Double-Edged Sword: How to Engage Returnee Networks in Migrant Reintegration

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Double-Edged Sword

How to Engage Returnee Networks in Migrant Reintegration

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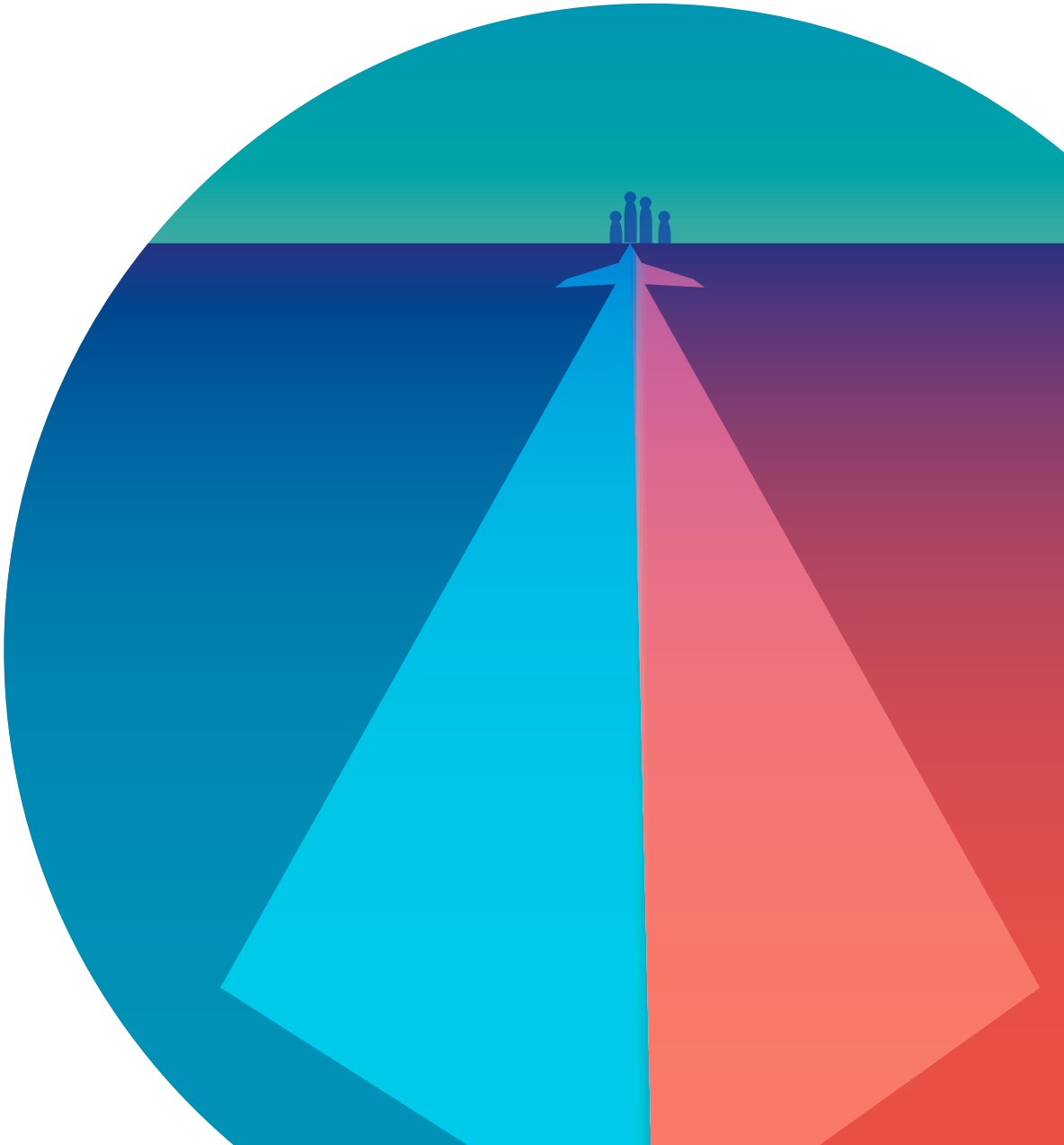

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Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

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Executive Summary

Migrants increasingly have a say in migration policies. Diaspora and migrant associations rightfully step into the spotlight to bring their much-needed perspectives to policy development. But the work of associations of returned migrants has stayed in the shadows despite their having firsthand experiences that can guide the design of reintegration policies.

This study highlights such returnee networks around the world and proposes a typology to differentiate them along four lines, based on their creation (self-organized vs. engineered), structure (peer-to-peer vs. charitable), membership (forced vs. voluntary returns), and functioning (informal vs. formalized).

In some countries, returnee networks are numerous and widely known; in others, they are all but unheard of. One important factor for their creation is to have a large number of migrants return at the same time; another is the existence of role models of successful former returnees' networks. But shared challenges also play a role, such as stigma and trauma, gaps in reintegration support, and the absence of family support systems, which make coming together with peers a more acute need. Support by external actors and an active civil society also help networks flourish.

Returnee networks hold great potential. They can provide practical support to recent returnees in matters such as housing, employment, and dealing with bureaucratic hurdles but also give psychological help and guidance. They can function as trusted intermediaries which inform new arrivals about available help and give valuable feedback to reintegration service providers. Crucially, they can be credible advocates for returnees' interests toward their governments and educate their communities about the risks of irregular migration and the realities of migrants' lives upon return.

But they also come with limitations and risks. Power struggles and elite capture are a risk, especially when networks serve as an income source for their founders. The lack of female representation is as common as it is lamentable. Like many grassroots initiatives, returnee networks often lack professionalization, which can lead to poor quality of work or the duplication of existing services. Even some of their positive functions can have downsides: When networks funnel other returnees toward existing services, this intermediary role risks increasing assistance shopping and chain support. When they engage in awareness-raising campaigns, there is a risk of re-traumatizing those who repeatedly tell their difficult stories. Lastly, networks may delay reintegration by solidifying the returnee status of their members rather than helping them move on.

Returnee networks are thus akin to a double-edged sword. Policymakers and practitioners in development agencies and other government units, international organizations, foundations, and civil society organizations who want to engage with returnee networks should consider the following recommendations to support returnee networks' strengths and navigate their pitfalls:

1 Representation matters: Map and engage with returnee networks but beware self-proclaimed leaders' ability to speak for returnees.

Not all returnees engage in networks, and some voices within networks are given more weight than others. Development actors should identify and map the returnee groups that already exist in their respective locations. They should look at who the leaders and members are and then engage with several of them to assess how representative a group is. As part of the mapping, development actors should develop criteria to measure the accountability and reliability of the networks and weigh the possibilities and limitations of engaging with them in their specific context.

2 Money matters (but is not everything): Consider financial support for accountable networks, and in-kind support for professionalization and cross-border exchanges.

Financial support for trustworthy networks with a system of checks and balances can be useful, especially when funding activities that the networks can do uniquely well. To newer and less formalized groups, development actors should provide in-kind support such as capacity building workshops to help them professionalize. They should also set up bilateral and group exchanges to connect networks across countries or regions. Development actors can also act as a bridge between networks and local gov-

ernment units, especially where trust toward authorities is low, to help establish working relationships that last beyond project cycles.

3 Timing matters: Decide whether you want to initiate new networks or partner with established groups.

Actors should carefully consider their goals and the trade-offs involved when deciding at which stage to engage with networks. While setting up new networks can help to pursue own goals, for example to send messages, engaging with established networks has the benefit of tapping into their strong connections to returnees. Since established networks may be hesitant to engage if they perceive that it puts their credibility at risk, cooperation must be built slowly and based on mutual interests.

4 Location matters: Engage with returnees not only in countries where European attention looms large but wherever numbers are high and conditions favorable.

European development actors should invest in reintegration in countries with high numbers of returnees, not just in the main countries of origin of migrants living in Europe. The presence of a critical number of returnees in a country makes it more likely that its government invests in reintegration infrastructure, which makes donor investments more sustainable. Also, investing in reintegration in those countries makes European countries' engagement more credible as it involves less immediate self-interest.

5 Choice matters: Expand reintegration goals to include migration in the region and beyond.

The success of reintegration programs depends on the ability of returnees to live a decent life with choices and opportunities for the future. This requires investments in migration relationships that include legal migration pathways. Involving returnee networks in shaping those pathways can improve them since former migrants have firsthand experience of migratory aspirations, missing support systems, and practical obstacles of which policymakers may be less aware. Bringing the experiences of returnees into migration policy design is overdue – in reintegration programming and beyond.

1. INTRODUCTION

Return can be a normal part of the migratory cycle. Some forms of return are highly politicized, such as the forced return of rejected asylum seekers, but others, such as the voluntary return of students when their visas expire, tend to happen smoothly and beyond the public eye.

All returning migrants face challenges reintegrating into their countries of origin: They need to find a place to live, a job, a spot in a school, and a place in their community. Some find this easy, but for others, reintegration can take a long time. This is especially true when people return after many years abroad or against their will, be it through deportation or because they have lost their jobs or residence permits. Family demands can also mean that people return who would rather have stayed abroad.

European countries have become increasingly active in the field of reintegration in recent years, especially since the migration crisis of 2015. Reintegration assistance aims to support the sustainable return and reintegration of former migrants in their countries of origin. Yet such efforts face criticism and limitations: Short-term and individualized support cannot address root causes of migration and displacement such as poverty, insecurity, and lack of opportunities, which are factors that provoke outmigration in the first place. European actors are driven by their own political priorities, which can shift quickly, and may not fully consider the needs and priorities of returnees and communities in countries of origin. They can thus reinforce power imbalances and perpetuate a sense of dependency instead of empowering local actors and communities to take up and lead the reintegration process. This is compounded by the fact that partner governments are not always able or willing to build up national and local reintegration infrastructure in lockstep with donors' investments to fill the gap when project cycles end.

More and more research focuses on ways to deal with these challenges, empower returnees' voices, and foster reintegration to help returning migrants find a new footing in their countries of origin.[1] But reintegration still is a comparatively young field of research. Much less is known about the reintegration of returning migrants than about the integration of those who settle in a host country. Research on migrants abroad, the so-called diaspora, goes back to the 1970s and provides a rich tapestry of knowledge[2], while research on migrants returning from abroad, the so-called returnees, only started gaining traction in the last decade and resembles a puzzle with many missing pieces.

One of these missing pieces are returnee networks. Recent studies suggest that returnees can play an important role in reintegration policies and that returnee-led reintegration projects may be more sustainable than government programs or other third-party projects because they tend to have greater credibility and ties within migrants' and origin communities.[3] But despite the potential benefits of these networks, we know little about them.

This study aims to fill this gap. It provides practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners on how to engage with returnee networks and how to navigate their pitfalls. To this end, it answers four sets of questions:

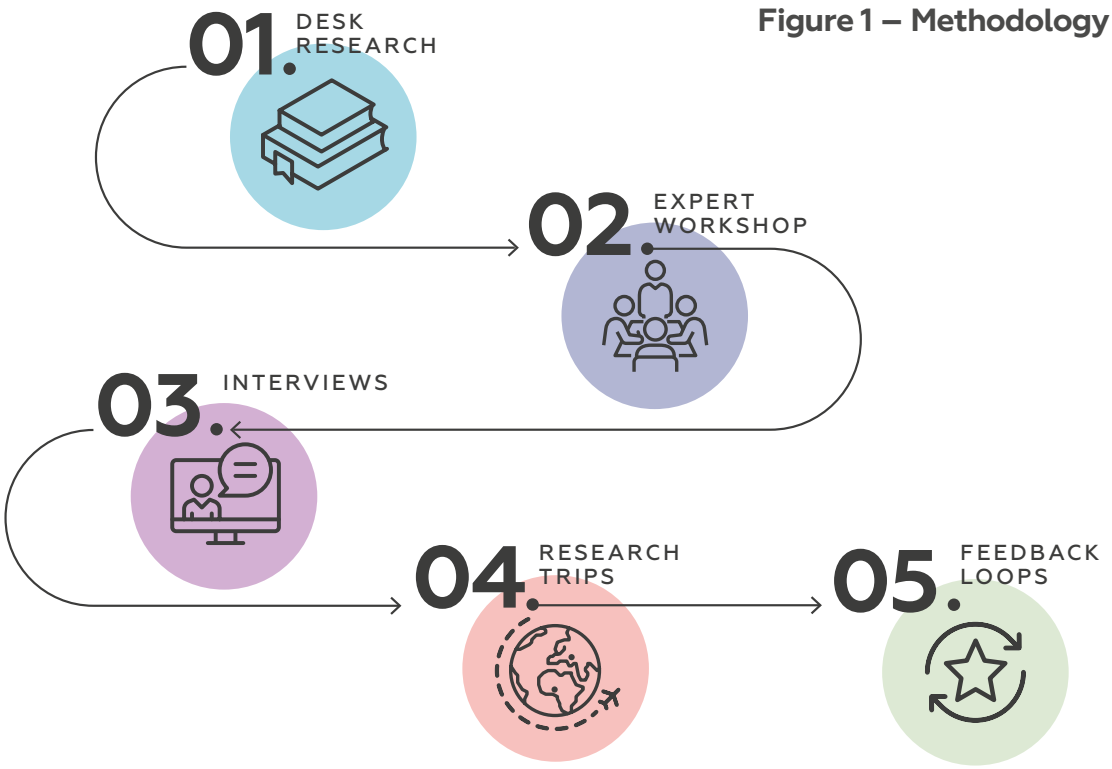
- What are returnee networks, how do they vary, and in which countries and regions are they located? (Chapter 2)

1 OECD, Sustainable Reintegration of Returning Migrants: A Better Homecoming (2020): https://www.oecd.org/development/sustainable-reintegration-of-returning-migrants-5fee55b3-en.htm (accessed March 27, 2023); Anne Knoll et al., "A sustainable development approach to return and reintegration: Dilemmas, choices and possibilities," ECDPM (January 25, 2021): https://ecdpm.org/work/a-sustainable-development-approach-to-return-and-reintegration-dilemmas-choices-and-possibilities (accessed March 27, 2023). Kathleen Newland and Brian Salant, "Balancing Acts: Policy Frameworks for Migrant Return and Reintegration," Migration Policy Institute (2018): https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/policy-frameworks-migrant-return-and-reintegration (accessed March 27, 2023); Maite Vermeulen, "What happens to migrants who are sent back? I spent a year following 12 people to find out," The Correspondent (January 9, 2020): https://thecorrespondent.com/213/what-happens-to-migrants-who-are-sent-back-i-spent-a-year-following-12-people-to-find-out/28168874481-35612b42 (accessed March 27, 2023).

