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. "A European Agenda on Migration"*.

The JI-HoA programme is well aligned with the objectives of the key regional actors, such as IGAD and African Union and their frameworks and activities.

The **IGAD** adopted a *Regional Migration Policy Framework* that aimed to comprehensively address the variety of issues related to unsupported migration in the IGAD region. The main goal of this framework was to provide advice and further strategies to support comprehensive migration management, to harmonise policies between countries, and to recommend and support formulating good policies in migration. The JI-HoA was aligned with the work of IGAD mainly in two pillars: gathering and disseminating quality data on migration and capacity building of the national governments⁴⁰.

Another important framework is the *Intergovernmental Authority on Development Regional Consultative Process on Migration* (IGAD-RCP). In this joint work, the organizations involved worked on policy harmonization, policy development and capacity building⁴¹. Also, under the JI-HoA, IGAD started discussions about new initiatives on developing a child policy and regional AVR framework⁴².

The JI-HoA was created on the basis of the commitments made by European and African leaders and is built on a partnership between the EU, the **African Union** (AU) and the UN⁴³. The JI-HoA mostly corresponds to two main pillars of the *Migration policy framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018-2030)* developed by the AUC, namely, 1) migration governance; and 2) irregular migration (including returns).

Overall, coordination between IOM and other UN agencies and NGOs led to a lack of duplications and created opportunities for complementarity. Interviewees mostly agree that **duplication is hardly possible** due to the scope of support needed for the return migration and the fact that the JI-HoA programme has a unique integrated approach to the return and reintegration processes.

An IOM regional representative shared the procedure how they were structuring the process of avoiding potential duplication across different initiatives in each country:

We would map out the developmental activities carried out in a given country by NGO's, other UN agencies, etc., and try to create the link between our returnees and activities of other actors so that they could be inserted within ongoing activities. We were not just replicating, but also trying to avoid duplicating what was already was already going on.

Source: Interview with the IOM staff

In short, the JI-HoA was able to build partnerships and complementarity with other development and aid organisations in the region, while avoiding duplication. This has also affected, to some extent, the cost-effectiveness of the JI-HoA, which is presented in the efficiency chapter.

⁴⁰ IGAD. (2012). IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework. Adopted by the 45th Ordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers.

⁴¹ IOM website: <https://www.iom.int/intergovernmental-authority-development-regional-consultative-process-migration-igad-rcp>

⁴² Interview with IOM staff

⁴³ IOM. (2022). Towards Sustainable Reintegration: EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration – Five Years on. Key Achievements. Pg. 2.

4.3. Effectiveness

Overall performance score for effectiveness: 3.8/5

Overall score on IOM's achievements: 3.4/5

Robustness score for the evidence: 4/5

The effectiveness of the JI was measured through one overarching objective and three Specific Objectives (each is discussed in a dedicated section below) with several result areas per Specific Objective. Indicators and targets were developed for the overall objective, outcomes, and result areas. According to the 2019 mid-term evaluation of the programme, the implementation of all pillars of the programme was “on good track” and some initial results were noted (e.g. effectiveness in reaching its target groups, provision of AVRRR assistance).⁴⁴

The current evaluation found that the targets for the overall objective were surpassed and that the achievements towards the three specific outcomes are supporting the achievement of the overall objective. Namely, **the Programme has in general met the targets for the specific objectives and their associated result areas, and at times even surpassing the targets**⁴⁵.

4.3.1. Specific Objective 1: Partner countries and relevant stakeholders developed or strengthened evidence-based return and reintegration procedures

The first Specific Objective considers that the development of data and data collection methodologies, combined with trainings and dialogue, will contribute to increased data availability and strengthened capacity of stakeholders, which subsequently results in the development of evidence-based return and reintegration procedures.

4.3.1.1 Achievement of outputs and results

Data availability

The current evaluation concludes that **the Horn of Africa faced significant gaps in data on human migration, towards which the JI made substantial progress**. The IOM logframe shows that **the JI exceeded the targets set for the “number of field studies, surveys and other research conducted under the programme” (20 instead of 19)**.⁴⁶ The increased availability of migration data (result 1.1.) was achieved mainly through the production and the publication of migration data and research outputs by the Regional Data Hub and the RDH's engagement with National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and key

⁴⁴ Mid Term Review of EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa

⁴⁵ Except the indicator on satisfaction with reintegration assistance.

⁴⁶ JI HoA Programme Monitoring Data

regional migration data stakeholders including the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD).⁴⁷

Despite these achievements, stakeholders in Djibouti noted that additional steps still need to be taken to improve data gathering capacities.⁴⁸ Similarly, a Sudanese stakeholder noted that *“all data needed for policymaking is now available to them, although capacity to use this data could still be strengthened further”*.⁴⁹

Capacity of stakeholders

The IOM logframe shows that the programme **exceeded the targeted number of stakeholders “strengthened through capacity building or operational support on reintegration”** (665 instead of 434).⁵⁰ The IOM logframe and surveys show that in each country, **the majority of surveyed stakeholders declared increased knowledge on return and reintegration issues (97% average across the four countries)**.⁵¹ The JI also met its target set for the “number of national/regional/local networks and dialogues on migration related issues newly established or functionally enhanced” (namely 29).

