



EVALUATION BRIEF

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE “EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE FOR MIGRANT PROTECTION AND REINTEGRATION-NORTH AFRICA”

This evaluation brief presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as identified by the evaluator(s) for use by key stakeholders, including internally by IOM staff and externally by project partners. More details can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type: External independent final evaluation.

Evaluators: CD-BE. *Teams leaders:* Antonia Carrión and Paolo Leotti. National experts: Soumia Bouchouk and Mehdi Souiah (Algeria), Ashraf Mohamed Abdelmon'm (Egypt), Enaam Elbasir (Libya) and Marwen Bounab (Tunisia).

Commissioned by: IOM Regional Office in Cairo

Managed by: Caroline Rosin, Caroline Ronsin, M & E Officer for Programmes.

Evaluation purpose: Assessing the performance of the action and identifying lessons learned, best practices and other relevant learning resources.

Evaluation criteria: The evaluation analyzed the project performance against the five OECD/DAC criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The additional criterion of coherence was also included.

Evaluation methodology: The evaluation used a mix of qualitative methods combining a systematic document review, hundred key informants' interviews with project staff, government and civil society stakeholders, as well as 71 questionnaires with migrants candidates to return (30 women and 41 men), and 21 migrants returnees in North Africa (3 women and 18 men) and 8 focus groups.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative enables migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, in full respect of international human rights standards and in particular the principle of non-refoulement. In close cooperation with partnering state and non-state actors, it provides assistance to returning migrants to help them restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities, has the potential to complement local development, and mitigates some of the drivers of irregular migration.

The North Africa component of the initiative is implemented in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Its objective is to contribute to the strengthening of migrant protection and sustainable reintegration systems in North Africa. More in detail it is aimed to:

- To improve protection and enable the voluntary return of stranded migrants and migrants in transit in North Africa.
- To support targeted countries to enhance the sustainability of reintegration through an integrated approach addressing economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions.
- To increase the capacities of North African countries and relevant stakeholders to develop or strengthen return and reintegration policies and processes, including identification and referral.

IOM missions in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia provided protection and direct assistance to 16,510 individuals (including 546 girls, 859 boys, 5356 women and 9706 men). Regarding Assisted Voluntary Return, IOM supported 8,328 returns from Algeria (1,997); Egypt (1,004); Morocco (4,518) and Tunisia (809). In terms of sex breakdown, 64 per cent of beneficiaries were men (5,460), and 36 per cent were women (2,868). From Libya, 31,252 individuals were supported to return to their countries of origin (24,111 men and 7,141

Project information

Geographical coverage: Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco

Project type: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) and Voluntary Humanitarian Return. (VHR)

Project code: T085-EUTF-NOA-LY-03-01/T05.141

Gender marker: N/A

Project period: August 2018—31 December 2022

Donor: European Union—DG NEAR

Budget: € 58,000,000

women). Sixteen percent (4,959 migrants) were migrants detained in migration-related detention centers. The remaining 26,293 migrants (84%) were stranded migrants who received VHR assistance in urban settings throughout Libya.

Regarding return, 585 North African migrants who returned to their home countries received reintegration assistance in Algeria (20), Egypt (243), Tunisia (30) and Morocco (270). Of the total, 90 per cent were men, 5 percent women and 5 per cent children.

IOM also provided essential technical expertise to governments of North African countries and relevant partners through meetings, workshops and trainings. The Regional Coordination Unit and missions in North Africa have continuously strived to identify gaps and engage governments and partners in return and reintegration policies, notwithstanding national priorities, legislation, and challenges that were sometimes unplanned, such as the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project was funded by the European Union (EU) and was implemented from August 2018 until December 2022, inclusive of a 6-months no-cost extension period.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance and coherence: The evaluation could agree on the high relevance of the program, due to the demand for voluntary return among migrants, the difficult living conditions in North African countries and the poor integration programs available in the target countries. Furthermore, returnees also require support for reintegration after the migratory experience, which is often traumatic. Despite the relevance of the program, the evaluation detected some weaknesses, mainly concerning the insufficient availability of resources to ensure better protection of migrants when awaiting return and the absence of adapted and comprehensive SOPs specific to each country to address individual migrants' needs, including those with specific vulnerabilities, at the time that national protection systems are reinforced and national institutional and non-institutional stakeholder capacities are improved. Generally speaking, involvement and buy-in of the programme by institutional actors were low for migrants' return and medium for returnees' reintegration, with differences observed among countries. The program is also relevant to the extent that it is coherent and aligned with the Global Compact for Migration and EU return and reintegration policy. However, the coherence with the legislation of North African countries is more complex to assess because if on the one side, they have a positive position towards AVRR, and are increasingly open to reintegrating returnees, on the other, the position toward migration is essentially based on a securitization approach.