2 Martin Baumann, "Diaspora: Genealogies of Semantics and Transcultural Comparison," Numen 47, no. 3 (2000), pp. 313–37: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3270328 (accessed February 24, 2023); Stéphane Dufoix, "Diaspora before it became a concept," in Routledge Handbook of Diaspora Studies, ed. Robin Cohen and Carolin Fischer (London, 2018); and Dovelyn Rannveig Mendoza and Kathleen Newland, Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries, International Organization for Migration and Migration Policy Institute (June 2012): https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/developing-road-map-engaging-diasporas-development-handbook-policymakers-and-practitioners (accessed February 24, 2023).

3 Fachkommission Fluchtursachen der Bundesregierung, Krisen vorbeugen, Perspektiven schaffen, Menschen schützen. Bericht der Fachkommission Fluchtursachen der Bundesregierung (April 2021): https://www.fachkommission-fluchtursachen.de/start#dokumente (accessed February 24, 2023); ICMPD, Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa (April 2021), https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/53786/file/Study_EN.pdf (accessed Februart 24, 2023); Susanne U. Schultz, "Failed" migratory adventures? Malian men facing conditions post deportation in Southern Mali (Bielefeld 2022); Samuel Hall, Community profiling of return areas in Nigeria (Executive Summary), for the regional West Africa bureau and the International Organization for Migration (September 2018), p. 14: https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/report/community-profiling-return-areas-nigeria-executive-summary (accessed February 24, 2023); Victoria Rietig and Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, "Stopping the Revolving Door: Reception and Reintegration Services for Central American Deportees," (December 2015): https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/stopping-revolving-door-reception-and-reintegration-services-central-american-deportees (accessed February 24, 2023).

Figure 1 – Methodology



- Which factors enable the creation of returnee networks? What conditions are conducive to the flourishing of such networks? (Chapter 3)

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of returnee networks? What potential and opportunities do they bring, but also what limitations do they have and what risks can they carry? (Chapter 4)

- When and how should development actors engage returnee networks, and when explicitly not? How should reintegration programs change to become more equitable and sustainable? (Chapter 5)

The researchers addressed these questions in five steps. They conducted (1) extensive desk research and a review of relevant literature, with a focus on recent literature since 2015; (2) a closed-door expert workshop in the summer of 2022, which brought together academics and practitioners to take stock of the state of knowledge and experience with returnee networks; (3) 54 virtual and in-person interviews (held via video platforms and following a semi-structured interview guide) with founders and members of returnee networks as well as with reintegration experts in twelve countries; (4) two research trips to countries with large-scale return migration: Nigeria (Lagos, Abuja, and Benin City in August 2022), where returnee networks are common, and Kosovo (Pristina, Fushe Kosova, and Mitrovica in November 2022), where they are rare.[4] For a deep dive into two different country contexts, the researchers set up five focus groups with a total of 40 returnees and conducted an additional 47 in-person interviews and site visits with representatives of returnee networks, government units, international organizations, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector. The final step (5) consisted of feedback loops with thirteen external experts and three briefings with more than 50 reintegration practitioners to put the findings and recommendations through a reality check before publication. Further information, including the concept note of the workshop and lists of the virtual and in-person interviews, is available in the annex.

4 While the study aims to examine the global phenomenon of returnee networks, the researchers selected two country cases to analyze how the networks fit into the overall reintegration cosmos. The selection of the two countries – Nigeria and Kosovo – was based on several factors, including different geographical and cultural contexts, high numbers of return migrants, contrasting prevalence of returnee networks that early research had revealed, German development interests, and practical considerations such as the researcher's ability to travel. Find more information in the country case studies (pp. 19-22).

THE BASICS: RETURN MIGRATION, REINTEGRATION, AND RETURNEES EXPLAINED

Return migration is the overarching term for the process of departure of migrants from a host country to their country of origin, home country, or to a country crossed on the way to the host country. Return migration can take place voluntarily (without state coercion) or forcibly (with state coercion), with or without financial support from states, and independently or organized by state agencies.[5]

Reintegration is the process of re-inclusion or re-incorporation of migrants following their return into their country of origin. There is no universally agreed definition of reintegration, but existing research often divides the process of reintegration along three dimensions: economic reintegration, leading to financial stability and self-sufficiency; social reintegration, such as access to adequate social services including health and education; and psychosocial reintegration. Other dimensions like legal, cultural, religious, or linguistic reintegration as well as physical and emotional safety and security are sometimes grouped as part of these three dimensions and sometimes treated as additional dimensions.[6]

Returnees are persons who have migrated abroad and returned to their country of origin. This report uses the terms "returnee" and "return/returned/returning migrant" interchangeably, but the term returnee carries different meanings in different countries. For instance, in Nigeria, a "returnee" is a person who has returned using a return program.[7] In contrast, in Kosovo, the term "returnee" describes a person who fled the region during the Yugoslav Wars and now returns, while a person who arrives back in Kosovo because he or she does not have of legal basis for staying in a foreign country is labeled a "repatriated person."[8] This contrasts with the terminology of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) which explicitly defines "repatriation" as the return of refugees.[9] These nuances matter because they determine the reintegration aid returning persons can access – or are excluded from.

The results of this study come with five limitations. First, the researchers identified returnee networks and relevant experts via a snowball system. As their entry point, they used organizational contacts, authors, and institutions chosen on the basis of their literature research as well as contacts named by the project's supporters, namely Germany's development agency "Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit" (GIZ). From then on, they worked through referrals. It therefore is likely that the choice of interviewees carried a bias toward more established persons and organizations and toward GIZ's partners. This is especially the case for the participants of the focus group discussions in Nigeria and Kosovo, most of who were prior or current GIZ beneficiaries.

Second, the findings of the study are shaped by the country case studies of Nigeria and Kosovo. Although the desk research and interviews yielded information

5 See also Jean-Pierre Cassarino, "Theorising Return Migration: The Conceptual Approach to Return Migrants Revisited," International Journal on Multicultural Societies 6 no. 2 (2004), pp.253-279; Russel King and Katie Kuschminder, Handbook of Return Migration (Cheltenham, 2022).

6 Fachkommission Fluchtursachen der Bundesregierung, Krisen vorbeugen, Perspektiven schaffen, Menschen schützen. Bericht der Fachkommission Fluchtursachen der Bundesregierung (April 2021), p. 58: https://www.fachkommission-fluchtursachen.de/start#dokumente (accessed February 24, 2023); IOM, IOM's Policy on the Full Spectrum of Return, Readmission and Reintegration (2021), p. 8: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/documents/ioms-policy-full-spectrum-of-return-readmission-and-reintegration.pdf (accessed February 24, 2023). Also see Nicola Graviano et al., "Towards an integrated approach to reintegration," International Organization for Migration (2017): https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/fr/resources/manual/towards-integrated-approach-reintegration-context-return (accessed February 24, 2023); and IOM, "Special Issue on Return and Reintegration," Migration Policy Practice 9, no. 1 (2019), p. 30 ff.: https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-policy-practice-vol-ix-number-1-january-2019-march-2019 (accessed February 24, 2023).

7 Mariia Shaidrova, "Performing a 'Returnee' in Benin City, Nigeria," Journal of International Migration and Integration (July 2022): https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-022-00976-9 (accessed February 24, 2023).

8 This differentiation between "returnee" and "repatriated person" is also reflected in the institutional responsibilities in Kosovo: The Kosovar Ministry of Community and Return supports former refugees who stayed in neighboring countries, while the Department for Reintegration of Repatriated Persons (DRRP) in the Ministry of Interior offers assistance to returned migrants, many of them coming back from member states of the European Union (see also Case Study Kosovo in the annex)

9 UNHCR, UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms (2023): https://www.unhcr.org/glossary/ (accessed March 27, 2023).

about returnee networks in many countries[10], the findings and recommendations are strongly influenced by the reintegration conditions in both countries and the impressions the researchers gathered during their trips. The findings may thus be less easily adaptable to contexts outside of Western Africa and the Western Balkans.

Third, the research trips came with time and resource constraints. The researchers spent 17 days in Nigeria and seven in Kosovo. In Nigeria, security constraints limited the locations researchers could access as well as their ability to move freely and spontaneously between locations.

Fourth, language barriers may have affected the results. The researchers conducted the interviews in English, German, and French, which may have hampered the inputs of interviewees who are non-native speakers of these languages. Also, the linguistic barrier during the research trip to Kosovo meant that many conversations were filtered through an Albanian-to-English translation.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, this research, as so much research on return and reintegration that has been done over the last years, reflects European political priorities and interests that have, inadvertently but undoubtedly, turned the topic of return migration into a market.[11] This study is inevitably part of this market. The researchers are Germans who conducted a study funded by a German donor with the explicit goal of developing recommendations for future projects in the realm of German and European development cooperation. These facts may have influenced interviewees' answers and discouraged some from expressing strong criticism. The results and recommendations do attempt to shed light on the activities and perceptions of returnees as protagonists of reintegration, but they are filtered through a German lens. This study therefore does not formulate local solutions for returnee networks but for German and European policymakers and other actors pursuing development goals.

2. CONTEXT: DEFINITION, TYPOLOGY, AND LOCATION OF RETURNEE NETWORKS

Contacts between returned migrants are common and develop naturally, whether during the stay abroad, immediately prior to return, during the return journey, or after return. Often, these contacts fade after some time or become secondary, especially when acute challenges such as finding a place to live or providing for oneself and one's family take priority. In some cases, however, these contacts are maintained, and the commonalities lead to regular exchanges and the pursuit of shared goals. When can these sustained contacts between returnees be considered networks?

This report defines returnee networks as **all types of groups or initiatives in which returnees regularly interact with each other to support (the reintegration of) themselves and/or others.** The term thus encompasses diverse groups which range from skilled workers returning home by their own choice after a long planning time to people who have little or no formal skills and who are forced to return against their will, possibly to a community where they have no support system.

Using this broad definition, returnee networks can be broken down into different categories. The researchers identified four dividing lines between the returnee networks they encountered in the literature and over the course of their own research, resulting in the following basic taxonomy based on networks' creation, structure, membership, and functioning:

- **Self-organized vs. engineered:** Returnee networks are either built through the intrinsic motivation of their members or because of an external nudge – as is the case with other networks. In some cases, the creation is pursued by a group of returnees who share common goals, such as advocating returnees' rights, assisting other returnees with their reintegration, or just opening a safe space for exchange. In contrast, other initiatives are deliberately initiated by external actors. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in particular, has a track record of bringing together returnees and

10 Namely Nigeria, Mali, Kenya, Ghana, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico.

11 However, in recent years, development actors (among others) have begun to support research that goes beyond the interests of EU member states, such as the studies commissioned by the EU Trust Fund for Africa. See for example Samuel Hall and Research and Evidence Facility, South Sudan's decades of displacement: Understanding return and questioning reintegration (January 2023): https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/files/2023/02/south-sudan-decades-of-displacement-1.pdf (accessed March 27, 2023).

encouraging them to become active agents of migration and reintegration. Best known are the organization's so-called community-based reintegration projects that apply participatory methods to create local ownership of reintegration processes and promote the creation of social networks among returnees.[12] The impetus of formation can determine networks' funding structures: While intrinsically formed and self-organized initiatives are often reluctant to accept donor money, arguing that the involvement of specific actors would interfere with their mission or identity, engineered networks usually see the influence of these actors on their efforts as unproblematic or even desirable.