While an increase in capacity is identified by stakeholders themselves, this does not necessarily reflect their actual capacity. For example, the 2021 stakeholder survey noted that 22% of stakeholders perceive that they now have larger financial allocations of their institutional budget for migration issues than that of their budget prior to their engagement in the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.⁵² This also demonstrates that in 78% of the cases, no additional budget or resources has been allocated (likely to a large extent due to COVID, conflict, etc.). This is a key finding, as capacity alone is not sufficient for governments and stakeholders to continue working on, and improving, return and reintegration policies and processes.

4.3.1.2 Achievement of Specific Objective 1

This evaluation has found various examples of the increased use of data in policymaking, strategies, processes and plans for return and reintegration. However, various challenges were found that hinder stakeholders from optimally benefitting from increased data and capacity.

According to IOM’s survey of stakeholders, **136 stakeholders reported that data produced has supported evidence-based policies, procedures, and programme design, which exceeds the original target of 42**.⁵³ There are some examples where the migration data is already used by legal entities (e.g., Women and Social Affairs Ministry in Ethiopia has initiated a mandate to work with the national returnee database⁵⁴), however in most cases local governments are not ready yet to overtake the task of

⁴⁷ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union, pg. 7.

⁴⁸ Interview with a stakeholder from Djibouti

⁴⁹ Interview with a stakeholder from Sudan

⁵⁰ JI HoA Logical Framework

⁵¹ JI HoA Logical Framework

⁵² JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union, pg. 7.

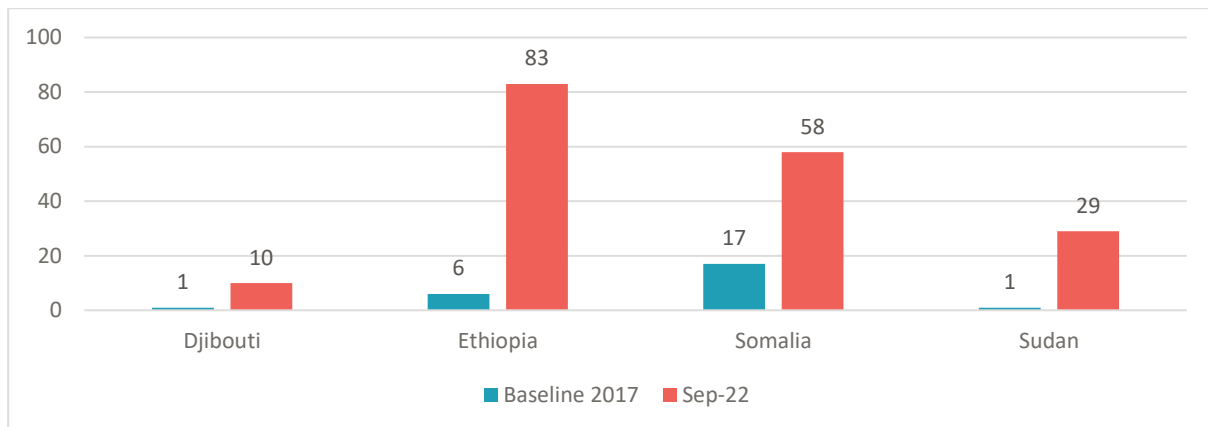
⁵³ IOM Stakeholder Survey (n=266)

⁵⁴ Interview with IOM staff from Ethiopia

national migration data management, but the initiative to be involved in its coordination processes is visible⁵⁵.

The number of stakeholders (state and non-state) involved in return and reintegration assistance has also increased from 25 (baseline in 2017) to 180 by the end of the project in 2022.⁵⁶

FIGURE 4. NUMBER OF ACTORS INVOLVED IN RETURN AND REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE



Source: Interim Report 2 and project monitoring data

However, progress towards the outcome was met by **various challenges that prevented the JI from ensuring that new data and capacity could be used for policymaking**. For example, the contextual factors presented in section 2.2 caused turnover of government staff, which undoes the positive results of trainings. This is elaborated in the chapter on sustainability. Some stakeholders from Sudan and Somalia noted that shortage of finance and (qualified) staff prevent the government from actively using increased capacities for policymaking.⁵⁷ COVID-19 was also mentioned as factor preventing the organization of workshops to design or validate mechanisms.⁵⁸

4.3.2. Specific Objective 2: Safe, humane, dignified voluntary return processes are enhanced along main migration routes

The second Specific Objective focused on enhancing awareness and availability of support to stranded migrants, which should enhance access of migrants to safe, humane, and dignified AVR processes. This includes a variety of outreach approaches, as well as provision of individual support based on identified vulnerabilities.

