

## Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Papers Series

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# FOSTERING AND STRENGTHENING INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

Executive Summary



## INTRODUCTION

Produced by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, this Knowledge Paper aims to examine the interlinkages between sustainable development and migrant reintegration to promote engagement and coordination between relevant practitioners, and synergies between programmes. It targets a wide range of development and reintegration actors, including but not limited to practitioners from national and local governments, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Using numerous examples of IOM programmes and featuring other actors' programmes and approaches, it analyses how reintegration and development programmes can be designed and implemented to maximize the positive, mutual impact of sustainable development and reintegration.

The link between migration and sustainable development has been widely acknowledged, including through the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM), and other multilateral development frameworks. However, historically, policies in the field of return and reintegration have tended to be disconnected from development processes and priorities, with reintegration assistance being traditionally conceived as a migration management instrument rather than a tool for development in countries of origin. Recently, though, there has been increasing recognition that sustainable development can positively impact reintegration opportunities and outcomes and that, conversely, reintegration can, in certain conditions, impact sustainable development. The interlinkages between these phenomena appear in several targets of the 2030 Agenda and feature prominently in the GCM.

Sustainable development refers to a variety of objectives including poverty eradication, economic inclusion, sustainable growth, social inclusion, and environmental preservation. Reintegration, on the other hand, is defined as “a process which enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life.”<sup>1</sup> According to the [Integrated Approach to Reintegration](#) conceptualized by IOM, achieving sustainable reintegration requires a holistic and a need-based approach, one that takes into consideration the various factors impacting reintegration, including economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions, across individual, community, and structural levels.

This integrated approach identifies how the general development conditions in communities of return can have an impact on reintegration. Key considerations include the availability of and access to basic services, livelihoods or employment opportunities as well as environmental conditions that directly affect communities' socioeconomic conditions.

While the influence of sustainable development on migrant reintegration is relatively clear, the opposite is less immediately evident. Yet, there is evidence that under certain conditions reintegration can positively impact sustainable development, for instance through contributions returnees bring to their countries of origin, such as new skills, financial and social capital as well as in their role as social change makers. Overall, while the influence of reintegration on sustainable development may not always be readily apparent, programmes and policies can still be designed and implemented in a way which maximizes the positive impact of reintegration on sustainable development.

## CONNECTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND REINTEGRATION IN PRACTICE

Interlinked interventions allow leveraging of development programmes to achieve sustainable reintegration and, conversely, leveraging of reintegration programmes for sustainable development outcomes. They have the potential to address both reintegration and development challenges and needs at the individual, community and structural levels. Acknowledging that these levels are often interconnected, the paper describes the types of interventions reintegration and development programmes can carry out, for each level, to maximize their positive mutual impact.

<sup>1</sup> IOM, [Glossary on Migration](#) (2019), page 176.



## A practical paper illustrated with numerous examples

In addition to numerous short examples of programmes implemented by governments, international organizations and bilateral development cooperation agencies, the following case studies are described in the paper, providing different perspectives on the interlinkages between development and reintegration programmes:

- ◇ The *EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration* implemented in 26 countries in Central, East, North and West Africa, with a focus on synergies fostered in the Gambia, Guinea and Somalia;
- ◇ *Reintegration and development programmes implemented in Afghanistan*<sup>2</sup> by a variety of stakeholders, including the government and IOM;
- ◇ *Sustainable reintegration and community revitalization* interventions piloted by IOM in Georgia;
- ◇ The *Rural Enterprises and Remittances* project implemented by the Government of Nepal;
- ◇ *FAO's approach* to sustainable reintegration in rural areas;
- ◇ The *Returning to New Opportunities* programme implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

## Maximizing the mutual impact of development and reintegration programmes at the structural level

Structural level initiatives promote good governance through engagement with local and national authorities and stakeholders, and support the strengthening of local public service provision. By working at a governance and legislative level to enact policies and plans that ensure returning migrants' needs and opportunities to support sustainable development are recognised and bolstered, an enabling environment can be created to support sustainable reintegration and leverage the development potential of reintegration.

Linking reintegration and sustainable development requires the mobilization and involvement of a large range of actors in order to promote a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, that is necessary to address the complex and interlinked challenges of reintegration and sustainable development. This requires governmental and non-governmental national and local actors, involved at different levels of development and reintegration policy and programming, to participate in the design, implementation and monitoring of programmes for sustainable development and sustainable reintegration.

