

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

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A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

A FRAMEWORK FOR ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

Introduction

1. This paper has been written in response to the Member States' request for an update on some of the most recent initiatives undertaken by IOM in the field of assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR). It outlines in particular:

- (a) recent IOM efforts to develop a conceptual and operational framework to address migrant return and sustainable reintegration in a humane and comprehensive manner;
- (b) IOM progress towards evidence-based programming in the field of return and reintegration.

2. A growing number of migrants travel in increasingly complex and mixed movements, remaining stranded or finding themselves in an irregular situation for prolonged periods of time. The return and reintegration of migrants unwilling or unable to remain in host or transit countries have gained renewed political importance among national and international policymakers around the world. This is reflected inter alia in Objective 21 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which calls on governments to cooperate "in facilitating safe and dignified return (...), as well as sustainable reintegration", including by promoting voluntary return programmes.

3. Since 1979, IOM has implemented AVRR programmes worldwide, providing humane and dignified support for the return and reintegration of over 1.6 million people. Throughout the years, AVRR concepts and practices have undergone major changes, mainly owing to the evolving environment in which AVRR programmes are implemented. To begin with, assisted voluntary return and reintegration has gradually expanded beyond Europe (where assisted voluntary return has long been in place) and is now embedded in national policies and return migration practices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Western Balkans.¹ Furthermore, the number of stakeholders involved in the organization of voluntary returns has grown, as has interest among development players in supporting sustainable reintegration. Lastly, dangerous migration routes continue to place migrants in situations of vulnerability, requiring the adoption of specific protection standards in the context of return and reintegration.

Background

4. Reflecting these developments, and based on its long-standing experience, IOM has produced an AVRR framework that has three objectives: to reaffirm the key tenets of assisted voluntary return and reintegration in an "increasingly interconnected and interdependent world";² to guide decision makers and practitioners in the design and implementation of AVRR-related policies and programmes; and to propose a road map to address voluntary return and reintegration holistically, based on coordinated policies and practices between stakeholders responsible for migration management and development at the international, national and local levels.

5. The principles and objectives outlined in the framework underpin IOM's commitment to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and to contribute to migrants' socioeconomic well-being, in line with IOM's Migration Governance Framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular targets 10.7 and 17.2) and the Global Compact.

¹ Between 2014 and 2017, the share of voluntary returns operated by IOM from non-European Economic Area countries rose from 15 to 30 per cent of all such activities.

² For further information, please refer to IOM, *World Migration Report 2018* (Geneva, 2018), p. 27.

6. Drawing on the principles of the AVRR framework, and as outlined in its integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return, IOM aims to foster reintegration sustainability across the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions.³ In order to monitor and evaluate returnees' progress in and across these three dimensions, it has developed a set of indicators and a scoring system to measure sustainability.⁴

The framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration

7. The AVRR framework articulates IOM's vision: "Migrants in need are assisted to return voluntarily, safely and in dignity and are supported in achieving sustainable reintegration, in full respect for human rights and regardless of their status."⁵ To achieve this goal, AVRR programmes are anchored in international law and rest on two pillars: protection of the rights of migrants during the return and reintegration process (as outlined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the nine core international human rights treaties⁶), and the principle that States have the sovereign right to determine who may enter and remain on their territory, without prejudice to relevant international law provisions, including by upholding the prohibition of collective expulsion and of returning migrants when there is a real and foreseeable risk of death, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or other irreparable harm.

AVRR principles

8. The framework sets out seven key principles that in IOM's view should be adhered to in order to support dignified voluntary return and sustainable reintegration.

- (a) **Voluntariness.** In the context of assisted voluntary return and reintegration, voluntariness is assumed to exist if two conditions apply: (a) freedom of choice, which is defined by the absence of physical or psychological pressure to enrol in an AVRR programme; and (b) an informed decision, which requires the availability of timely, unbiased and reliable information upon which to base the decision.
- (b) **Migrant-centred response.** Assisted voluntary return and reintegration puts the rights and needs of the migrant at the forefront. Individual assessments should be undertaken to provide tailored support to each migrant throughout the return and reintegration process in a gender- and age-sensitive manner. This is particularly important for migrants in vulnerable situations, who may require a thorough assessment of their situation and targeted assistance that meets their specific needs.
- (c) **Safety.** AVRR programmes need to take into account safety considerations, such as the general level of security, and operational challenges that may affect the provision of return and reintegration assistance. Returns to certain regions or countries may need to be limited or suspended if one or a combination of these factors amounts to a situation which poses a threat to the safety of returning migrants and/or staff involved in the provision of AVRR assistance.
- (d) **Sustainability of reintegration.** The sustainability of migrant reintegration is at the core of the AVRR approach. Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and

³ For further information, please refer to N. Graviano et al., *Towards an integrated approach to reintegration in the context of return* (IOM, Geneva, 2017).