⁵⁵ Multiple interviews with IOM staff from Ethiopia, interview with a stakeholder from Djibouti

⁵⁶ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #2 and #4 to the European Union

⁵⁷ Interviews with stakeholders from Sudan and Somalia

⁵⁸ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

4.3.2.1 Achievement of outputs and results

Outreach and awareness

According to IOM's logframe, **IOM conducted five times more awareness raising activities/events addressing migrants in target countries than expected.**

A stakeholder in Djibouti noted that the JI was effective in providing migration related information in Obock and outside. *"They are consistently briefing the migrants about the possible dangers of migration"*.⁵⁹ IOM Ethiopia organised awareness raising on sexual and gender-based violence to migrant returnees and host community members as part of the programme's gender mainstreaming effort within the reintegration process.⁶⁰

The current evaluation did not find guidelines for awareness raising and outreach that would ensure a harmonized approach across countries. Additionally, no information was found in project documents and logframes on the exact objectives of awareness raising (i.e. this dimension did not have its own objectives, indicators and impact studies). It was not subject to specific evaluation under the JI-HoA.

Assistance to stranded migrants

Three indicators were designed to measure achievements regarding AVR. **The JI supported 9025 migrants to return voluntarily to their countries of origin (against a target of 8450), and provided 8960 migrants in transit with protection and direct assistance (against a target of 8450).**

Additionally, between 2017-2022, **the JI built, enhanced, rehabilitated or rented a total of 15 MRCs, thereby exceeding its target of 12.** Besides the number of migrants supported, the AVR monitoring survey found that **95% of assisted migrants were satisfied with travel arrangements made for them** (exceeding the target of 70%) and 99.6% of surveyed returnees felt that travel was well-organised and safe.⁶¹

The 2019 mid-term evaluation noted that **stakeholders in both Somalia and Sudan were concerned about the long waiting times for AVR (often due to external factors)**, which in some cases have led to migrants choosing alternative ways to return. During the current evaluation, a Somali stakeholder pointed out that voluntary return procedures still tend to take too long, creating difficulties for returnees.⁶² However, there are some factors (e.g. approval by the Ethiopian government, COVID-19 restrictions, conflicts) that can hinder the swift AVR of migrants beyond the control of IOM or the JI).⁶³ In Djibouti stakeholders noted that return procedures have improved as voluntary return procedures and documentation of migrants was sped up allowing for quicker return processes.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Interview with a stakeholder from Ethiopia

⁶⁰ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

⁶¹ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

⁶² Interview with a stakeholder from Somalia

⁶³ Interview with IOM staff

⁶⁴ Interviews with stakeholders from Djibouti

4.3.2.2 Achievement of the Objective

According to the majority of surveyed stakeholders, **the JI effectively reached out to migrants who would otherwise not be in a position to return home** (87%, exceeding the target of 70%). Similarly, **95% of surveyed migrants reported that they have been provided with sufficient and useful information to take an informed decision to return**, which exceeded the target of 70%.⁶⁵

Desk review of project documents, the interviews with IOM staff, stakeholders, and returnees themselves confirmed that **the JI allowed for safe, humane, and dignified return of migrants while taking into consideration their needs and vulnerabilities**. Returnees involved in the Focus Groups noted specifically that “their return would not have been possible without IOM”.⁶⁶ The development of a Regional MRC strategy with 40 partner organisations has been an important achievement of the JI’s efforts.⁶⁷

Some evidence has been found of the involvement of governments in AVR, in terms of direct assistance to MRCs, cancelling exit fees and penalties in host countries, and direct contributions to return flights.⁶⁸ However, it is important to note that the JI staff (and JI-funded staff) were the main responsible actors to facilitate the return process. Therefore, **whether return processes have actually become safer, more humane and more dignified in general (without the support of IOM) is unclear**. Namely, as presented above and in the sustainability section, key stakeholders still lack important capacity to work on return independently.

4.3.3. Specific Objective 3: Returnees are sustainably integrated in host communities, and host communities are better able to create living standards that address drivers of migration.

The third Specific Objective focuses on the reintegration process. This area includes numerous activities focused on support to returnees, community-based projects, and monitoring. It is expected that these activities contribute to the economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration of returnees while simultaneously enhance livelihoods in the communities. This Outcome also includes the establishment of proper M&E systems to track the needs of returnees, which should lead to reinforced data collection systems. Overall, the results should contribute to sustainable reintegration in communities that are able to create living standards that address drivers of migration.