In addition, inter-institutional coordination and governance mechanisms must be in place (at a national, and where relevant, at a local level) to optimize the contribution of relevant stakeholders and better mainstream reintegration into development planning and

programming, and sustainable development into reintegration planning and programming. These mechanisms contribute to policy and programmatic coherence and to ensure that reintegration support is anchored in local development priorities. Where such mechanisms are in place, development and reintegration programmes should seek to build upon these. Otherwise, programmes can support their establishment. These mechanisms can facilitate referrals among programmes as well as the use of existing structures and services, including those available to the larger population, which should be prioritised when possible and relevant. If these structures and services do not function appropriately, efforts should be made to strengthen their capacity and provide them with the resources necessary to improve service provision.

More generally, reintegration and development programmes can provide stakeholders at the local and national levels with technical, material or financial support, to ensure the delivery of quality services to returnees and non-migrant members of the communities, and the development of appropriate policies and programmes. Indeed, national and local authorities can contribute to maximizing the positive impact of reintegration on sustainable development, and of sustainable development on reintegration,

<sup>2</sup> At the time of this paper's release, and considering the prevailing insecurity across Afghanistan, IOM's AVRR Programme, as well as post arrival reintegration assistance to returnees, have been put on hold temporarily. See IOM Press Release "[Safety of Afghans and Humanitarian Access Must be Top Priorities](#)" (17 August 2021).



by designing and implementing adequate policies, plans and programmes that integrate reintegration concerns into sectoral (e.g. labour, education, health) and inter-sectoral policies and programmes, and likewise integrate sustainable development concerns into reintegration policies and programmes.

### *Maximizing the mutual impact of development and reintegration programmes at the community level*

In most return contexts, communities have a variety of needs that may be related to a lack of economic opportunities, a lack of access to basic services, or environmental threats. Community level initiatives respond to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of communities, including returnees. By addressing these needs, programmes can contribute to sustainable development at the local level, while directly or indirectly supporting returnees' sustainable reintegration.

In the economic dimension, programmes can implement local economic development initiatives benefiting the community at large, and directly or indirectly benefiting returnees. Programmes can support local employment for both returnees and the local population by making sure that employment services are available to both groups, or by supporting existing businesses to create jobs for both returnees and other groups from the local community. Reintegration and development programmes can also support the construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure relevant to economic development and strengthen or develop supply chains and local economic systems, which can contribute to both sustainable development and to the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

The availability of and access to basic services (including health, education and housing) are important factors of sustainable development and significantly contribute to migrants' reintegration. At the community level, programmes can improve service availability and access by building or rehabilitating appropriate infrastructure and by ensuring access for the whole community, including returnees.

Supporting the delivery of services in communities of return can also mitigate tensions and frustrations that could arise if only returnees were targeted, which has the potential to erode social cohesion. Programmes can also support social cohesion more directly by supporting the restoration of trust between returnees and receiving communities, and the improvement of social relations in returnees' communities, for example through activities promoting positive interactions between different groups.

Climate change, environmental degradation and natural hazards pose severe threats to some communities, and can negatively affect returnees' reintegration. Programmes can support communities adapting to the impact of climate change and environmental degradation or mitigate the risks related to disasters, for instance by building small infrastructure to protect from natural hazards, or by introducing sustainable agricultural techniques. Furthermore, threats to communities can be turned into short and long-term income opportunities for returnees and community members, by creating green jobs for example.





Community-based initiatives can have different characteristics depending on the local needs and contexts. This type of intervention can be implemented in a variety of contexts through community stabilization, community revitalization, community-based reintegration or area-based development projects targeting high migration and return areas. While these approaches can differ in terms of primary beneficiaries, all seek to address community needs and pursue recovery or sustainable development objectives, while directly or indirectly supporting returnees' reintegration. Many also utilise participatory methods in which community members, including returnees, are consulted and participate in the identification of needs, and in the design and implementation of interventions.

### *Maximizing the mutual impact of development and reintegration programmes at the individual level*

With most reintegration programmes providing individual support to returnees, the creation of synergies with development programmes operating in the same geographic area can allow for a combination of support to increase the range of options or the amount of support available to returnees in a variety of economic and non-economic sectors. In such a scenario, each programme addresses particular needs of returnees, based on its specific parameters. Development programmes can also provide an opportunity to strengthen the outcomes and sustainability of the initial support provided by reintegration programmes. Indeed, a common challenge of many reintegration programmes is the lack of sufficient resources to allow businesses to grow and create jobs. Development programmes may provide additional support to boost the sustainability of such businesses and help them grow.

In view of the different time constraints of reintegration and development programmes, creating synergies can allow continuity of service provision to returnees in the longer term, including after the end of the assistance period under the reintegration programme. Development programmes can also play an important role in supporting returnees not included in reintegration programmes, that often limit support to certain categories of returnees, or provide support where no specific reintegration programme is in place.