⁴ These tools can also be applied when reintegration takes place in the context of non-voluntary returns, for instance under IOM's post-arrival and reintegration assistance programmes.

⁵ IOM, *A framework for assisted voluntary return and reintegration* (publication forthcoming), p. 3.

⁶ The nine core international human rights treaties are available at:
www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CoreInstruments.aspx.

psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.

- (e) **Confidentiality.** Migrant privacy needs to be respected by putting in place strict safeguards for handling personal data of AVRR beneficiaries, taking all reasonable and necessary precautions to preserve the confidentiality of personal data and the anonymity of individuals. All personal data must be collected, used, transferred and stored securely in accordance with international data protection standards.⁷
- (f) **Dialogue and partnerships.** Institutional dialogue fosters constructive and balanced exchanges between stakeholders involved at different stages of the AVRR process. It promotes a common understanding of challenges related to return and reintegration, while informing and influencing policy development. Cooperation between a variety of actors – governmental and non-governmental – at international, regional, national and subnational levels is required to enhance the range and quality of return assistance available to migrants, avoid duplication of efforts and foster the sustainability of reintegration.
- (g) **Evidence-based programming.** Systematic and continuous data collection, and monitoring and evaluation have to be established throughout the entire AVRR process to understand the impact of AVRR interventions and inform ongoing and future programme design. Feedback mechanisms should also be in place to allow migrants to express their views on the assistance received in an open and confidential manner.

Operational objectives: putting principles into action

9. The AVRR framework also defines six key objectives and related activities that inform the implementation of AVRR programmes and projects. With regard to facilitating voluntary return, the framework highlights the importance of migrants being able to make an informed decision and take ownership of the voluntary return process (Objective 1), and of ensuring they reach their country of origin in a safe and dignified manner (Objective 2). When it comes to sustainable reintegration, the framework underscores the need for an integrated approach, through which returnees are able to overcome individual challenges to reintegration (Objective 3), communities have the capacity to provide an enabling environment for reintegration (Objective 4) and adequate policies and public services are in place to address the specific needs of returnees and communities alike (Objective 5). Lastly, the framework insists on the importance of ensuring that migrant vulnerabilities are addressed throughout the voluntary return and reintegration process (Objective 6).

Towards evidence-based programming: IOM's indicators to measure reintegration sustainability

10. In order to support implementation of the AVRR framework, IOM has recently taken important steps to reinforce evidence-based programming in the field of sustainable reintegration. The biggest obstacle to measuring reintegration sustainability is the long-term and multidimensional nature of the process, which encompasses economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. IOM has developed a new scale of indicators to measure reintegration sustainability at the individual level, drawing on field research conducted in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Senegal and Somalia under the Mediterranean Sustainable Reintegration (MEASURE) Project, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and managed by the Migrant Protection and Assistance Division at IOM Headquarters.

⁷ This includes the principle of lawful and fair collection of data, for a specified and legitimate purpose, the principles of consent, confidentiality, access and transparency, and data security. For the IOM data protection principles, see IOM, *IOM Data Protection Manual* (Geneva, 2010).

11. The research has resulted in the development of 15 field-tested indicators and 30 measurement elements relating to the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration, together with a scoring system for measuring reintegration outcomes that facilitates the measurement of returnees' progress towards sustainability.

12. The economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration contributing to economic self-sufficiency. The related indicators cover income source, the reliability and adequacy of employment or income-generating activity, debt-to-spending ratio, food security and a self-assessment of satisfaction with the economic situation. The social dimension reflects the extent to which returnees have reached social stability within the community. The related indicators include access to basic services and infrastructure in connection with housing, education, justice, health and other public services. The psychosocial dimension encompasses the emotional, mental and psychological elements of reintegration. The related indicators include the sense of belonging, participation in social activities, the ability to rely on a support network, and potential tensions, conflicts and signs of distress.