4.3.3.1 Achievement of outputs and results

Individual and community-based reintegration

By September 2022, **the JI had provided reintegration assistance to a total of 15161 beneficiaries, with an original target of 12800**. The JI aimed for declared satisfaction with reintegration support among 70% of returnees, although it reached an average satisfaction rate of 55% across the three countries of

⁶⁵ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

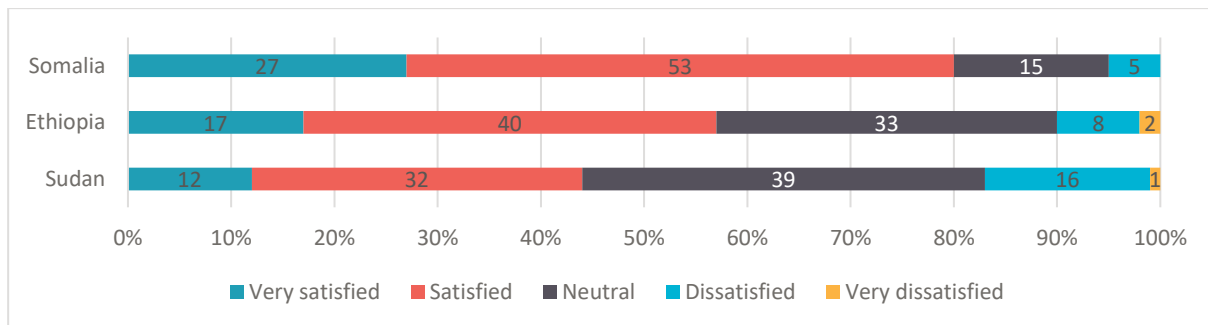
⁶⁶ FGD with returnees from Sudan

⁶⁷ IOM. (2022). Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Programming

⁶⁸ IOM. (2022). Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Future Programming

origin. This target was exceeded in Somalia (80%) while it was not achieved in Sudan (44%) and Ethiopia (57%).

FIGURE 5. LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH REINTEGRATION SUPPORT



Source: Reintegration Assistance (RA) Monitoring Survey (n=2,928; 2,591 male, 337 female)

The majority of returnees were satisfied with the support received. Some returnees indicated that the economic support was crucial for them as they returned “with nothing”. The support helped them to start a business or search for employment and helped them create new social networks.⁶⁹ The majority of FGD participants in Sudan were satisfied with medical, psychosocial support, and social support.⁷⁰

Focus Groups with returnees demonstrate that the main factors causing dissatisfaction related to the insufficiency of economic support.⁷¹ For example, several Somali returnees believed that the economic support was too little. Similarly, a FGD in Sudan concluded that “*the total budget allocated to the income generation projects is not sufficient to start projects/generate income to support a family.*”⁷² The Year 4 Interim Report noted in this regard the adverse impact of devaluation and difference between the official and “black market” exchange rates in Sudan in 2021 which brought down the pre-2021 average.

Additionally, 54 **community-based reintegration** projects were initiated. These projects have supported approximately 76,348 community and returnee beneficiaries.⁷³ Itad’s “*Spot Analytical Report #1 – Community-based Reintegration Projects (CBRPs)*” study found that the majority of the CBR projects were well-designed with plausible outcomes, focusing mainly on capacity building and livelihood support.⁷⁴

M&E systems

Under the JI, a **total of 36 planning, monitoring, learning, data collection and analysis tools were set up, implemented and/or strengthened** across the four countries, exceeding the target of 33. In total 29

⁶⁹ FGDs with returnees from Somalia.

⁷⁰ FGD with returnees from Sudan

⁷¹ FGDs with returnees from Somalia, Sudan and Djibouti

⁷² FGD with returnees from Somalia and Sudan

⁷³ Project monitoring data

⁷⁴ Itad (2023, forthcoming) “Spot Analytical Report #1 – Community-based Reintegration Projects (CBRPs)” Document commissioned by IOM under the Joint Initiative in the Horn of Africa.

institutions were supported to establish or strengthen data collection, monitoring and/or learning tools, compared to the target of 27.

Throughout the JI, the programme has implemented activities to harmonize the approach to monitoring and measuring the impact of return and reintegration assistance, and associated tools for data collection across the three countries of origin. Enumerators in IOM country offices (and universities in Ethiopia) conducted AVR, reintegration assistance, and reintegration sustainability surveys, the results of which were collected regionally in the MiMOSA database for analysis. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative also strengthened data collection, analysis, and dissemination on reintegration through development of database applications, provision of equipment and training to the relevant government institutions.⁷⁵

The unmet targets regarding the support to institutions in Ethiopia are explained by the IOM as owing to the prolonged process required to ensure ownership of the government entities involving in the development of return and reintegration database in Ethiopia, which is envisaged to be used as a national database.⁷⁶ The Partnership Analysis noted that similar initiatives with new software applications in Sudan were delayed due to the political turmoil. Somalia was the only country where a returnee registration and certification system could be deployed, in collaboration with the Somaliland National Displacement and Refugee Agency (NDRA).⁷⁷

4.3.3.2 Achievement of Specific Objective 3

Overall achievement of reintegration

By September 2022, **more than 99% of returnees referred to state and non- state actors were assisted by those actors**, exceeding the target of 70%. **At least 89% of returnees in all countries (with an overall average of 93%) reported sufficient levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability and psychosocial wellbeing** in their community of return (also exceeding the target of 70%).⁷⁸