Furthermore, programmes can support returning migrants contributing to the sustainable development of their area of origin. For instance, they can enable them to create jobs for the local population or to establish new services useful to the community, or provide training (including in the host country, before returns take place) in line with local development needs and opportunities. Programmes can also encourage and facilitate the use of returnees' skills or social and financial capital for the sustainable development of their community and country of origin. For instance, programmes can provide financial incentives for the establishment of businesses meeting certain criteria (e.g. grant matching programmes) or support the matching of their skills with local needs and opportunities, including through assignments in key development-related sectors such as health and education.

## DESIGNING PROGRAMMES AND ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS TO PURSUE SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Reintegration and development programmes can be designed and implemented in a way which maximizes the positive interlinkages between reintegration and sustainable development. In particular, reintegration programmes can apply a development-oriented approach, and development programmes can include returnees among their target groups, or seek to establish conditions conducive to sustainable reintegration in migrants' countries and communities of origin.

Development-oriented reintegration programmes are programmes primarily aiming to support returnees' sustainable reintegration, and adopting a development-focused approach (i.e. aiming to also contribute to sustainable development through reintegration interventions). Reintegration programmes can achieve sustainable development outcomes by leveraging the positive



contributions returnees may bring to their communities, by designing and implementing interventions that are inclusive of the returnees' communities of return, or by aligning their interventions with local development plans. However, for reintegration programmes to address the needs of returnees, and contribute to sustainable development, they must be resourced adequately.

Development programmes have increasingly targeted high out-migration and high return areas with programmes aiming to offer economic opportunities to the local population and improve their living conditions, in order to provide an alternative to migration and to facilitate returning migrants' reintegration. However, even when they do not specifically focus on high return areas, development programmes can benefit returnees either as a specific target group, or as part of wider target groups in communities. In these situations, there are significant opportunities for synergies and complementarities with reintegration programmes.

Maximizing the positive mutual impact of sustainable development and reintegration often requires partnerships between relevant stakeholders at the local, national and international levels, and synergies between reintegration and development programmes. However, building effective partnerships can be challenging for various reasons, including differences in stakeholders' approaches, priorities and capacities. In order to make synergies as effective as possible, they should to the extent possible be defined at the design stage of programmes. This allows ensuring that the objectives, geographic areas of interventions, activities and target groups of different programmes are aligned and complement each other according to needs and as relevant in the local context. It is critical to define the terms of the synergies, based on the programmes' respective objectives, their comparative advantages, and the gaps each one could fill. The organizations or institutions should then formalize the synergies or partnership, and embed them into wider referral mechanisms.