13. All the above elements are to be captured using a reintegration sustainability survey comprising 32 questions based on these core indicators and developed together with a scoring system. Designed to be easily deployed in IOM's reintegration programming, the scoring system generates a composite reintegration score and three dimensional scores measuring economic, social and psychosocial reintegration, as outlined in the definition of sustainable reintegration.

14. These sets of harmonized indicators and monitoring tools will allow IOM and other practitioners to understand the reintegration process and adjust the provision of reintegration assistance accordingly. They will also be key for programme evaluation, by helping identify and address gaps and thereby strengthen future reintegration programming, based on evidence. Finally, they will serve as a basis for research, enabling comparisons of trends in beneficiary reintegration across dimensions, country contexts and over time.

Conclusions

15. The AVRR framework outlines the value of assisted voluntary return and reintegration as an essential pillar of migration management, and as a preferred option enabling migrants to return in a voluntary, humane and dignified manner. The scope of the framework goes beyond IOM's own engagement and is intended to guide policymakers and practitioners involved in the design and implementation of AVRR programmes.

16. IOM has already taken concrete action to support implementation of the AVRR framework. A knowledge management hub has been set up to support implementation of European Union-IOM External Actions by strengthening information-sharing and harmonization of approaches, processes and tools, and by centralizing and disseminating the knowledge gained from these programmes and beyond. IOM is also developing a reintegration handbook and training tools under a DFID-funded programme, in order to reinforce the capacities of reintegration practitioners. Finally, IOM is embedding the sustainability indicators in all its programming in order to improve reintegration monitoring in the context of return. MiMOSA, IOM's institutional information management system, is already being enhanced to foster systematic and quality data collection on reintegration support and outcomes.

17. As outlined in the framework's priorities for the future, additional efforts need to be made to promote dialogue and joint programming between host and transit countries and countries of origin, enhance the quality and standardize AVRR support, particularly for migrants in vulnerable situations, and strengthen accountability and feedback mechanisms on return and reintegration.

Measuring reintegration sustainability: REINTEGRATION SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY AND SCORING SYSTEM

To what extent have migrants assisted by IOM achieved a level of sustainable reintegration in the communities to which they returned? The reintegration sustainability survey and its related scoring system evaluate sustainable reintegration of returnees across the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. They allow IOM to compare trends in beneficiary reintegration across dimensions, country contexts and over time, and enhance staff understanding of the reintegration process of individuals they work with.

THE REINTEGRATION SUSTAINABILITY SURVEY

The reintegration sustainability survey allows to collect data on beneficiaries that can be coded in the scoring system.

- Designed to evaluate reintegration outcomes at different times
- 15 field-tested indicators and 30 measurement elements adapted from the DFID-funded MEASURE project
- 32 questions separated into three sections encompassing the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Data collected from beneficiaries using the reintegration sustainability survey are coded and fed into the scoring system. The scoring system generates:

- 3 dimensional scores (measuring reintegration in the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions); highlighting discrepancies in specific dimensions of reintegration and where further assistance might be desirable;
- 1 composite reintegration score that provides a numerical measure of overall reintegration across dimensions and is useful as a tool for evaluation, reporting and analysis.

[EXAMPLE] REINTEGRATION SCORE OUTPUT

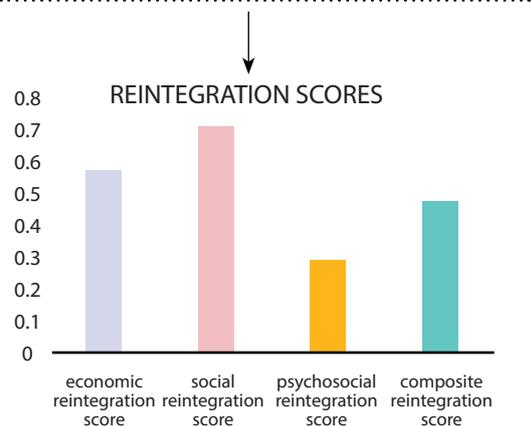
	MEASUREMENT ELEMENTS	CODING RULES	POINTS	DIMENSION SCORE WEIGHT	COMPOSITE SCORE WEIGHT
ECONOMIC	Satisfaction with current economic situation	“very satisfied” = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = “very dissatisfied”	0.75	0.15	0.05
	Ability to borrow money	“yes”=1, “no”= 0		0.08	0.02
SOCIAL	Access to housing in community	“very good” = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = “very poor”		0.1	0.03
	Access to education in community	“very good” = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = “very poor”		0.11	0.03
PSYCHOSOCIAL	Participation in social activities	“very often” = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = “never”		0.12	0.04
	Strength of support network	“a very strong network” = 1, 0.75, 0.5, 0.25, 0 = “no network”		0.05	0.03