The extent to which returnees considered themselves effectively reintegrated differs between persons. In a Sudanese FGD with returnees, the majority of participants reported a good level of reintegration in the community.⁷⁹ A FGD with Somalian returnees also found that the majority considered themselves reintegrated.⁸⁰ However, some respondents noted that they do not feel reintegrated, mostly due to their mental health (e.g. *“I feel that I haven’t landed yet. I feel like I am still in Libya”*).⁸¹

While the IMPACT study showed visible changes in the economic situation of beneficiaries, all three countries show a similar trend where the economic reintegration score is lowest, and psychosocial is the highest.⁸² Interviews with stakeholders and Focus Group Discussions with returnees in the programme countries point out that their country’s dire economic situation severely hinders their

⁷⁵ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

⁷⁶ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #3 to the European Union

⁷⁷ IOM RDH. 2022 Partnerships for Migrant Reintegration

⁷⁸ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

⁷⁹ FGD with returnees from Sudan

⁸⁰ FGD with returnees from Somalia

⁸¹ Respondents in nearly all FGDs in the four countries.

⁸² JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #4 to the European Union

economic reintegration. As mentioned above, many returnees were glad to receive economic assistance, but deemed it too little to become economically reintegrated.⁸³

At the same time, **community members** who attended the FGDs noted that CBR projects contributed positively to economic and employment opportunities in the community. **92% of surveyed community members reported that they feel involved in the identification, design and/or implementation of community-based reintegration**, exceeding the 70% target.

Sustainability of reintegration

Besides the extent of economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration of returnees as a result of the JI-HoA intervention, the IMPACT study also measured the **sustainability of reintegration**. The IMPACT study was the first impact evaluation to use IOM's metric of sustainable reintegration, the Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI). The RSI was further adjusted based on literature reviews, which resulted in an enhanced version of the institutional questionnaire, called RSS+.⁸⁴

However, the methodology to assess the sustainability of reintegration is rather new and still subject to testing and improvement. Therefore, adjustments in measuring reintegration sustainability were made during the IMPACT study, considering the score threshold. The outcome of the RSS against the Reintegration Sustainability Score shows that a large difference exists between the use of the 0.5 and the 0.66 threshold. Using the former approach, 92% of the respondents recorded a score higher than the 0.5 threshold. Using the 0.66 threshold, only 53% of the respondents would be considered as having attained "sufficient levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability and psychosocial wellbeing in their community of return".

TABLE 1. AVERAGE REINTEGRATION SUSTAINABILITY SCORE PER PROGRAMME COUNTRY

ETHIOPIA	SOMALIA	SUDAN
0.68	0.67	0.65

4.3.4. Functioning of the Integrated Approach

Based on the combined information gathered from desk research, interviews and Focus Group Discussions, and the assessment of the results achieved, **the evaluation can conclude that the integrated approach itself is of great importance to sustainable reintegration**. However, factors external to the JI hindered the integrated approach from being effectively implemented at all levels.

Stakeholders noted, in particular, the **combination of individual reintegration support and CBR projects**, aimed to create better cohesion in communities and enable communities to support the reintegration process. Interviews and focus groups conducted for this evaluation also noted that

⁸³ Multiple interviews and FGDs across the three countries

⁸⁴ Itad (2023, forthcoming) "Consolidated Final Report". Document commissioned by IOM under the Joint Initiative in the Horn of Africa.

economic, social, and psychosocial reintegration is interlinked and that a gap in one dimension can influence the other.

At **structural level**, the JI-HoA has certainly contributed to the introduction or strengthening of new policies, and enhanced the capacity of government officials, external factors such as conflict, COVID-19, competing government priorities and political instability have prevented this component of the integrated approach from functioning to its full extent. Government turnover as well as government priorities meant that the role of the government in the integrated approach was not optimized to its full extent. Another important factor influencing the structural level is the general availability of services and existing coordination structures.

