

Office of Programme Evaluation

**EVALUATION OF PHASE III OF THE PROGRAMME
FOR THE RETURN OF QUALIFIED AFRICAN
NATIONALS**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN) programme is intended to facilitate the return to Africa of nationals of that Continent. Candidates for the programme have the knowledge and skills required to make a contribution to the development of the country to which they wish to return but lack the means to effect that return.

The programme is a complex one, carried out in Recruitment Missions in Europe and North America, and in several Placement Missions in Africa. The Central Management of RQAN is located in Nairobi, and the programme is managed from there, although in a relatively decentralized manner.

There have been numerous difficulties encountered in the programme, many of which were beyond the control of its management, particularly the changes in the political situations in some of the countries originally targeted by the programme. Other management difficulties were the result of the complicated nature of the programme and its broad geographical coverage. Some problems — such as difficulties with the database — were related to certain management decisions and can serve IOM as valuable lessons for the future.

The programme is in line to meet its reduced overall targets (originally 999, reduced to 631), but has taken significantly longer to do so than foreseen in the project document – five years in actuality vs. four years planned. The effectiveness of the programme in meeting targets varies greatly from country to country, and is related both to the overall situation in the country of return and to the efforts of the programme staff.

Sustainability of the programme will be generally related to the benefits derived from the contributions at the workplace and beyond of the individuals who have been returned under it. The impact at the workplace is being reported on separately in a survey carried out by Central Management. The 'ownership' of the programme by governments is almost non-existent, although the benefits are understood and welcomed. There is almost no evidence that the activities of the programme itself will be continued by the governments of the countries concerned, in spite of efforts to provide exposure and training. This is in large part due to the very limited input that countries of return have in the programme.

As there are beneficial impacts from the programme, which are confirmed by the survey, IOM should continue assisting in the return of qualified nationals. In doing so, it will first of all be necessary to get greater ownership of the process by concerned governments, among other things by greater involvement in programme execution and by contributing concretely to it. Careful analysis of the benefits of central management vs. a more decentralized approach will be needed.

When reading this evaluation report it should be borne in mind that it is a reflection of the programme status in the Summer and Fall of 1998, when the bulk of the information was gathered. The impact survey, which is contained in a separate report, was carried out in the Fall of 1999. This evaluation report and the impact survey are being issued simultaneously, and should be read jointly, to gain a more comprehensive understanding and assessment of the programme impact.