- **Peer-to-peer vs. charitable:** Structure is another factor that differs among returnee networks. Most of the networks identified by the researchers emerged as a form of self-help among like-minded returnees who find themselves in similar circumstances. Such an exchange among equals has, above all, the crucial advantage that members understand which problems the others are struggling with, and which fears and worries are difficult to express. In contrast, other networks are built and run by people who do not (or who no longer) face the same challenges as recently returned migrants. These initiatives, which can be described as charitable, are launched either by people with dual citizenship, who lived abroad for a long time while maintaining close ties to the community in their country of origin, or by former returnees, who have successfully overcome the challenges of reintegration. Personal experiences with the problems faced by returnees then lead them to create initiatives to alleviate the problems of current returnees and create a space for them to share their experiences.

- **Forced vs. voluntary returns[13]:** Given the different challenges faced by forced and voluntary returnees, it is not surprising that the networks they build and are involved in also differ. While all returnees face challenges along the many dimensions of reintegration, forced returnees are often under additional stress due to, for example, stigma, trauma during the deportation process, or a lack of administrative and practical preparation because of the abruptness of their return. The demands on networks are therefore different: Returnees who choose to return, perhaps after a period of working or studying abroad and with enough time to prepare, are primarily interested in a space where they can exchange views about reverse culture shock and the applicability of their degrees in the local labor market. In contrast, forced returnees often face more existential challenges and require additional support to cover basic needs and get connected to providers of short-term relief.

- **Informal vs. formalized:** Returnee networks exist on a continuum between formality and informality, and the degree of formality can change over time. As with all other kinds of groups, first contacts can either occur through meeting physically or online via social media platforms. Some initiatives pursue the formalization of their cooperation, which risks changing the group's dynamics and goals but also promises three possible advantages: First, a formalized network may have greater chances to exist for a longer time; second, formalization can add to a network's trustworthiness and make it appear more relevant to interlocutors – an advantage that is especially important for advocacy work; and third, officially registered initiatives can receive funds for their activities more easily. As the official registration is often associated with administrative and financial expenses, in some contexts, external actors such as IOM[14] step in and support the networks' formalization.

The lines between these different types of networks can, of course, be blurry since networks can move from one type to another over the course of their lifetime. For instance, an organization can start as a peer-to-peer organization and evolve into a charitable institution when its founders gain prominence, or it can start as an informal initiative that eventually becomes more formalized.

12 Interview 43; see also IOM, "Module 3 "Reintegration Assistance at the Community Level," Reintegration Handbook (2019): https://publications.iom.int/books/reintegration-handbook-practical-guidance-design-implementation-and-monitoring-reintegration (accessed March 27, 2023).

13 The term "voluntary return" is controversial. This report distinguishes between voluntary and forced return according to the use of state coercion as this allows for an objective distinction. At the same time, it recognizes that not all forms of return without state coercion are genuinely voluntary. For example, in many cases of "voluntary assisted returns," the individual's freedom of choice is clearly limited. See also Frances Webber, "How voluntary are voluntary returns?" Race & Class 52, no. 4 (2011), pp. 98–107: https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396810396606 (accessed March 27, 2023).

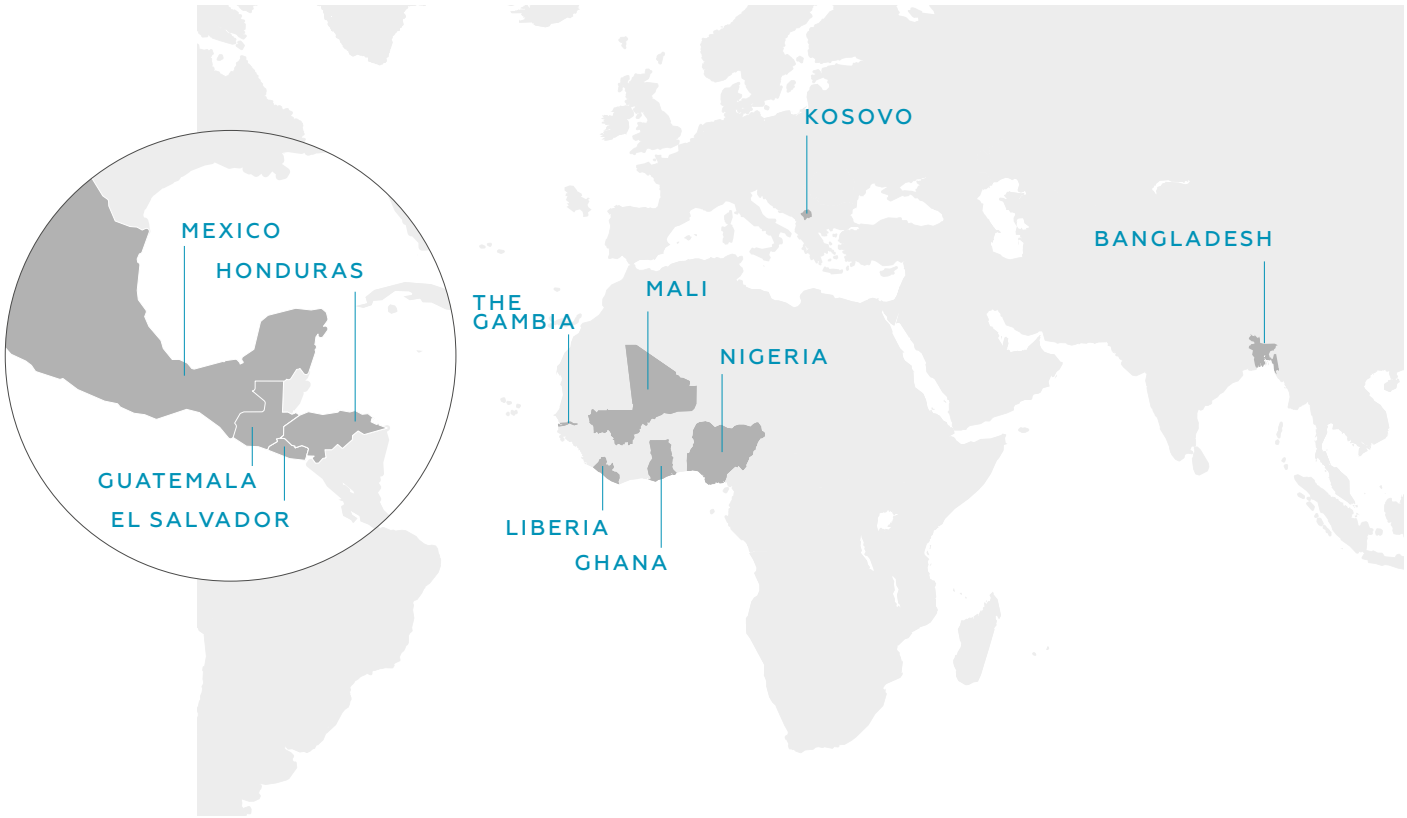
14 Interviews 18, 20, 25 and 26.

Figure 2 shows the wide spectrum of returnee networks this research identified, highlighting especially the forced and formalized groups the researchers interviewed.[15] While this is not a comprehensive collection but a first glimpse into existing returnee networks, the visual illustrates that they are not a phenomenon limited to a particular country or a single region of the world, but that they are geographically widely spread.

To compare their features, activities, and challenges, the researchers focused their interviews, research trips, and analysis on (1) groups of self-declared forced returnees, independent of whether they had been formally deported or received administrative and financial support to return, which is often called "assisted voluntary return" or "voluntary humanitarian return," but can lack genuine choice; and on (2) groups that had formalized their interactions in some way, for example by founding or registering an organization. The reasons were that formalized groups were easier to identify and that forced returnees were likely to face greater challenges of reintegration.

Figure 3 gives snapshots of the returnee networks identified in the course of this research. It provides basic information about each network, namely the region, country, name, and founding year, along with a brief description of its creation and activities. While most of the networks featured here are formalized groups of self-declared forced returnees, the table also conveys an impression of the diversity that characterizes returnee networks.

Figure 2 – Map of Returnee Networks Identified



15 As indicated in the introduction, the researchers identified the returnees' networks through a snowball system and by using the search function on social networks (mainly Facebook and Twitter). Interviews were conducted in person (in the case of Nigeria and Kosovo) or using communication software.

Figure 3 – Table of Returnee Networks at a Glance: Location and Description

REGION	COUNTRY	NAME	ACTIVE SINCE	DESCRIPTION
Latin America	El Salvador	Alianza De Salvadoreños Retornados (ALSARE)	2015	Returnees from the United States founded ALSARE. The network runs projects to help returnees in rural areas with their psychosocial, cultural, and economic reintegration. ALSARE receives funds from various organizations and has provided start-up capital for some 1,000 beneficiaries.
Latin America	El Salvador	Red Nacional de Emprendedores Retornados Salvadoreños (RENACERES)	2014	The NGO Salvadoran Institute for Migrants (INSAMI) built this network of Salvadoran migrants who returned from the US. It promotes employment for returned migrants and provides training and start-up capital for businesses run by returnees. In addition, the network conducts awareness raising campaigns and engages in advocacy.
Latin America	Guatemala	Asociación de Retornados Guatemala	2014	The network was built by a group of 30 returnees who met at an IOM workshop. Projects include airport pickups, family reunification, and awareness raising, funded by organizations such as IOM, the Inter American Foundation, and the Avina Foundation.
Latin America	Honduras	Asociación de Migrantes Retornados con Discapacidad	2008	The network was founded by 13 Honduran migrants who were injured during their journey to the US and had to return due to their injuries. The group gained international attention through awareness raising caravans to Mexico and the US in 2014 and 2015. It received support from the Jesuit-run radio station Radio Progreso.
Latin America	Mexico	Deportados Unidos en la Lucha	2016	The network was founded by a migrant forced to return from the US. It helps returnees to reconnect with their families and provides a meeting space and help with administrative tasks. In addition, it runs an online shop that sells items such as T-shirts with messages about deportation and migration.
South Asia	Bangladesh	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP)	2004	Around 20 migrant workers returning to Bangladesh formed OKUP as a platform two decades ago. Since then, the organization has developed into an NGO which conducts pre-departure interventions to reduce migration-related risks and vulnerabilities. It also helps with the social and economic reintegration for returnees. Funding sources include European governments and civil society organizations.
South Asia	Bangladesh	Local Migrant Forums	2014	The NGO OKUP (see above) created 70 local migrant forums in different parts of the country that are run by returned migrant workers and offer space for knowledge exchange and self-help. To date, more than 3,000 returnees have been active in these forums.
West Africa	Ghana	Sahara Hustlers Association	2019	The network was formed by migrants returning from Libya and European countries. Its eight board members assist returnees with reintegration and raise awareness about the dangers of irregular migration. Past projects were supported by Ghana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOM, UNHCR, GIZ, and the EU, among others.
West Africa	Liberia	Liberia Returnee Network	2012	A group of former refugees formed the network to help other Liberians with their return and to advance the socio-economic development of Liberia. The network's activities include advocacy, psychological counseling, and entrepreneurship and vocational training. The network also purchased ten acres of land to incentivize the return of Liberians from neighboring countries. It collaborates with IOM's Stranded Migrants Program.
West Africa	Mali	Association des Refoulés de l'Afrique Centrale au Mali	2010	The network was created by a Cameroonian migrant who returned to Mali from Morocco after attempting in vain to cross to Ceuta and Melilla in 2006. Besides providing (re)integration support for returnees and migrants in Bamako, the organization is part of a regional network of migrant organizations.

