



EVALUATION BRIEF

August 2020

THEMATIC EVALUATION OF REINTEGRATION ACTIVITIES IN SAHEL AND LAKE CHAD UNDER THE PROJECT “EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE FOR MIGRANT PROTECTION AND REINTEGRATION ”

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: Regional Thematic Programme Evaluation

Evaluator(s): Sarah Drury, Lamine Kane, Jack Chitham (regional); Abdel El Moulat, Roselinde Den Boer, Caroline Ronsin, Theo Nshimiyimana, Andreas de Boer, Jules Le Goff, Marco Valenza, Alex Odum, Cedric Dekeyser (country-level).

Field visit dates: January-February 2020

Final report date: August 2020

Commissioned by: IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa (RO Dakar)

Managed by: Sarah Drury and Lamine Kane, RO Dakar

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

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability .

Evaluation methodology: Mixed-methods approach, drawing on more than 10,000 beneficiary surveys and 360 qualitative interviews.

PROJECT SUMMARY

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 13 countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad region.

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 implemented in the framework of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative builds upon IOM’s holistic and needs-based approach, taking into consideration the various factors affecting an individual’s reintegration, including economic, social and psychosocial factors across individual, community and structural levels.

The most common forms of economic reintegration assistance used in the region 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. Psycho-social assistance includes both one-on-one and group counselling in addition to recreational activities designed to improve returnees’ wellbeing. 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.

Project information:

Geographical coverage: The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana.

Project type: Reintegration

Project code: RT.1500 + JI national projects

Project period: 2016-2021

Donor: European Union

KEY FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

This reintegration evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative assesses 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 combination of economic and psychosocial assistance produced strong results, however limited budgets and timelines for medical, shelter and education assistance were often insufficient in the face of large-scale needs.

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 micro-business 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 government and civil society partners 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.

KEY 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) To donor: Mobilize additional funding for social reintegration and allow provision of assistance addressing longer-term/more serious vulnerabilities.
- 8) 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.