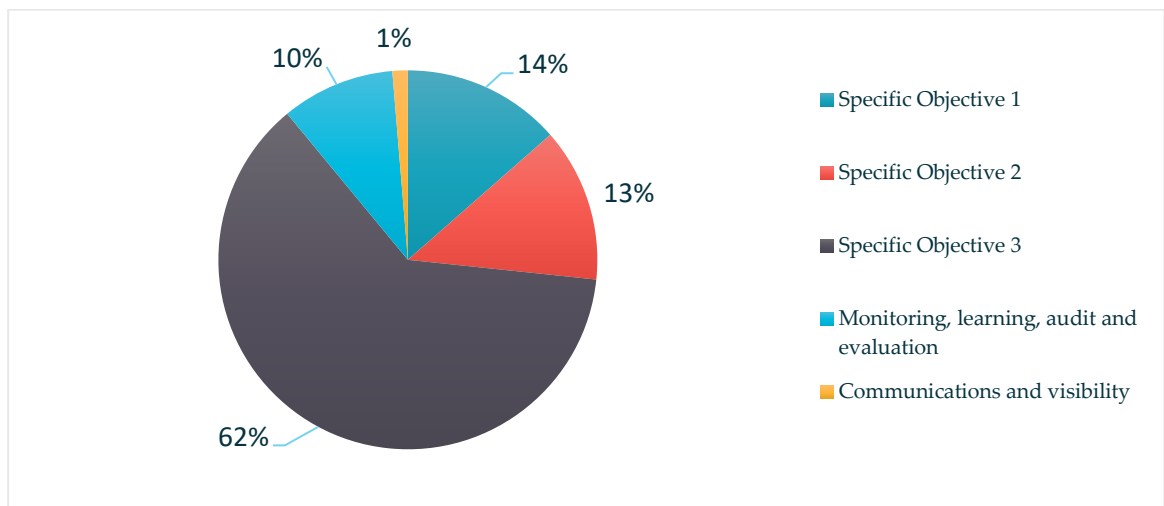
4.4. Efficiency

Overall performance score for efficiency: 4.3/5
Robustness score for the evidence: 3.5/5

4.4.1. Did the programme receive sufficient resources to achieve its objectives?

The **financial resources were sufficient to meet the programme’s objectives in terms of achieving the project outcomes and results**. With the given budget, the JI-HoA could ensure the safe and dignified return of migrants, contribute to reintegration assistance (with minor reservations expressed by some implementing partners), and increase the capacity of key stakeholders. In comparison to other initiatives in the region, the per capita allocated budget of the JI-HoA can be considered high.

FIGURE 6: BUDGET ALLOCATED BY OBJECTIVES OR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY AREAS (IN EUR)



Source: Action Fiche for the implementation of the Horn of Africa Window T05-EUTF-HoA-REG-25

Overall, **the top-up system was necessary to finance services and reach the objectives of the JI**. With the help of top-ups, the JI-HoA succeeded in scaling up the programme and developing psychosocial support, community projects and trainings. Because the project was lacking a proper inception phase

due to the urgency caused by the crisis in Libya,⁸⁵ the top-up system was also necessary to widen the scope of the JI-HoA over time. **On the other hand, the top-up budgeting system created uncertainties regarding the implementation budget, which hindered planning and budgeting.**

Based on the evaluated material, **the human resources were mostly sufficient to meet the programme objectives.** The Mid-term Review of the programme stated that there were staff shortages in the JI, and that staff among MRCs was not always distributed efficiently.⁸⁶ However, the present evaluation found that improvements were made in the following years to ensure more available and more qualified staff to the programme. There were only a few limitations mentioned in interviews.

Although there were delays in some activities, almost all final results were met by the end of the implementation period of the programme. Note that the initial timeline was amended several times in the course of budget expansion. Beyond financial problems, and the lack of the inception planning, security issues were the major – and most important – reason for delays in Horn of Africa. The security risks remained high for the whole region at the time of the JI-HoA programme and showed a deteriorating trend.⁸⁷

4.4.2. Cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the programme

Based on the evaluated materials and the self-assessment of JI-HoA employees, **the programme was cost-effective overall, and it also increased the efficiency of some services despite challenges with resource management.** As there were not enough resources provided to precisely estimate the distribution of the budget and staff, the following conclusions rest on estimations.

Some assistance activities for beneficiaries became more efficient during the programme implementation. According to surveys, the return arrangements were better organized, and it became easier to get in touch with IOM for the application of return procedures. The time taken from return to receiving reintegration assistance also decreased, there were less people who had to wait seven or more months in later years. However, the waiting time for the response on return application fluctuated during the implementation. The delays in services could have been due to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the instable security situation. The war in Tigray region in Northern Ethiopia broke out in 2020, which affected the capacity of the state of Ethiopia to support their citizens to return home.

Based on the evaluated material it can be concluded that **although the JI-HoA was effective in forming partnerships with service providers, additional measures are needed to ensure the stability and financial independence of these actors to increase the efficiency gains created.** To decrease costs, partners were expected to complement JI-HoA services without any support or to take over activities and become self-sustaining. However, lack of resources, unstable states, government turnover and the lack of service providers in certain regions made the full reliance on partnerships impossible.

National referral systems were established in all countries, but they did not become fully effective and sustainable. This was mainly due to the lack of independent capacity in the region. The effective functioning of referral systems would have enabled IOM to hand over more services to state

⁸⁵ Mid-Term Review of EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa

⁸⁶ Mid-Term Review of EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa

⁸⁷ JI HoA Interim Narrative Report #1 and #4 to the European Union

organisations and strengthen national stakeholders' capacity to provide different types of return and reintegration support.

4.5. Sustainability

Overall performance score for sustainability: 2.5/5
Robustness score for the evidence: 4/5

The sustainability of the JI's results is to a large extent dependent on the ability of key stakeholders - mostly governments- to maintain the tools and mechanisms set in place by the JI and continue building on the results. **Government officials and other stakeholders have reported an increase in their capacity, and sometimes even resources, to work on return and reintegration.** This has already resulted in the introduction of new policies and processes. Another important achievement is the improvement of cooperation mechanisms between different stakeholders.