REGION	COUNTRY	NAME	ACTIVE SINCE	DESCRIPTION
West Africa	Mali	Association Malienne des Expulsés	1996	The network is the central and oldest returnee organization in Mali. Having started as an advocacy organization for the rights of returnees, the network today offers services for returnees, including airport pickups, shelter, (psycho-) social support, and economic reintegration (trainings and startup kits). The organization partners with the Malian government and (European) NGOs.
West Africa	Mali	Association des Femmes Rapatriées de la Cote d'Ivoire (AFERCI)	2006	The network for women and children who returned from Ivory Coast in 2002-2005 was created by a female returnee. Since its founding, it has expanded its services to other women in situations of vulnerability. AFERCI provides training and employment opportunities in agriculture and food processing through a company linked to the association. The network has received funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund.
West Africa	Mali	Association Retour Travail Dignité (ARTD)	2005	The network was created by returnees from Morocco and Spain after mass crossings into Ceuta and Melilla. In addition to socio-economic reintegration work, the network carries out awareness raising campaigns. It also lobbies countries of transit and destination to help with improving living conditions in Mali. The network has five employees and has received short-term funding from government, local authorities, IOM, and GIZ. Members of the network pay a monthly contribution to take part in activities.
West Africa	Nigeria	Female Returnees Forum of Nigeria	2019	The network was created by a female returnee from Libya who volunteered in IOM's "Migrants as Messengers" campaign. It specializes in the support of female returnees, and its ten members engage in awareness raising, referral to reintegration assistance, counseling, and psychosocial support. The network's activities are supported by IOM.
West Africa	Nigeria	Foundation for action against irregular migration	2019	The network (formerly known as Returnees Organization of Surviving Emigrants) was also created by a volunteer in IOM's "Migrants as Messengers" campaign. It is one of the few networks active in Ogun State. Its activities include awareness raising, referrals, helping stranded migrants, counseling, psychosocial support, and airport pick-ups. Its awareness raising activities are supported by IOM.
West Africa	Nigeria	Go Getters	2019	The Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), a part of the government of Edo State, created this network, which mainly consists of a WhatsApp group for returnees that were supported by ETAHT. Local returnee representatives in 18 municipalities regularly share information about the status of reintegration of its estimated 3,000 members.
West Africa	Nigeria	Great Esan Returnees Association	2018	A group of returnees in the Esan speaking region of Edo State established the network after their return from Libya. They created a database with entries for about 2,000 returnees to organize referrals. The network's awareness raising campaigns have been supported by UNHCR, Caritas, IOM, UNESCO, Salvation Army, and the Edo State Task Force.
West Africa	Nigeria	Greater Returnees Foundation	2016	The network was one of the first returnee networks in Edo State. Its three board members created a database of returnees for referrals and engage in awareness raising with the support of the IOM, the Salvation Army, and UNHR. In addition, they cooperate with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).
West Africa	Nigeria	Migrants Hope Again	2019	The network was founded by a returnee from Libya who was also a volunteer in IOM's "Migrants as Messengers" campaign. The network runs an awareness raising campaign, offers counseling, and refers returnees to reintegration services. In addition, the network's founder manages the shelter of the Patriotic Citizens Initiatives (see below).

REGION	COUNTRY	NAME	ACTIVE SINCE	DESCRIPTION
West Africa	Nigeria	Migrants Lives Matter	2020	The network was founded by returnees from Libya, Europe, and Asia, and is one of the few networks active in Nigeria's capital Abuja. Its twelve active members engage in awareness raising and counseling and refer returnees to GIZ and IOM services.
West Africa	Nigeria	Patriotic Citizens Initiatives (PCI)	2009	Founded by a returnee after his return from Libya more than a decade ago, the network is one of the oldest advocacy organizations for returnees in Nigeria. Today, the network's founder serves as a business trainer for IOM and, with support from IOM and the UK government, runs a shelter for male returnees in Lagos. Many founders of returnee networks in Lagos and Benin City regard PCI as a role model.
West Africa	Nigeria	Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Reintegration	2013	The organization was formed by a returnee from Libya who later served as Senior Special Assistant to the Edo State Governor on Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration from 2017 to 2019. It mainly engages in awareness raising and advocacy for returnees' rights.
West Africa	The Gambia	Gambia Returnees From Backway	2017	Young Gambians created this network after returning from Libya. Its main activities include awareness raising and advocacy for enhanced reintegration support. With the support of the North Bank, the network runs an agricultural education center for returnees. Some of its members are part of IOM's "Migrants as Messengers" project.
West Africa	The Gambia	Youth Against Irregular Migration (YAIM)	2017	The network was also formed by young Gambians returning from Libya. It engages in awareness raising, information sharing, psychosocial support, and advocacy. The network stresses its independence of IOM funding and partners with the Gambian government and European donors.
Western Balkans	Kosovo	Kosovo American Education Fund, (KAEF), Alumni Association	2004	The association connects more than 100 alumni of the Kosovo American Education Fund program. The fellowship program offers up to eight Kosovar citizens graduate scholarships to select US universities every year. Like many other alumni associations for scholarships and fellowships around the world, its goal is to foster exchange among former recipients.
Western Balkans	Kosovo	USAID Transformational Leadership Program, (TLP), Alumni, Association	2017	The network of Transformational Leadership Program alumni is another forum for highly skilled returnees to Kosovo. Its goal is to develop a cadre of leaders to further Kosovo's economic, political, and social development. In addition to offering graduate scholarship to US universities, the program has a volunteering component.

Source: Desk research and interviews

3. FACTORS ENABLING THE CREATION OF RETURNEE NETWORKS

Based on the analysis conducted for this project and on prior research, the researchers identified seven factors that appear to enable the formation of returnee networks. Although the topic remains understudied, researchers and practitioners have identified returnee networks in a number of countries. Several reports point to returnee networks in West Africa, Central America, and the Balkans.[16] The following factors do not form a comprehensive list of conditions that need to come together to enable the creation of networks but represent an attempt to understand why networks exist in abundance in some countries yet are virtually unknown in others.

1. The Power of Numbers

First, to have large numbers of people who return under similar circumstances within a given period seems to support the flourishing of returnee networks. In Nigeria, returnee networks were predominantly formed by former migrants evacuated from Libya since 2017. Between 2017 and 2022, IOM evacuated nearly 20,000 people from Libya to Nigeria.[17] This sudden influx of people with similar experiences, who arrived by the same mode of transport, namely on evacuation flights, meant that the seed for contact was sown through external intervention. In Mali, deportees from France, Saudi Arabia, and Angola established networks out of a sense of kinship which was born of the fact that many of them arrived within a matter of weeks.[18] Similarly, after nearly one million people were deported from the United States and Mexico to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras between 2010 and 2014[19], this huge inflow into small countries meant that networks of returned migrants formed in those counties and that reintegration became a political priority. Large numbers of returnees may also nudge reintegration actors to prefer group or community-based activities over individual assistance.[20] Such group activities can be an additional incentive for the formation of networks.

A few exceptions merit mention. In Kosovo, nearly 30,000 people returned from the EU in 2016 and 2017 alone, but this inflow did not result in the formation of returnee networks, perhaps because many quickly joined their families and did not stay in shared shelters or were put through other procedures. That may have limited the development of a sense of kinship. Similarly, in Iraq and Pakistan, the researchers were not able to identify any returnee networks, neither in the literature nor in conversations with reintegration actors, despite high return numbers. These exceptions show that having a high number of returnees is just one factor among many that need to come together to enable the creation of networks.

2. The Power of Role Models

Second, having a role model of successful prior returnees and their groups helps encourage new groups. Between 10 and 25 years ago, returning migrants founded organizations which today are well-known actors in three West African countries (Mali, Nigeria, and The Gambia). In Mali, the Association Malienne des Expulsés (AME) is a long-standing organization which emerged when its founders were deported back to Mali in 1996.[21] In Nigeria, Osita Osemene founded the Patriotic Citizen Initiatives (PCI) in 2009 after his return from Libya[22]; and in Liberia, a group of former refugees formed a network in 2012 to help other Liberians with their return and to advance the socio-economic development of Liberia[23].

These examples of successful returnee-led organizations that are able to secure funding for their activities – and also sometimes provide actual jobs for the networks' members – have sparked several sim-

16 For an overview of the reviewed literature, see the bibliography in the annex. On West Africa, see esp. Schultz, "Failed" migratory adventures? (see note 3); Almamy Sylla, "Associations de femmes rapatriées : entre volonté d'innover et s'autonomiser par l'entreprenariat ?" Études Maliennes, no. 94 (2022), pp. 84-112; Samuel Hall, Community profiling of return areas (see note 3), p. 14; and ICMPD, "The Republic of Guinea Country Brief" (see note 3), p. 19. On Central America, see Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, "Stopping the Revolving Door" (see note 3). On Western Balkans, see Selma Porobič, "Bosnian 'Returnee Voices' Communicating Experiences of Successful Reintegration. The Social Capital and Sustainable Return Nexus in Bosnia and Herzegovina" Südosteuropa 64, no. 1 (2016), pp. 5-26: https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2016-0002 (accessed March 27, 2023).

17 IOM, "IOM Assists More than 500 Nigerians Stranded in Libya Safely Return Home" (March 16, 2022): https://www.iom.int/news/iom-assists-more-500-nigerians-stranded-libya-safely-return-home (accessed March 27, 2023).

18 Interviews 17 and 101.

19 Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas and Victoria Rietig, "Migrants Deported from the United States and Mexico to the Northern Triangle: A Statistical and Socioeconomic Profile," (September 2015), p. 22: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/RMSG-CentAmDeportations.pdf (accessed March 27, 2023).

20 See also IOM, "Module 3 "Reintegration Assistance at the Community Level" (see note 12).

21 AME, "Qui sommes nous?" (2016): http://www.expulsesmaliens.info/-Qui-sommes-nous-.html (accessed March 27, 2023); Almamy Sylla and Susanne U. Schultz, "Mali: Abschiebungen als postkoloniale Praxis," Peripherie 39, no. 156 (January 2020), pp. 402-403: https://elibrary.utb.de/doi/abs/10.3224/peripherie.v39i3.04 (accessed March 27, 2023).

22 PCI, "About us" (2014): http://www.pcinigeria.org/about/ (accessed February 7, 2023); and interview 22.

23 Interview 102.

ilar initiatives. For instance, in Nigeria, the founders of Migrants Hope Again started out as volunteers at PCI and explicitly name that organization's founder as their mentor and source of inspiration. Similarly, the founder of the Female Returnees Forum inspired another female-led network, the Foundation Action Against Irregular Migration.[24] Thus, to have people who lead by example and mentor returnees seems to be a key enabler for budding networks.

3. The Power of Filling a Gap

Third, returnee networks seem to form in contexts where reintegration support is insufficient and where the government is generally open to activities by civil society and international actors. In Nigeria, the government has a rather elaborate reintegration structure with many governmental actors involved. For instance, the Migrant Resource Centers (MRC) of the Ministry of Labor and Employment provide counseling and training.[25] But some interviewees reported that, in practice, the demand for training exceeded the offers made by the MRC, and public advisors were often unavailable.[26] This gap in services requires other actors to step up. Nigeria's government cooperates with many external actors that provide further reintegration support.

In addition to GIZ, IOM, and civil society organizations like Caritas and Don Bosco, whose work constitute important components of the reintegration system, some returnees feel a need – and an incentive – to become reintegration actors themselves. Since they are free to form groups and officially register their organizations, they can move forward and attract (foreign) funding for reintegration activities. Similarly, the lack of reintegration funding and services in Central American countries motivated returnees to El Salvador and Guatemala to become active in counseling and training of fellow returnees.[27]

4. The Power of Shared Stigma and Trauma

Fourth, in situations where migration and return are associated with shared difficulties, especially the experiences of stigma or trauma, founding or joining a returnee network can serve as a coping mechanism.

Migrants are often marked by the difficulties experienced during their journey, stay, and return. As countries of destination in Europe and North America fortify their borders to reduce irregular migration, migrants take increasingly dangerous routes to get to their chosen destinations. According to the Missing Migrants project, more than 25,000 migrants died or disappeared crossing the Mediterranean since 2014.[28] In addition, 5,700 went missing or died crossing the Sahara. In the Americas, more than 7,000 lost their lives or went missing since 2014, with a new record of close to 1,300 in 2022 alone.[29] Besides witnessing such deaths, migrants may endure other traumatizing events on the way, be it abuse by smugglers, organized criminal networks, or police and border forces.

After returning from a country with different customs and values, finding one's footing back home can also be challenging.[30] Dealing with reverse culture shock can be an incentive for returnees to stay connected with their peers, regardless of the nature of their return or their skill and income level. Migrants may face stigma when they return from a migration journey that is considered a failure by family members and the community. And women can experience additional stigma attributed to their gender when they face assumptions about their sexual past, for instance that they were raped or involved in prostitution.

Mental and physical health problems can be an obvious consequence, but reliable quantitative data about their extent are rare. A recent comparative study that surveyed more than 900 returnees in nine countries finds that the experience of discrimination varies substantially by country. Also, women are more likely than men to say that they need psychological support but less likely to have access to it.[31] Other studies find that, although psychosocial sup-

24 Interviews 20 and 25.

25 ICMPD, "Nigeria Country Brief," in Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa (April 2021), p. 24: https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/53786/file/Study_EN.pdf (accessed February 24, 2023).

26 Two separate anonymous sources (see annex for total list of interviewees).

27 Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, "Stopping the Revolving Door" (see note 3), p.22 and p. 26.

28 IOM, "Migration within the Mediterranean," (2023): https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean (accessed February 7, 2023); This estimate is mirrored by UNHCR data which reports close to 23,000 dead and missing since 2015, see UNHCR, "Mediterranean Situation," (2023): https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean (accessed February 7, 2023)

29 IOM, "Migration within the Americas," (2023): https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/americas) (accessed February 7, 2023)

30 Janine Läpple and Judith Möllers, "Social remittances as an engine of social change in Kosovo," (2020), p. 68: https://www.iamo.de/fileadmin/user_upload/iamo2020_en_c7.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023)

31 Christian Kothe et al., „Das Leben nach der Rückkehr: Langfristige Reintegration nach der geförderten Ausreise aus Deutschland. Begleitstudie II zum Bundesprogramm StarthilfePlus," Forschungsbericht 42 des Forschungszentrums des Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (March 2023): https://doi.org/10.48570/bamf.fz.fb.42.d.2023.starthilfeplus2.1.0 (accessed February 27, 2023).

port for returnees is increasingly prioritized in reintegration assistance, returnees rarely have sufficient access to those services. Even if those services exist, accessing mental health resources can lead to being stigmatized.[32]

Finding community members who share these experiences and creating spaces to talk about them can be an incentive for creating networks. The impetus to do so may be stronger for returnees who share a particularly difficult or traumatic experience, lack access to professional psychological support, or feel particularly discriminated due to their status as returnees.