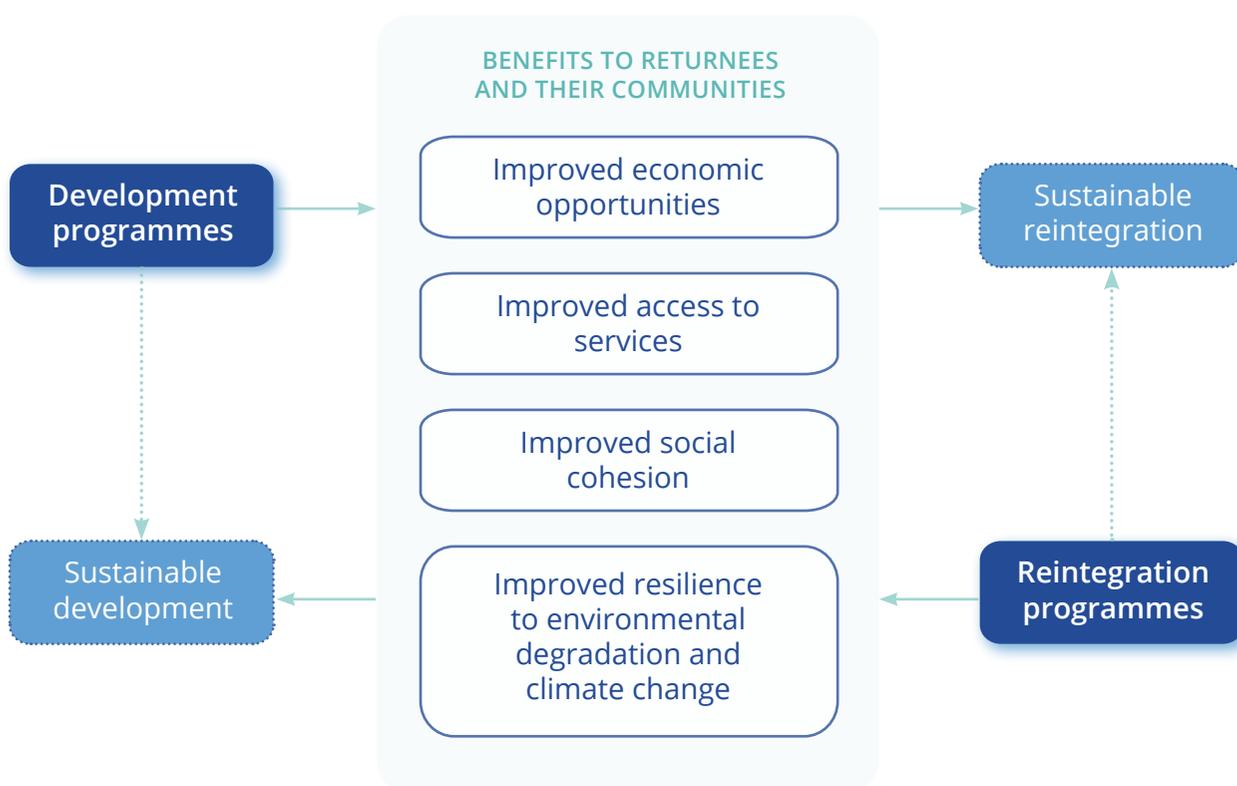


Chart 1. How development programmes impact sustainable reintegration and vice versa



## CONCLUSIONS

The primary objective of reintegration programmes is to enable returnees reintegrating in a sustainable manner, and the primary objective of development programmes is to advance sustainable economic, social and environmental development. Efforts have been made to maximize the sustainable development potential of reintegration and to build upon development interventions to foster sustainable reintegration, as highlighted through the examples and case studies presented in the paper. But much more

can be done to more systematically leverage this link to foster sustainable reintegration and advance sustainable development outcomes, to better anchor reintegration interventions in local development priorities, the GCM and SDGs, and to integrate migration and reintegration-related concerns in development programmes targeting areas of high migration and return. In addition, the environmental aspect of the interlinkages between reintegration and sustainable development should be given a particular attention. Several recommendations are proposed in the paper to support progress in these areas, highlighting the need to:

- ◇ Design and implement reintegration interventions to maximize their sustainable development potential, and development interventions to support sustainable reintegration;
- ◇ Strengthen synergies between development and reintegration programmes and enhance cooperation and coordination;
- ◇ Involve all relevant actors, including returnees and communities of return;
- ◇ Increase ownership and targeted actions of countries of origin, host countries and donors;
- ◇ Produce more knowledge and evidence to better understand the interlinkages between reintegration and sustainable development and enhance related programming.

The full version of the knowledge paper is available [here](#).



### Credits:

Cover. Udayapur, Nepal, is one of the regions in the country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Several families have lost their houses and livelihoods due flooding. They also face difficulties with their plantations because of changes on rain patterns. © IOM 2016/Amanda NERO. .

Page 3. In the context of reintegration activities 355 returning migrants have received vocational training and have been accompanied in the creation of micro-enterprises or in the search for a job or work experience. More than 2,437 stranded migrants have voluntarily returned to Burkina Faso under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for the Protection and Reintegration of Migrants. Launched in December 2016 with funding from the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for the Protection and Reintegration of Migrants is the first global programme to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa. © IOM/Alexander BEE.

Page 5. Through IOM Afghanistan's Reintegration and Development Assistance (RADA) and Connecting Return with Development (CRD) programmes, Afghan returnees are supported to attend a tailoring school in Herat run by a young female entrepreneur. The programme helps these women to reintegrate, enhance their professional skills and eventually gain new livelihood opportunities. © IOM 2021/Angela WELLS.

Page 7. A returnee, in Habru district of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia, assisted with economic reintegration under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative programme. © IOM 2019/ Genaye ESHETU.



## Rationale of the Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Papers Series

This report is part of a series of *Knowledge Papers* focusing on aspects of migrant reintegration that have been largely under-researched, not implemented to their full potential, or that have consistently been identified in reintegration programmes' evaluations as programmes gaps or opportunities. The *Knowledge Papers* series complements other knowledge products developed by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH), such as *Good, promising and innovative practices factsheets*, the *Knowledge Bites* series and the research studies under the KMH's Research Fund. The *Knowledge Papers* aim to take stock of the state of the art in various areas related to reintegration assistance and programmes, and to propose leads for future reintegration programmes implemented by governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations worldwide.

## Knowledge Management Hub

The development and production of this paper is supported by the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH), which was established in September 2017 under the *Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-based Reintegration*, funded by the European Union. The KMH aims to strengthen learning across return and reintegration programmes, and support the harmonization of approaches, processes and tools under the EU-IOM Actions addressing migrant protection and sustainable reintegration in Africa and Asia and beyond.