A lack of operational and financial capacity and resources from the government remains some of the main barriers to creating sustainable capacity of governments to work on migrant protection and reintegration⁸⁸. In fact, the vast majority of interview respondents does not believe that stakeholders could continue the provision of support without the involvement and funding provided by IOM.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Interviews with IOM staff from Somalia, Sudan, and Djibouti

⁸⁹ Interviews with IOM staff and stakeholders from all countries

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa was a **unique effort to support return and reintegration in a highly complex political and economic context**. The scope of the support provided (e.g. considering all dimensions of the integrated approach) required extensive investment of resources by IOM and stakeholders, but created valuable, even life-saving benefits for beneficiaries.

Despite the challenges, **the JI-HoA has created important results and impact on the individual level**. Desk research, interviews, and Focus Group Discussions point out that the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has been of crucial importance to address the needs of migrants and returnees facing dire situations (including abuse, violence, and exploitation) in their host countries.

Continuous contact between IOM and returnees ensured that returnees' needs were identified and monitored from the moment of their identification in the host/transit country. Extensive evidence was found of efforts made by MRCs and IOM staff to identify vulnerabilities and provide individualized support in terms of economic support, social support, and psychosocial support.

Similarly, **community-based reintegration** projects were helpful in creating business and employment opportunities (although their impact was still affected by the overall economic decline) and various community members noted this support as important factor reducing their need to migrate for economic reasons. Additionally, CBR projects have also shown clear value for social cohesion and reduction of stigmas towards returnees, which in turn supported their reintegration. Various examples were found regarding the link between social cohesion and economic self-sufficiency of returnees.

Additionally, **the JI-HoA has made important contributions to the availability of data and research on migration trends in the region**. The impact in this regard is twofold. Firstly, stakeholders explicitly appreciated the work of the Regional Data Hub in terms of data production and capacity building. The dissemination and subsequent use of data in decision-making can have a long-term positive impact on return and reintegration, by providing governments and stakeholders with tools and capacity to use these data in their policy- and decision-making.

Secondly, the research done by the JI-HoA itself as part of its monitoring and evaluation has provided important evidence for programming. It allowed the IOM and its partners and stakeholders to learn about the diverse needs of returnees, which needs can be addressed, and what approaches are more or less effective. This knowledge is of great importance to inform migrant protection, return and reintegration programming in the region.

The complexity of the JI-HoA and the integrated approach, and the fragility of existing systems in the Horn of Africa countries, leads to the conclusion that **ownership and sustainability of the programme cannot be expected after five years of implementation**. Important progress has been made, but continued support is needed in terms of capacity-building, but also for wider socio-economic development and security in the four countries in general.

Namely, **the vast majority of challenges and barriers to the achievements of the JI-HoA are linked to the context in which it takes place**, and to external factors. Capacity-building efforts were undermined by political priorities and staff turnover; referral systems and service provision for migrants and returnees were hindered by a lack of a structure national referral mechanism, well-functioning health and social security systems, and economic support lost value in the face of a deteriorating economic situation and inflation. Activities of the JI were furthermore hindered by civil conflict and security issues. Therefore, the situation of returnees cannot be addressed without simultaneously addressing the wider socio-economic context.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of the evaluation, the evaluation team has designed the following recommendations towards migrant protection, return and reintegration programming.

1. **Enhance efforts with national, regional, and local stakeholders to build capacity and ownership (while continuing provision of funding).**

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has put visible effort in building the capacity of national actors to support return and reintegration. However, political priorities did not always ensure ownership and commitment of governments to take the JI results forward. Additionally, turnover of staff has removed trained staff and therefore undone some of the work of the JI in this regard.

Two important steps need to be taken to enhance the capacity and ownership of key stakeholders, which would set the scene for sustainability and impact. Firstly, capacity building should be expanded to a wider scope of persons. This should include the entire relevant organisational departments, ensuring the participation of top and middle management as well as their staff.

Secondly, capacity alone is not sufficient to ensure impact and sustainability of the work on return and reintegration. Therefore, migrant protection, return and reintegration programming should focus also on enhancing ownership and commitment of stakeholders towards these topics. Possible steps include the gradual integration of MRCs with the relevant public sector organizations, or co-ownership/management of the MRCs by local governments (along with IOM) where some of the employees are funded by the local government. In addition, the migrant protection, return and reintegration programming should continue to support the integration of return and reintegration into policy documents and development plans

However, sustainability and independent work by governments and stakeholders is not something that should be expected in the near future. Therefore, financial resources from donors will still need to be allocated to governments and stakeholders to implement their policies and services for returnees.

2. Strengthen community-based reintegration efforts to address drivers of irregular migration and provide economic opportunities that reduce the necessity to migrate.