5. The Power of Non-Traditional Networks

Fifth, returnee networks are likely to spring up where returnees lack traditional support systems, especially families. If family members believe that it is disgraceful to have to return home, returnees are reluctant to contact their relatives.[33] "'Are you mad to come back?' my family said," a female participant of a focus group in Nigeria emphasized. "Every family here encourages you to leave for Europe. They are still mad at me [for returning]."[34] Not only do returnees fear stigmatization and exclusion, but the likelihood of receiving support from people who relied on the income sent from abroad or who lent migrants money for their initial journey tends to be low. In those cases, returnee networks can help to fill the gap.

In contrast, in societies where family networks are the most important support system and where returnees are generally welcomed with open arms regardless of their perceived success in the destination country, the urge to find an alternative peer group is much lower. As a result, networks are less likely to emerge. In Kosovo, focus group participants emphasized that, with few exceptions, both core and extended families tend to welcome returnees back into the fold, making the coming together in a returnee group less urgent.[35]

6. The Power of Nudging

Sixth, returnee networks blossom where they are nudged into existence by external actors who incentivize activities through financial and practical support. As early as 2018, a study recommended helping returnees build networks or associations as a best practice for reintegration actors.[36] Support for returnee networks can broadly happen at two stages: either before the network is created, or by fostering existing networks. Some projects incentivize joint activities among returnees, for example by reimbursing transportation costs for gatherings, by helping to find suitable meeting venues, or by creating social media groups.[37] Other projects help existing networks with their official registration (financially and administratively), provide management training, or links to other networks and potential donors.[38] Such support not only encourages the creation of new networks but also helps sustain and foster existing initiatives.

7. The Power of an Active Civil Society

Finally, having an active civil society which encourages the pursuit of common interests through grassroots initiatives is another factor that enables the formation of returnee networks. In some countries, joining together in formal associations to advance political or other issues is a cultural norm. The founder and president of the Malian returnee network AME attributes the establishment of his network to its members' experiences in France, where active civil society groups lobbied for the rights of (irregular) migrants – something they replicated after their return to Mali.[39]

Conditions in other countries are different. In Kosovo, for instance, many interviewees said that civil society

32 Samuel Hall and IOM, Health & Reintegration – Returning to Space but Not to Time: A Life Course Approach to Migrants' Health, Continuity of Care and Impact on Reintegration Outcomes (2020): https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/kmh-research-study-report-study/research-study-3-health-and-reintegration-returning-space (accessed February 27, 2023). Lucia Salgado et al., "Putting Migrant Reintegration Programmes to the Test. A road map to a monitoring system," (2022), p. 14: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpie-reintegration-monitoring-report-2022_final.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023). See also Sertan Sanderson, "Returnees struggle to adjust to life in Nigeria," InfoMigrants (September 17, 2019): https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/19561/returnees-struggle-to-adjust-to-life-in-nigeria (accessed February 27, 2023); and Interview 73.

33 See for example Liza Schuster and Nassim Majidi, "Deportation Stigma and Re-migration," Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 41, no. 4 (2015), pp. 635-652: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2014.957174 (accessed February 27, 2023) or Giacomo Zandonini, "Nigerians returned from Europe face stigma and growing hardship," The New Humanitarian (July 28, 2020): https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/07/28/Nigeria-migrants-return-Europe (accessed February 7, 2023).

34 Interview 40.

35 Interviews 79, 84, and 97.

36 See for example Samuel Hall, Community profiling of return areas (see note 3), p. 14.

37 Interviews 26, 44, and 45.

38 Interviews 26, 43, and 50.

39 Interview 101.

engagement had blossomed after independence. Since then, it had gone back down because people were disappointed with the perceived results. One interviewee shared the observation that "people are just disappointed. [...] They complain with their families and friends, but they don't protest. I would call it cultural pessimism."[40]

The Varieties of Democracy project features an index measuring civil society participation, reaching from zero for countries with the least active civil society to one for countries with highest level of activity. The data show that many countries where returnee networks were identified rank relatively highly on the index, meaning at least at 0.7. These include Bangladesh (0.7), Nigeria, Mali, the Gambia, and Honduras (0.8), Ghana, and Liberia (0.9). However, some countries which score relatively low on the index, namely Mexico (0.4), Guatemala (0.6), and Kosovo (also 0.6), nevertheless feature returnee networks.[41] This underlines the finding that it does not necessarily take all the factors listed here to make the creation of returnee networks likely.

40 Interview 85.

41 V-Dem, Democracy Report 2023: Defiance in the Face of Autocratization (March 2023): https://v-dem.net/ (accessed February 27, 2023); Our World in Data , "Civil society participation, 1789 to 2021 for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nigeria, the Gambia, Bangladesh, Ghana, Liberia, and Mali," (2023): https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/civil-society-participation?tab=chart&country=SLV~GTM~HND~NGA~GMB~BGD~GHA~LBR~MLI, (accessed February 27, 2023).

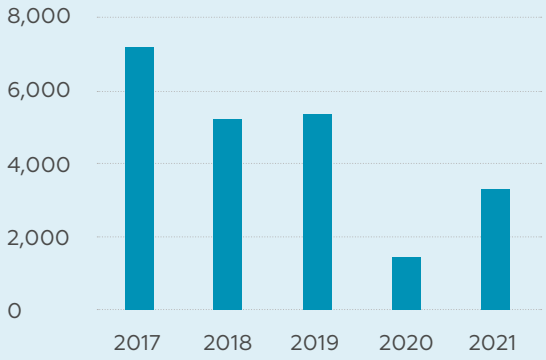
CASE STUDY NIGERIA

Africa's most populous country with an estimated 210 million people is a country of origin, transit, and destination.[42] According to UN data, more than 1.7 million Nigerians live abroad. Around three million Nigerians are displaced within the country. In addition, Nigeria hosts over 1.3 million international migrants.[43]

Yet data on return migration to Nigeria (and West Africa overall) are scarce and underestimate the actual movement of people in and out of the country significantly. Between 2017 and 2021, IOM assisted the return of more than 22,000 migrants from West and Central Africa to Nigeria (see graph 1). During the same period, nearly 50,000 Nigerians were ordered to leave the European Union, and some 7,300 officially returned following those orders (see graph 2).[44] These numbers account for only a small portion of the total return movement to Nigeria as they neither include Nigerians who return with IOM-support from other countries nor those who return on their own, possibly even under the radar of authorities.

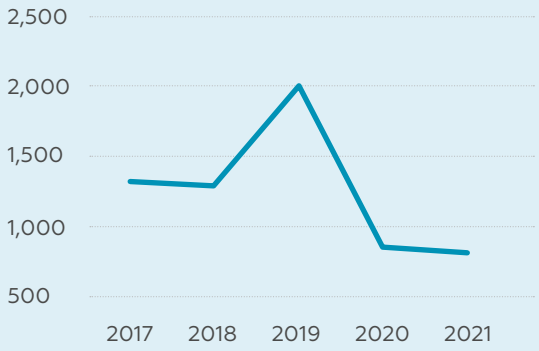
Within Nigeria, the three major areas of return are the states of Edo, Lagos, and Delta – all located in the south of the country. Nigeria's central governmental actor for the return, readmission, and reintegration of migrants is the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (formerly the National Commission for Refugees).[45] The government has been advancing its policy framework on return and reintegration since the launch of Nigeria's National Migration Policy in 2015. The policy aims to "evolve bilateral and multilateral arrangements with the main destination countries of Nigerian emigrants" and to "institute training programmes for the reintegration of return migrants."[46] It also encourages comprehensive reintegration through Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs while strengthening the involvement of Nigerian authorities in the return and reintegration of migrants.[47] A technical working group is to develop and periodically revise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) which detail the principles and operational details of return to Nigeria.[48]

Graph 1 – IOM-Assisted Returns to Nigeria from West and Central Africa



Source: IOM

Graph 2 – Returns from the EU-27 Following an Order to Leave



Source: Eurostat

42 UN Network on Migration, Federal Republic of Nigeria: National Voluntary Review towards the International Migration Review Forum (2022), p. 5: https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/Nigeria%20-%20Voluntary%20GCM%20Review%20Towards%20the%20IMRF%202022.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023).

43 United Nations, "International Migrant Stock: Total, origin," (2020): https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed February 27, 2023), UNHCR, "Nigeria: All Population Snapshot," (November 10, 2021): https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89576 (accessed February 12, 2023); United Nations, "International Migrant Stock: Total, destination," (2020): https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock (accessed February 27, 2023).

44 Eurostat, "Third country nationals returned following an order to leave – annual data (rounded)," (2023): https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_EIRTN__custom_4822536/default/table?lang=en (accessed February 27, 2023).

45 Federal Republic of Nigeria, "National Commission for Refugees (Establishment, etc.) Act," (December 29, 1989): https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/3ae6b522e.pdf (accessed February 17, 2023).

46 Federal Republic of Nigeria , "National Migration Policy 2015," p. 41: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/national_migration_policy_2015.pdf (accessed February 17, 2023).

47 Ibid.

48 Federal Republic of Nigeria, "Framework for Effective Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) in Nigeria: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)," (May 2018): https://ncfrmi.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/VALIDATED-AVRR-MANUAL-11-DEC-updated-1.pdf (accessed February 17, 2023).

Despite this advanced policy framework, coordination among reintegration actors continues to be a challenge, and international actors remain the main providers of practical reintegration assistance. For instance, IOM is in charge of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, along with other AVRR programs for voluntary return. GIZ runs three centers in Lagos, Benin City, and Abuja that provide counseling and vocational training for returnees and potential migrants. Also, local and international NGOs, such as Idia Renaissance, Don Bosco, or Caritas, provide reintegration assistance, mostly with European funding, and Frontex started its Joint Reintegration Services Program in the spring of 2022.

Nigeria boasts the largest number of returnee networks this research could identify. Generally, there seems to be a high level of exchange with and trust in international reintegration actors. The connection with IOM is particularly close, as many networks emerged from or were supported by IOM's community-based projects and its Migrants as Messengers project. Thanks to in-kind support, such as coaching members and organizing gatherings, and financial support, for instance for flyers, smartphones, and registration fee coverage, many returnees have created networks which continue to collaborate with IOM. While most of those networks were set up after 2017 by migrants returning from Libya, two networks have been around for much longer: the Patriotic Citizens Initiatives (PCI), established in 2009, which is an important role model for many younger networks, and the Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Reintegration Initiative, which was established in 2012 by an activist who later became a Senior Special Assistant to the Edo State Governor on Human Trafficking.

One of the biggest challenges for returnees in Nigeria is the economic hardship many of them face. With a poverty rate of 40 percent and youth unemployment of 42.5 percent[49], making a living is difficult, and returnees often face the additional challenge of travel debt. Their situation is exacerbated by the stigma of being a returnee, as coming back to Nigeria is seen as failure. Returnees who feel a sense of shame may avoid their hometowns or villages and forego contact with their families or even providers of reintegration assistance. Returnee networks seem to provide a space for an open exchange between peers who share and understand the challenges through first-hand experience.

49 The World Bank, "Deep Structural Reforms Guided by Evidence Are Urgently Needed to Lift Millions of Nigerians Out of Poverty, says New World Bank Report" (March 22, 2022): https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/03/21/afw-deep-structural-reforms-guided-by-evidence-are-urgently-needed-to-lift-millions-of-nigerians-out-of-poverty (accessed February 27, 2023); Nigeria Poverty Map (NPM): https://www.nigeriapovertymap.com/ (accessed March 29, 2023); Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, "Unemployment Statistics," (2023): www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/ (accessed March 29, 2023).

CASE STUDY KOSOVO

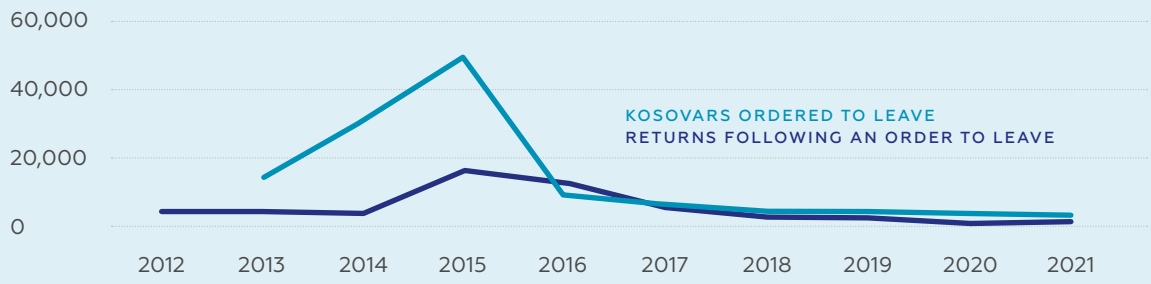
Founded in 2008, Kosovo is the youngest state in the Western Balkans. With a population of under 1.8 million, it is also the second smallest state (after Montenegro).[50] Due to its history of conflict and upheaval, emigration is common, especially to other European countries. With an estimated size of over 350,000[51], nearly half of the total Kosovar diaspora resides in Germany.