Effectiveness: The intervention has proved to be effective regarding those actions directly related to migrants, like the number of returns, their satisfaction with the assistance received and the outcomes of their reintegration. On the contrary, the performance was improvable when the target was stakeholders, especially national authorities; in this case, the capacity building produced limited ownership of the intervention with few signs of collaboration in the implementation. IOM showed strong technical capacities to operate voluntary and humanitarian return, resulting in high levels of satisfaction among beneficiaries, since it offers return who would not have been able to return without IOM's support. However, the lack of information regarding their reintegration support and the overall return leaves migrants in an uncertain and stressful situation. In addition to this, IOM did not show a high enough intervention quality regarding reintegration in North Africa, with a low capacity to ensure integrated support and continuous follow-up.

Efficiency: The programme was efficient as it surpassed the expected indicators for both return and reintegration using the allocated resources. It must be recognized that the JI-NA was implemented in a challenging context characterized by a large caseload in all country offices, understaffing (especially in reintegration), sometimes personnel turnover and training needs, which resulted in the execution of SOPs, but that were not always migrant-centered and tailored to individual needs.

Impact and sustainability : The programme had little impact in terms of reinforcement of protection systems. Along the same lines, the evaluation could not identify policy changes regarding return and reintegration in North Africa. Contextual challenges limited the capacity of IOM to collaborate with national institutions which prioritize a security approach to migratory management over the protection of migrants in vulnerable situations. Additionally, North African countries over-controlled the actions of civil society organizations

working with migrants which also limited the possibility of collaboration with IOM and the promotion of referral systems. The absence of a policy framework in countries in North Africa for the reintegration of their nationals also limited the creation of synergies between the IOM programme and other programmes (except for Tunisia). Although there were narrow opportunities for collaboration with external stakeholders, IOM could not take advantage of them in all countries, because of the prioritization of a direct and independent modality of intervention that ensured quantitative achievements and effectiveness, but compromised the potential impact of the intervention. Notwithstanding all these elements, a greater understanding of the importance of the program on migratory trends management is identified in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia which also represent an element for sustainability.

CONCLUSION

The JI-NA was designed based on IOM's vast experience and high operational capacities in North Africa, specifically in the areas of return and sustainable reintegration. The program aimed to effectively protect stranded migrants and migrants in vulnerable situations while envisaging lasting changes in terms of protection systems reinforcement and national institutions ownership. Although these objectives could not be achieved, the increasing interest of governments in the programme and the lessons learned from these experiences could result in an improvement in the quality of the interventions and a further impact of IOM's next actions on return and reintegration.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: focus on strengthening national capacities and protection facilities through return and reintegration programmes.

Recommendation 2: promote policy dialogue on the migrants' protection and reintegration.

Recommendation 3: more strategic coordination between IOM and the EU at both the country level and headquarters level.

Recommendation 4: Enhance flexible operational models to ensure a more migrant-centered approach.

Recommendation 5: prioritize migrants' participation and accountability to ensure their empowerment.

Recommendation 6: ensure the integration of a gender-sensitive approach in the programme.

Recommendation 7: ensure more efficient M&E systems.

Recommendation 8: preparation for possible technical and financial contextual sudden changes.

Recommendation 9: promote programme learning and innovation through the operationalization of more cross-regional coordination and enhancement of the return-reintegration approach.

Recommendation 10: enhance IOM teams' capacities, including additional staff.