Q. “How satisfied are you with your current economic situation?”
A. “Satisfied” = coded as 0.75

Point * dimension weight = weighted point
 $0.75 * 0.15 = 0.1125$

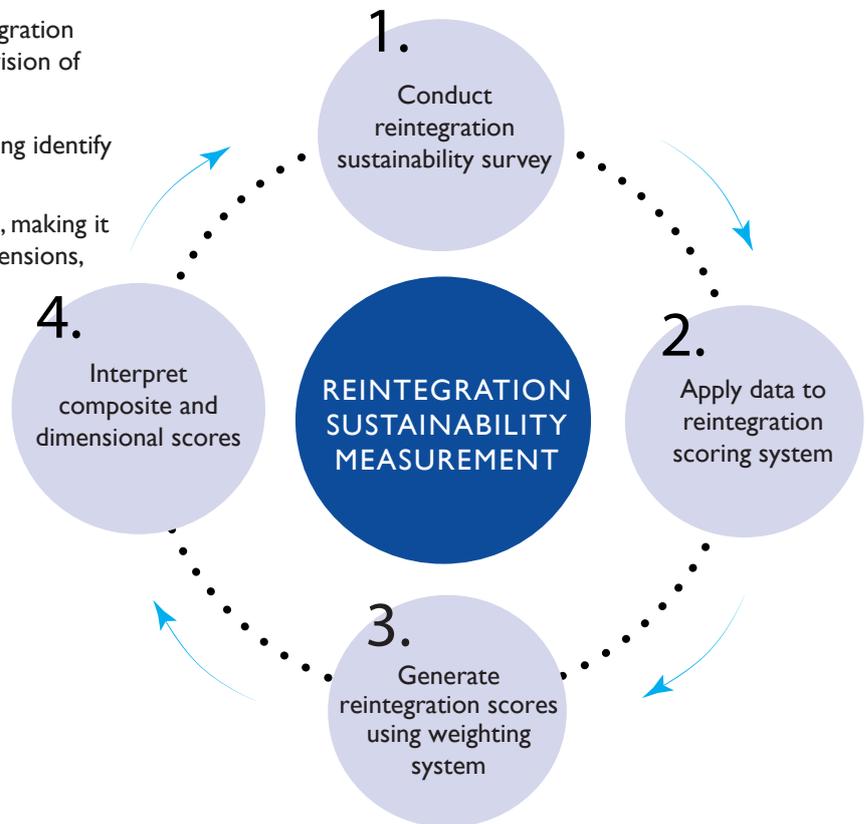
Sum of weighted points in one dimension = dimensional reintegration score
 $0.1125 + _ + _ + _ + \dots = \text{economic reintegration score}$

Sum of all weighted points (using composite weights) = composite reintegration score
 $0.75 * 0.05 = 0.06$



REINTEGRATION SUSTAINABILITY MEASUREMENT PROCESS

- Helps to understand returnees' reintegration process and needs, and adjust the provision of reintegration assistance accordingly
- Key for programme evaluation, by helping identify and address gaps
- Serves as a basis for research purposes, making it possible to compare trends across dimensions, country contexts and over time



BENEFITS OF REINTEGRATION SCORING AT DIFFERENT MOMENTS OF THE PROCESS

The reintegration sustainability survey is primarily designed to evaluate post-reintegration assistance outcomes. However, it is also useful to complete the survey multiple times throughout the reintegration process.

1ST COUNSELLING SESSION /
SOON AFTER RETURN

6 - 9 MONTHS
AFTER ARRIVAL

12 - 18 MONTHS
AFTER ARRIVAL

INITIAL MONITORING

- Useful as a baseline assessment of needs
- Helps to select most appropriate reintegration support measures, based on dimensional reintegration scores

FINAL MONITORING

- Reflects the sustainability of the returnee's situation after the conclusion of reintegration assistance
- Scores data fed into final programme evaluation
- Indicates the effectiveness of different types of reintegration assistance for different categories of migrants, in different contexts

INTERMEDIATE MONITORING

- Indicates whether progress has been made since arrival
- Serves to readjust assistance across dimensions