Return numbers to Kosovo are well-recorded, especially in comparison with Nigeria. Returns spiked sharply in 2015, following a large emigration wave when nearly 67,000 Kosovars applied for asylum in the European Union, half of them in Germany.[52] In response, Germany introduced the so-called "Western Balkans Regulation" in 2016, which opened a new regular migration channel for citizens from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia). In parallel, returns were stepped up, resulting in almost 30,000 Kosovars returning in 2015 and 2016 alone. As graph 3 shows, this contrasts with nearly 60,000 orders to leave that were issued in the same period. This number has since dropped significantly, reaching 1,400 returns in 2021.

Many returnees re-enter Kosovo through Pristina airport, which is the country's only international airport, and then continue their journey to their communities and families. In contrast to Nigeria, there are no hotspot areas of return in Kosovo.

Municipalities are a central point of support for returnees in Kosovo. Returnees (or, as they are also referred to in Kosovo, repatriated persons) are supposed to register either at the Reception Centre for Repatriated Persons at the Airport in Pristina or at their local Municipal Office for Community and Return. The key national actor for these repatriated persons is the Department for the Reintegration of Repatriated Persons (DPPR), a part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[53] In contrast, formerly displaced refugees from Kosovo who return home are supposed to be served by the Ministry of Community and Return.[54] While the assistance for these formerly displaced persons is more generous, all returnees can apply for one year of reintegration assistance that includes rent support, food, and hygiene kits. The Kosovar employment agency's Labor Market Department is responsible for supporting the economic reintegration of returnees. Yet finding a viable job remains the major challenge

Graph 3 – Returns from the EU-27 Following an Order to Leave



Source: Eurostat

50 The World Bank, "Population, total – Kosovo," https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=XK (accessed February 17, 2023).

51 German Federal Foreign Office, "Germany and Kosovo: Bilateral relations," (March 9, 2022): https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/kosovo/228088 (accessed February 17, 2023).

52 Eurostat, "Asylum applicants by type of applicant, citizenship, age and sex – annual aggregated data," https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/MIGR_ASYAPPCTZA__custom_4941215/default/table?lang=en (accessed February 17, 2023); and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Bundesamt in Zahlen 2021 (August 2022), p. 23: https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2021.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5 (accessed February 17, 2023).

53 Republic of Kosovo, Regulation (GRK) No. 22/2020 on Reintegration of repatriated persons (October 6, 2020): https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ddfcf8f4.html (accessed February 17, 2023).

54 Republic of Kosovo, Regulation on the Return of Displaced Persons and Durable Solutions (GRK) – NO. 01/2018 (February 5, 2018): https://www.refworld.org/docid/5c04f43b4.html (accessed February 17, 2023).

for returnees in Kosovo, illustrated by a youth unemployment rate of almost 40 percent in 2021.[55]

In addition to the support provided by the Kosovar state, there are several other reintegration actors. IOM supports returnees to Kosovo via Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programs. GIZ runs the German Information Center for Migration, Vocational Training and Career (known by its German acronym DIMAK) which provides counseling and vocational training for returnees and potential migrants. The URA (Albanian for "bridge") project, which is also part of DIMAK, is funded by Germany's Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, offers counseling for returnees and supports returnees from nine German states[56] both financially and with in-kind help. German NGOs such as AWO and Diakonie offer psychosocial support and training opportunities, and several local NGOs, such as KHCS Mother Theresa or NGO Lady, offer training and counseling. The most important support system for returnees to Kosovo, however, are their families. Almost all returnees interviewed during this research confirmed that they were welcomed with open arms by their families and received financial and other support their family members in Kosovo and abroad. This is a marked difference to Nigeria, possibly because of the higher stigma that return carries in Nigeria as well as the higher cost and effort of travelling from there to the EU.

Perhaps due to these many layers of support, this research identified no formalized networks of forced returnees in Kosovo. But Kosovars who studied abroad often keep in touch with each other through alumni associations, such as the Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) and the USAID Transformational Leadership Program (TLP) scholarship network. Members of these networks are highly educated and skilled and tend to use their alumni networks to keep in touch with their peers. For all their differences to the returnee networks in Nigeria, this fact illustrates one joint motivation: Members use networks as platforms to exchange views and information with like-minded people who are brought together by a formative joint experience.

55 Kosovo Agency of Statistics, "Unemployment and unemployment rate, by sex and age group by variabla, age group, year and sex," (2023): https://askdata.rks-gov.net/pxweb/en/ASKdata/ASKdata__Labour%20market__Anketa%20e%20Fuqis%c3%ab%20Pun%c3%abtore__Annual%20labour%20market/tab19.px/table/tableViewLayout1/ (accessed February 17, 2023).

56 Namely Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Bremen, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, and Thuringia.

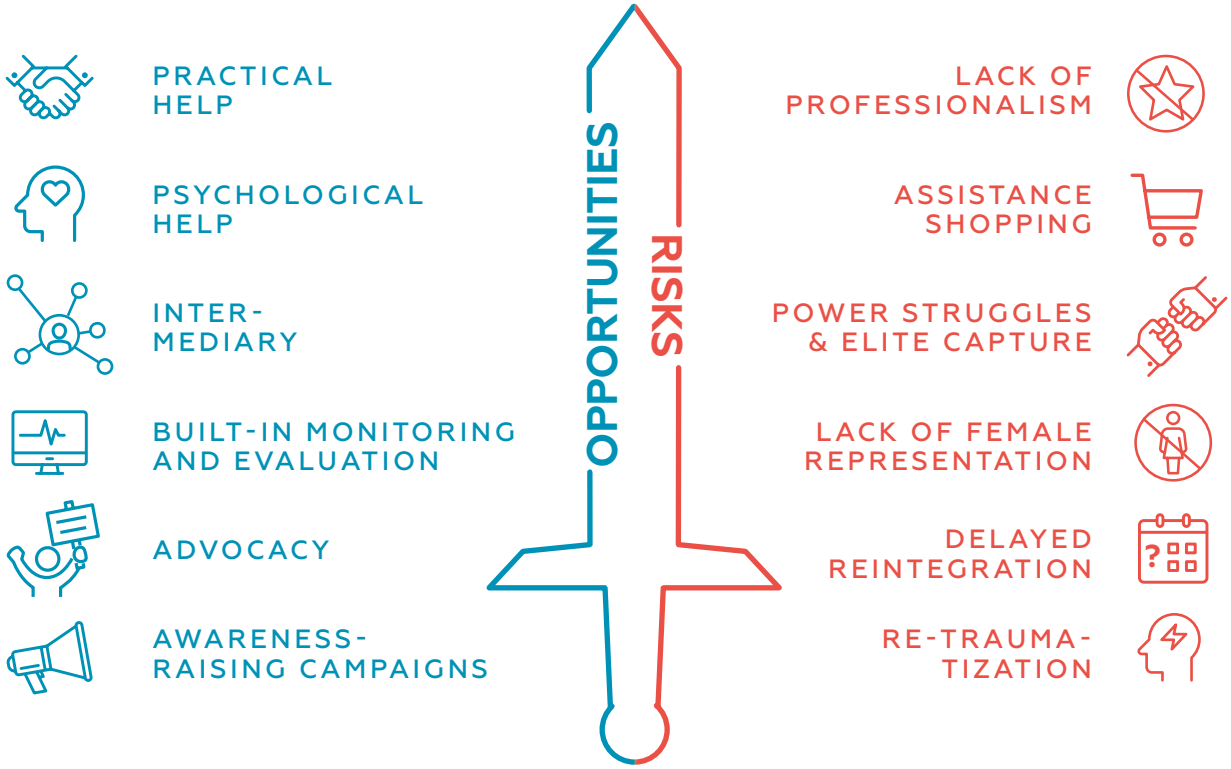
4. OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF RETURNEE NETWORKS

Returnee networks are akin to a double-edged sword. The limited research that has been done to date on this subject tends to emphasize the positive effects they can have on their members and the broader communities.[57] But the closer look this research takes also finds that returnee networks carry numerous risks both for their members and for the sustainability of reintegration programs. These risks are important to consider when developing engagement strategies. The following chapter analyzes the strengths and opportunities that returnee networks offer (4.1.) and contrasts them with the limitations and risks inherent to returnee networks (4.2.).

4.1 Opportunities and Strengths

Returnee networks can and do provide **practical support** to recently returned people, be it with helping to find a place to stay or a job, or assistance in dealing with bureaucracy. The hands-on support that some returnee networks offer includes running shelters for new arrivals or connecting them with organizations that offer short-term accommodation.[58] Besides housing, returnees need a source of income. Some networks try to help returnees enter the local labor market by referring them to training or job opportunities, or they have members who run their own businesses and can employ other returnees they meet through the networks. Networks also provide practical advice for dealing with bureaucracy and administrative tasks such as obtaining updated docu-

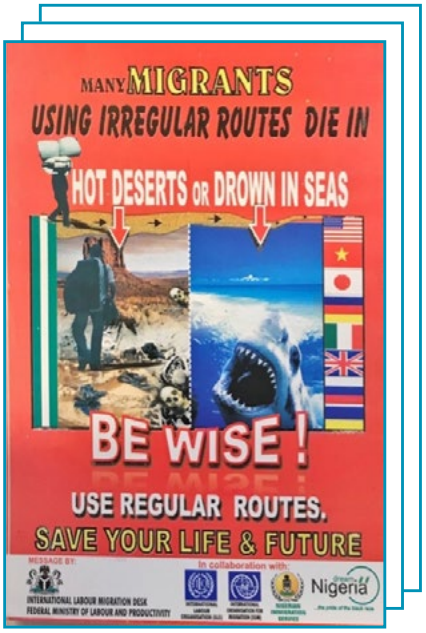
Figure 4 – The Two Sides of the Sword: Opportunities and Risks



57 See for example Samuel Hall, Community profiling of return areas in Nigeria (Executive Summary), for the regional West Africa bureau and the International Organization for Migration (September 2018), p. 14: https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/report/community-profiling-return-areas-nigeria-executive-summary (accessed February 27, 2023); Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, "Stopping the Revolving Door," (see note 3); Schultz, "Failed" migratory adventures? (see note 3); and ICMPD, ICMPD, Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa (April 2021), https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/53786/file/Study_EN.pdf (accessed Februart 24, 2023)

58 In Liberia, a returnee network even preempted this problem by acquiring ten acres of land for the construction of housing units for Liberians still living as refugees in nearby countries, see J. H. Webster Clayeh, "Liberia Returnee Network Purchases 10 Acres of Land in Bomi County for the Return of Liberian Refugees in Neighboring Countries," FrontPageAfrica (January 11, 2022): https://frontpageafricaonline.com/news/liberia-returnee-network-purchases-10-acres-of-land-in-bomi-county-for-the-return-of-liberian-refugees-in-neighboring-countries/ (accessed February 8, 2023).

Figure 5 – Nigerian Campaign Flyers to Raise Awareness About the Dangers of the Route



ments, enrolling children in school, or accessing health and social protection schemes. Checking in with different authorities and organizations for support can be lengthy and taxing.[59] Helping hands from fellow returnees can make a direct difference in navigating these acute challenges.

A second fundamental strength of returnee networks is the **psychological help** they can offer new returnees to give them guidance and help them deal with stigma and trauma. Family and societal value judgments can be dangerous obstacles to social reintegration. The feeling of being isolated and misunderstood amplifies those difficulties.[60] Having the opportunity to talk with community members who have experienced comparable traumatic emigration and return journeys can be an important self-help mechanism. Conversations about the shared experience can have positive psychological effects on both sides: "I support the female survivors because they are just like me," one network founder, who had returned from Libya, explained. "It gives me a lot of joy to know that in one way or the other, I can put aside my own personal struggles to help other people."[61] The power of such peer-to-peer support is also understood by IOM, which provides training to returnees to Nigeria specifically with the goal of enabling them to support the psychological reintegration of other returnees.[62] This kind of succor is no substitute for professional psychological support, but it is beneficial, especially when professional support is scarce.

59 Jill Alpes, "Emergency returns by IOM from Libya and Niger. A protection response or a source of protection concerns?" medico international (July 2020): https://www.medico.de/fileadmin/user_upload/media/rueckkehr-studie-en.pdf (accessed February 8, 2023).

60 Ruerd Ruben et al., "What Determines the Embeddedness of Forced-Return Migrants? Rethinking the Role of Pre- and Post-Return Assistance," International Migration Review 43, no. 4 (2009), pp. 908–937: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00789.x (accessed February 8, 2023).