The current evaluation has demonstrated the great importance of CBR projects as a component of the integrated approach. However, gaps were found in the design, M&E, and relevance of some of the projects. Therefore, migrant protection, return and reintegration programming should be focused on enhancing the quality of the CBR projects in relation to the needs of the community members. Possibly, this may require larger-scale projects by a smaller sample of Implementing Partners, to ensure IOM can keep a better oversight of the project design, needs analysis and implementation.

Additionally, the CBR projects are an important occasion to ensure the involvement of local authorities. In line with Recommendation 1, IOM should continue focusing on enhancing ownership by local authorities through their increased engagement in CBR projects.

3. Increase attention on building partnerships with service providers who can function without (significant) funding channelled by IOM.

The use of service providers not funded under the JI has multiple benefits to strengthen the work done under the JI. Namely, it can contribute to the capacity of service providers to support returnees; it contributes to the development and strengthening of referral systems; it contributes to policies on social security, insurance, and budgeting for service provisions; and finally, it reduces the costs of IOM. Therefore, capacity building of such existing service providers, who can function without significant financial support, can be a crucial element contributing to long-term impact and sustainability.

To continue strengthening partnerships, the IOM should also explore complementarity with other organisations which are focused on strengthening service provision. Namely, there is a need not only to strengthen partnerships and referrals but also to strengthen the quality of service provision in general (e.g. considering the lack of psychiatrists in Djibouti and lack of attention to mental health in most countries). Current efforts to build referral systems are not sustainable unless the service providers are able to function effectively themselves.

4. Explore opportunities for the continued (co-)funding of key, effective, and relevant activities in line with those supported under the JI-HoA. These activities include direct and specialized assistance in transit, including AVR assistance for migrants along all key migration routes from the HOA (including the Eastern, Southern, and Northern Route), an integrated approach to reintegration (individual reintegration support, CBR projects, structural level interventions) as well as support to the Regional Data Hub.

The work of IOM in countries of transit and destination has been noted as most relevant and important, as it directly involves the saving of lives. Therefore, the continuation of AVR support to migrants is directly linked to rescue and protection. A termination of this component, even if partial to specific migration routes, has detrimental consequences for migrants.

The evaluation found that the community-level approach to reintegration has been crucial for the achievements of the JI-HoA, both as standalone activities to enhance livelihoods, but also as integral component of the Integrated Approach. The effectiveness of the CBR projects to support reintegration and address drivers of irregular migration has been underlined and substantiated in this evaluation. Additionally, the evaluation found that the integrated approach itself is of great importance to link all

components of support for reintegration, and would be significantly weakened if certain components were removed.

The work of the Regional Data Hub was highly appreciated by stakeholders and the activities of the hub were effective in enhancing knowledge on migration, harmonizing methodologies and indicators, and building capacities for data collection and management. There is a clear interest of stakeholders to continue working with the RDH on improving research and data in the region.

It is strongly recommended that IOM explores funding sources to ensure the continuation of the aforementioned activities. IOM should explore, for example, opportunities for funding and cooperation under the inter-agency framework established under the Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen.

5. Explore opportunities to extend the scope of support provided to returnees, with a focus on longer-term integration.

While the emergency support on arrival (cash, medical services, MHPSS) was deemed highly relevant, important, and effective, the evaluation has shown that returnees still struggle with sustainable reintegration. This relates in particular to their ability to sustain themselves and their families economically.

In this regard, additional gains could be made by enrolling returnees back into formal education (for those who did not complete it), possibly with some allowance, and by focusing more attention to the development of entrepreneurial skills as foundation for starting sustainable (micro-)businesses. This requires additional research into the factors influencing the success of the businesses initiated by returnees under the JI.

6. Continue supporting and strengthening safe, humane, and orderly migration pathways, by providing direct support to migrants in distress, and engaging and building the capacities of key stakeholders involved in the process.

The most visible and important achievement of the JI-HoA has been the *immediate, life-saving support provided to migrants* who suffered various forms of abuse and trauma, and who did not have any other chance of returning. Currently, this evaluation believes that governments and stakeholders do not have the capacity to continue this work independently, although irregular migration continues to take place.

Human trafficking and abuse take place in all migration directions out of the Horn of Africa (North, East, and South) and therefore requires a continued investment in AVR in Djibouti and other transit countries from where migrants return to the HoA. Any gaps in provision of AVR has direct consequences for stranded migrants.

7. Build on the results of the IMPACT evaluation conducted under the JI-HoA by continuing to test and adjust the tools to measure reintegration sustainability and by conducting additional impact evaluations on key elements of AVRR.

The JI-HoA has commissioned the development of an IMPACT study which measured the sustainability of reintegration according to a predetermined methodology (RSS+). As the report mentions, the measurement of reintegration sustainability through preset indicators is rather new and

discussion on the threshold were ongoing under the JI-HoA. Therefore, to improve migrant protection, return and reintegration programming should continue investing in impact studies to closely monitor the impact of the integrated approach and adjust the RSS+ methodology accordingly.