61 Interview 18.

62 IOM, "Returnees, Health Workers Join Hands to Improve Psychosocial Well-being in Nigeria," (November 20, 2020): https://www.iom.int/news/returnees-health-workers-join-hands-improve-psychosocial-well-being-nigeria (accessed February 8, 2023).

Third, returnee networks also can fulfill a pivotal function as trusted **intermediaries** between returnees and reintegration service providers.[63] They can be a credible and non-threatening source of information, which is why they can contribute to the knowledge about available services among returnees. Even though some returnees receive information about reintegration services prior to their return, not all offers are known or remembered by the potential beneficiaries. Returnee networks can refer eligible returnees to the reintegration services and tell service providers about recent returnees these are not in touch with yet. Further, they can address doubts that returnees sometimes have about service providers. Mistrust of local authorities and institutions associated with the return prevents some returnees from making use of reintegration services. Members of returnee networks can help by offering first-hand accounts of the offers and their individual conditions and benefits.

Working as an intermediary, returnee networks can also provide feedback to service providers, thereby functioning as a **built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanism** for reintegration programming. As members of the networks participate in various reintegration measures, such as on-the-job training or counseling, they can provide direct or aggregate feedback anonymously and put forward ideas for improvement.

A fourth strength of networks is that they can be credible **advocates** for returnees' interests vis-à-vis their governments. For instance, the Gambian network "Youths against Irregular Migration" (YAIM) gave its members a voice that was heard by political stakeholders and influenced the re-orientation of reintegration programs.[64] In Nigeria, Solomon Okoduwa, a former returnee and founder of the initiative "Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Reintegration," became a vocal activist for the human rights of returnees, eventually rising to the position of Senior Special Assistant on Human Trafficking and Irregular Migration to the Edo State governor.[65] In Bosnia-Herzegovina, returnee associations played a key role in the efforts to reclaim and rebuild destroyed property.[66] And in Mali, protests of the members of the Association Malienne des Expulsés in the 1990s seemed to have improved the situation of forced returnees to Mali, since the government changed its policy and stopped detaining them.[67]

Lastly, members of returnee networks are credible campaigners who **can raise awareness and educate their communities** about risks of irregular migration and the challenges for returnees. Studies have shown that potential migrants tend to distrust foreign information campaigns and that they are more likely to believe first-hand reports from members of their own communities or from other migrants they meet on their journey.[68] In line with these findings, IOM started its "Migrants as Messengers" project in 2017. The campaign, which has been implemented in countries in South Asia, West Africa, and South America, relies on returned migrants who share their stories in person or via video recordings.[69] Many of the returnee networks interviewed in Nigeria in the course of this project are closely associated with this campaign: Some members just participated in the project, and some were inspired by the training and created networks to execute the campaigning. The strength of returnee networks to provide credible voices is thus used strategically by IOM and other foreign donors which invest in campaigning components. The leaders of returnee networks in Nigeria reported that their awareness raising campaigns were supported by the Salvation Army, UNHCR, and

63 The networks' direct contact to returnees especially pays off in hard-to-reach places or exceptional situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In large territorial states such as Nigeria, the central government or development actors present in the country may not be able to always serve all parts of the population directly, be it due to territorial or sanitary barriers. Here, it becomes crucial to have reliable intermediaries which can reach the one's people of concern.

64 Franzisca Zanker and Judith Altrogge, "The Political Influence of Return: From Diaspora to Libyan Transit Returnees," International Migration (25 March 2019), pp. 8-9: https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12578 (accessed February 8, 2023).

65 Devatop, "Obaseki Appoints SSA On Human Trafficking, Illegal Migration," (December 16, 2017): https://www.devatop.org/obaseki-appoints-ssa-on-human-trafficking-illegal-migration/ (accessed February 8, 2023).

66 Selma Porobič, "Bosnian 'Returnee Voices' Communicating Experiences of Successful Reintegration. The Social Capital and Sustainable Return Nexus in Bosnia and Herzegovina," Südosteuropa 64, no. 1 (2016), pp. 5-26. https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2016-0002 (accessed February 8, 2023).

67 Almamy Sylla and Susanne U. Schultz, "Mali: Abschiebungen als postkoloniale Praxis," pp. 397-398; Interview 17; Schultz, "Failed" migratory adventures? (see note 3), p. 57.

68 See for example Jasper Tjaden and Felipe Alexander Dunsch, "The effect of peer-to-peer risk information on potential migrants – Evidence from a randomized controlled trial in Senegal," (2020): https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105488 ; Jill Alpes and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, "Migration Risk Campaigns are Based on Wrong Assumptions," Danish Institute for International Studies (May 2015): https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Migration/StudyMigrants/CivilSociety/JillAlpesMigrationcampaigns.pdf (accessed February 8, 2023); Ida Marie Savio Vammen et al., "Does Information Save Migrants' Lives? Knowledge and needs of West African migrants en route to Europe," Danish Institute for International Studies (2021): https://pure.diis.dk/ws/files/4209801/Does_information_save_migrants_lives_DIIS_Report_2021_01.pdf (accessed February 8, 2023).

69 IOM , "What is Migrants as Messengers?" (2023): https://www.migrantsasmessengers.org/about (accessed February 9, 2023).

IOM.[70] This approach, while promising in principle, brings a risk of re-traumatization and of instrumentalizing the networks – one of the downsides and limitations the next section explores.

4.2 Risks and Limitations

Engaging with returnee networks comes with several risks and limitations. First, the risk of **power struggles and elite capture** of resources. This is a general risk for any group, but it is amplified in situations where basic resources are scarce and networks serve as sources of income or livelihood for their initiators, especially when these lack alternative ways to make a living. For instance, the positive function of acting as intermediary between service providers and beneficiaries can become problematic when returnee networks hog information or use it as leverage, for instance by demanding payment in exchange for information about reintegration services. Similarly, the information networks gather about their members and the decisions they take can lead to power struggles within the networks. Prominent positions, for example as founder or leader of a network, provide people with a position of power where their views are heard and valued by authorities.[71] This is particularly tempting for returnees who lack a sense of belonging and suffer from not being respected members of society.

The risk of elite capture is further compounded by the fact that the reintegration market is usually decentralized and barely coordinated, which makes it easier to take advantage. The risk for power struggles and elite capture is likely to increase substantially once networks receive an influx of funds.

Internal power struggles can also lead to spin-offs, as happened in Mali. Several members broke away from their original returnee network, which had attracted funds from state and international organizations, and created a new returnee network to compete with their former network and raise their own standing.[72] Spin-offs are not a bad thing in itself, of course, but when they are the result of insufficient accountability within a network, they are the symptom of a larger problem.

Second, many returnee networks are self-taught and highly motivated but **lack professionalization**. The networks aim high with their mission and goals but are hampered by the same basic challenges that many grassroots civil society groups struggle with: They tend to be personality-driven, without enough of a structure to implement project ideas. Funding is minimal – if it exists at all. While the networks know the problems returnees face, they tend to think of themselves as the best-placed organizations to offer the required services. Other actors do not get factored in, either because the leaders of the network are not aware of them, or because they harbor suspicions toward them. In Nigeria, for example, many leaders aspire to open training centers to offer on-the-job training for returnees. This is problematic on two counts: On the one hand, a big part of a network's activities, such as providing counseling or job training, risks having little effect if done without proper training and connections to relevant partners such as potential employers. On the other hand, returnee networks have the tendency to duplicate existing services because they do not coordinate or, even when they try to coordinate, they are seen as small players that can be useful to talk to but not to engage or partner with. The situation is further complicated by the well-established fact that potential partners also are potential competitors for funds, attention, or other resources. This partly explains why coordination is one of the key challenges for reintegration support (as for many other public policy issues). [73]

Another risk that returnee networks' activities entail is that they can **increase assistance shopping**. When networks refer returnees to services and training opportunities, they may be tempted to do one training after another, a phenomenon known as assistance shopping or chain support. Some interviewees also said that returnees sometimes move from one short-term aid to the next. Some end up selling the in-kind goods they are given at the end of their training (such as kitchen equipment, mechanic tools, or sewing machines) to make money, either to ensure subsistence for a short time or to pay off smuggling debts. This problem is amplified when start-up funding provided as reintegration support is insufficient or inadequate, and alternative financial opportuni-

70 Interviews 18, 21, 24, and 25.

71 See also Mariia Shaidrova, "Performing 'Returnee' in Benin City, Nigeria," Journal of International Migration and Integration (July 23, 2022): https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-022-00976-9 (accessed February 8, 2023).

72 Interview 17.

73 ICMPD, "Nigeria Country Brief" in Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa (April 2021), p. 34 ff.: https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/53786/file/Study_EN.pdf (accessed February 24, 2023).

ties such as micro-credits are unavailable because returnees are seen as not creditworthy due to unstable living conditions and a lack of collateral.[74]

The **lack of female representation** in most of networks identified through this research is another crucial limitation. Although the researchers could locate returnee networks in Nigeria and Mali that are led by women (Female Returnees Forum of Nigeria, Foundation for Action Against Irregular Migration, and Association des Femmes Rapatriées de la Cote d'Ivoire), most networks are headed by men and rarely address gender issues, let alone intersectional ones. The underrepresentation of women in returnee networks is not surprising, especially when there are few women in the overall returnee population. But the pattern of underrepresentation also has cultural reasons as illustrated by other peer-to-peer formats for returnees. For instance, an IOM-initiated mentoring program for returnees in Senegal and Guinea counted mostly male mentors. One of the few female mentors described her impression that women were seen by participants as "not hav[ing] power to resolve family problems."[75] These findings emphasize the calls in the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) for gender-responsive return and reintegration programs. At the same time, they illustrate why practical implementation is difficult.[76]

Dedicated membership in a returnee network can also solidify a member's returnee status – a status that is inherently temporary – and thus **delay reintegration**. When returnees keep to themselves and predominantly engage in activities that are related to the condition of being a newly returned migrant, psychosocial reintegration, such as overcoming feelings of alienation and embracing local social networks, may take a back seat.[77] Being a returnee is a transitory status, but creating an identity and making a living based on the experience and the associated eligibility for assistance or sympathy can introduce an additional barrier between returnees and their community.[78] What is more, a community may not be as willing to accept returning migrants as part of society if it sees them primarily as returnees. This holds especially true in societies where return migration is highly stigmatized.

Finally, there is a particular risk associated with the awareness raising campaigns that many returnee networks engage in. Telling others about past experiences can be therapeutic if done in a private and safe environment. But it carries a risk of **re-traumatization** if done in a public or even adversarial setting. Also, if these campaigns are not initiated by network members but are motivated by a prospect of receiving funds, there is a risk of instrumentalization. In Nigeria, IOM's Migrants as Messengers campaign explicitly encouraged returnees to share their stories in marketplaces, schools, or other public fora to raise awareness about the dangers of such a journey. Peer pressure within the network may incentivize some members to participate in these campaigns even if they do not feel comfortable with it. In some contexts, there is also a risk of backlash from publicly branding oneself as a returnee, especially for women. For instance, one woman had her engagement called off after she spoke out publicly about her experiences of migrating to Libya because her fiancé's family assumed that she must have worked in prostitution.[79] This illustrates a gendered stereotype with an outsized negative impact on female returnees.

74 IOM, "Access to Microcredit Opportunities for Returned Migrants during and beyond IOM Support," (2016), p. 9: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/access_to_microcredit.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023); Interview 23.

75 Nassim Majidi et al., "Re-Balancing the Reintegration Process and the Potential of Mentoring for Returnees: Evidence from Senegal, Guinea and Morocco," Journal of International Migration and Integration (2022): https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12134-022-00963-0) (accessed February 27, 2023).

76 United Nations, "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration" (July 2018), art. 37b: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023).

77 Lucia Salgado et al., "Putting Migrant Reintegration Programmes to the Test,". p. 15.

78 See also Mariia Shaidrova, "Performing a 'Returnee' in Benin City".

79 Interview 50.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The idea that returnee networks mostly are a positive force that can and should be partnered with consistently is flawed. This report shows that returnee networks are akin to a double-edged sword with many downsides and risks. But it also highlights the many positive contributions that groups of returnees can make and are already making around the world. This study showcases many people and organizations who invest their time and creativity to improve the situation for returnees and who make a positive difference for migrants and their communities. Crucially, many of the problems and limitations are not specific to returnee networks but typical of grassroots groups and civil society initiatives in general. Returnee networks should not be overlooked or underestimated by their communities, governments, development agencies, foundations, and international organizations.

Returnees' perspectives should always be a part of reintegration programming. The question is not whether to engage returnee networks but how to engage them usefully. Any engagement must follow the so-called "do no harm" principle, which is one of the guiding principles of development investments. According to this principle, actors should identify and avert potential negative impacts of development cooperation and reflect on possible unintended consequences that well-meaning actions can entail.[80] This report gives a check list of such possible unintended consequences of engaging with returnee networks.

So how should development actors engage with returnee networks while respecting the "do no harm" principle? How can they lift returnee networks up and support and capitalize on their strengths while averting possible risks and limiting their downsides? And how should they adapt overall migration cooperation to make reintegration more equitable and sustainable?

Policymakers and practitioners in development agencies and other government units, international organizations, foundations, and civil society organizations should consider the following five recommendations:

1 Representation matters: Map and engage with returnee networks but beware self-proclaimed leaders' ability to speak for returnees

Just like diaspora groups, returnee networks are not always representative of the overall group of returnees. Not all returnees engage in networks, and some voices within the networks are given more weight than others. Amplifying singular loud voices can marginalize a silent majority that is unable to make itself heard due to individual hardship or structural oppression. This research found that women are noticeably underrepresented in many networks and that vulnerable groups may not know about them or not be welcomed into them. [81] Especially when development actors try to follow concepts like intersectionality or feminist development policy, they should abstain from following the blanket advice to "give a voice" to all networks because not all voices need equal encouragement. Some can actively contribute to silencing other vulnerable groups.

Development actors should therefore identify and map returnee groups that are active in the region or country, consider who their leaders and members are, and then weigh the possibilities and limitations of engaging with them in their specific context. The mapping should include developing criteria to measure and assess the accountability and reliability of the networks identified. The results should then guide the decision with which networks to engage in the next step. The criteria can differ according to local context but should include information about the networks' structure, ways of communication, and leadership. Practices like lifetime presidencies or a nontransparent use of networks' resources by their founders or leaders merit special attention.

80 The "do no harm" principle is sometimes used synonymously with the term "conflict sensitivity" and sometimes separately from it. Originally borrowed from the Hippocratic oath, the pledge doctors make to avoid harming patients through their intervention has been the medical profession's guiding principle for thousands of years. As a wider expression, the "do no harm" principle gained traction in the 1990s and has since spread to other disciplines (most recently, it has made an appearance as "do no significant harm" in the climate debate). For more information, see BMZ, "Do-no-harm-Prinzip," (2023): https://www.bmz.de/de/service/lexikon/14244-14244 (accessed February 20, 2023); Jean Martial Bonis Charancle and Elena Lucchi, "Incorporating the Principle of "Do No Harm": How to Take Action Without Causing Harm: Reflections on a Review of Humanity & Inclusion's Practices," Humanity & Inclusion and F3E (October 1, 2018): https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/donoharm_pe07_synthesis.pdf (accessed February 20, 2023); and Nadia Humphreys, "What does it mean to "Do No Significant Harm"?" Bloomberg Professional Services (March 4, 2022): https://www.bloomberg.com/professional/blog/what-does-it-mean-to-do-no-significant-harm/ (accessed February 20, 2023).

81 This is especially important in contexts in which ethnic divides are present. For example, in Kosovo, reintegration needs may significantly differ based on the ethnicity of the returnees and the associated exclusion practices. The mapping should take diversity within the network's membership into account.

Both during the mapping stage and especially if continued engagement becomes likely, development actors should try and engage not only with the (often self-proclaimed) heads of returnee networks, who may already be well-connected to international organizations and other donors. Focusing on them can produce elite echo chambers which fail to foster innovation at a grassroot level. Instead, talking to the ordinary members of a network conveys a better sense of how representative a group is and to which degree members really are involved. Based on this, development actors can assess the feedback, advice, or demands of a network more accurately. If these caveats are taken into account, cooperation with networks can help development actors incorporate a wider range of returnee voices into the design, implementation, and adaptation of reintegration programs.

2 Money matters (but is not everything): Consider financial support for accountable networks and in-kind support for professionalization and cross-border exchanges

Development actors can support organizations in various ways. While it can be appropriate to provide financial support, this study does raise red flags regarding elite capture and power struggles – problems that tend to get worse the more money is at stake. Development agencies should thus only in certain circumstances provide funds that would lead to paid staff positions and organizational hierarchies of returnee networks. Funding can be useful if the following qualifiers are considered:

- Support returnee networks that have been identified as trustworthy in the initial mapping process. In particular, groups should have a system of checks and balances that prevents leaders from taking unilateral or arbitrary decisions. At the very least, they should be open to introducing accountability mechanisms.

- Support activities that networks are particularly well suited to provide, especially psychological help, and the evaluation of reintegration programs. Offering low-threshold mentoring and peer-to-peer support is a unique feature that sets returnee networks apart from most other reintegration actors. This function also makes the networks suited to giving feedback on reintegration offers and identifying protection gaps.

- Develop projects jointly and support networks as sustainably as possible, ideally cooperating beyond short-term project cycles. Given the fact that the duration of many reintegration programs is defined by the political preferences of the donor rather than by local needs, returnee networks can be a way to sustain and localize support.

At least initially, it may be more useful for many returnee networks to receive in-kind support, including technical support, capacity building, contacts with potential allies or funders, and connections across provinces or national borders. For instance, workshops on organizational development can teach networks how to conduct their activities more efficiently and transparently and how to attract new members, including from underrepresented groups. Development actors can link returnee networks to organizations that have expertise with advocacy, awareness-raising, or other functions networks can or want to fulfill.

It can also be useful to work as a bridge between returnee networks and the government units in charge of reintegration and migration policies, especially in contexts where the trust toward authorities might be low. This could build working relationships that last beyond foreign donors' project cycles and thus increase sustainability. In addition, connecting more experienced networks with newer networks transnationally can create a flow of information across borders about shared challenges and how to overcome them. Such exchanges can happen either bilaterally or within larger meet-and-greet formats. Meeting in person may help create stronger connections, while online gatherings can include a broader variety of participants. But both will help networks identify and leverage their institutional strengths, be it to bolster core activities or to expand their scope, for instance by drawing up joint funding proposals.

3 Timing matters: Decide whether to initiate new networks or partner with established groups

Development actors can choose to either encourage the emergence of new networks or support the activities and reach of existing groups. How they time their engagement brings separate challenges. Development actors should, as a first step, carefully consider the goals they pursue with the engagement and the trade-offs their chosen form of engagement involves.

Some actors may want to set up a network to send messages through it and thus pursue their own goals.[82] IOM' Migrants as Messengers campaign illustrates this approach. The campaign engineered returnee networks and initiated their formation, partly with the goal to leverage them to tell their stories and raise awareness about the dangers of migration. In terms of numbers, this was an effective campaign: many new networks launched, lots of awareness raising conducted. But it is unclear to which degree the interest to tell returnees' stories was a genuine joint interest of returning migrants and IOM, or rather an imposed interest. In some cases, returnees may have taken part in this campaign to receive basic help rather than to follow an intrinsic motivation to talk publicly about painful experiences.[83]

Actors could consider changing the message they want to send via the networks: If the goal of a campaign is not to raise awareness about the dangers of the route but to destigmatize returnees, the focus shifts from past hardship and traumatic experiences to the new lives that refugees lead as part of their local communities. Such an approach would both decrease the risk of re-traumatization and transform the image of returnees: Instead of as victims, they can be seen as active agents who are in control of their own lives and bring about positive change in their communities.

Working with existing networks offers other opportunities and challenges. Actors engaging with long-standing returnee networks can tap into their established connections. This can help them reach new arrivals, obtain feedback from former returnees, or facilitate referrals for services. Such networks may, however, be hesitant to engage with development actors if they believe that this could endanger their credibility as independent organizations and advocates for returnees' rights. Strong incentives – especially the prospect of a long-term engagement that is truly reciprocal and not imposed – are likely needed to establish collaboration with such established networks.

There is a fine line between cooperation and instrumentalization, particularly if one partner is financially powerful and the other depends on funding. It is the responsibility of the more powerful partner to hedge against this risk, for instance by developing ideas jointly with established networks and following participatory approaches.

4 Location matters: Engage with returnees not only in countries where European attention looms large but wherever numbers are high and conditions favorable

European development actors should move beyond their traditional approach of investing in reintegration primarily in the main countries of origin of migrants living in Europe. Instead, they should also invest in reintegration in other countries with high numbers of returnees independently of where they return from.

This approach has two benefits: First, having a critical number of returnees in a country makes it more likely for the government to invest in reintegration infrastructure (such as setting up responsible government units, expanding arrival services, etc.). Investments become more sustainable since they correspond to the interest of both the country and the donor. High numbers also make returnee networks more likely; either because they already exist or because there is a sufficiently high number of returnees interested in setting them up. Second, when a country is not a main source of irregular migrants to Europe, European engagement on reintegration gains credibility as it involves less immediate self-interest. This may improve Europe's reputation in those countries.

Picking appropriate countries for such an engagement is tricky, though. The three countries with the highest number of returning refugees are currently South Sudan, Burundi, and Syria. If development actors engage with the regimes of these three coun-

82 If the goal is to send messages through the network, it is important to consider the type of network along the four lines identified in chapter 2: While forced returnees can help raise awareness of the dangers of irregular migration, alumni networks of former students abroad or migrant workers can be a point of contact for those considering migration to learn about opportunities and contacts.

83 Several studies suggest that international migration agencies support programs that align with their agendas, often not taking into sufficient consideration how such programs affect the returnees themselves; see for example Dan Bulley, "Shame on EU? Europe, RtoP, and the Politics of Refugee Protection," Ethics & International Affairs 31, no. 1 (March 10, 2017), pp. 51-70: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0892679416000666 (accessed February 20, 2023); B. S. Chimni, "From resettlement to involuntary repatriation: Towards a critical history of durable solutions to refugee problems," Refugee Survey Quarterly 23, no. 3 (October 2004), pp. 55-73: https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/23.3.55 (accessed February 20, 2023); Jeff Crisp and Katie Long, "Safe and voluntary refugee repatriation: From principle to practice," Journal of Migration and Human Security 4, no. 3 (2016), pp. 141-147: https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241600400305 (accessed February 20, 2023); or Carl Thor Dahlman, "Unity amid barbed wire: Asylum restrictions, European integration and the migration crisis," Journal of Peacebuilding and Development 11, no. 3 (2016), pp. 8-22: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2016.1222594 (accessed February 20, 2023).

tries at all, reintegration issues take a back seat over broader political issues or development goals.[84]

It may make more sense to engage with countries where the governments are already actively engaged in reintegration, such as Bangladesh or the Philippines, but where services for some groups of returning migrants are not readily available. For instance, the Bangladeshi government supports the reintegration of returned workers but provides less support to people who are forced to return to Bangladesh.[85] Although there are some projects by international actors that include this group of returnees, such as the EU-funded Prottasha project, protection gaps remain.[86] Migrants from the Philippines fill labor shortages in countries all over the world, most prominently in the Middle East. In 2020 alone, nearly 800,000 overseas workers returned to the Philippines due to the COVID-19 crisis.[87] When governmental reintegration support for labor migrants is strained, forced returnees may fall through the cracks. Further countries where return numbers are high and conditions generally favorable toward reintegration are Latin American countries like Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Here, the governments have expanded their reintegration support over the past decades, but services remain limited and would benefit from expansion.[88]

Whether it is attractive for European countries to invest in reintegration in these countries is a political question, of course. But if the goal is to invest in countries where reintegration numbers are high, services are limited, and governments are open to cooperation, these countries merit attention.

5 Choice matters: Expand reintegration goals to include migration in the region and beyond

Anyone designing reintegration programs should remember that successful reintegration means being able to live a decent life. Thus, good reintegration services ultimately are the same as good development services. They should try to give people perspectives, choices, and hope for the future for themselves and their children. In practice, this means fostering a safe and secure environment, curbing corruption to protect new ventures, providing quality education for children, and expanding decent job opportunities that allow their holders to pay their bills, including migration-related debts, and make ends meet.

Good reintegration also includes safe and legal migration options. While some actors still label reintegration as sustainable if it entails a permanent return to the country of origin, researchers and policymakers increasingly understand that sustainable reintegration does not mean immobility – it can also include future migration and mobility if it is done safely, regularly, and out of genuine choice rather than necessity.

Reintegration programming should therefore be part of the debate about legal pathways. Such pathways, be they for skilled and low-skilled workers, students, or family members, can only be achieved through sustained and long-term cooperation between countries of origin and destination. Well-designed and tailored migration agreements have advantages for migrants as well as for origin and host countries. They can help meet labor market needs in both destination and origin countries, especially when programs include not just migration but skill-building elements. Opening legal channels for migration might reduce irregular migration and increase the safety of migrants and host societies alike, as regu-

84 UNHCR, Global Trends Report 2021 (2022), p.38: https://www.unhcr.org/62a9d1494/global-trends-report-2021 (accessed February 27, 2023).

85 Interview 69.

86 IOM, "Prottasha: Bangladesh Sustainable Reintegration and Improved Migration Governance," https://bangladesh.iom.int/prottasha (accessed February 27, 2023).

87 Maruja MB Asis, "Uncertain Homecoming: Challenges Faced by Returned. Overseas Filipino Workers," IOM (2022), p. 8: https://philippines.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1651/files/documents/1_Uncertain%20Homecoming%20-%20Challenges%20Faced%20By%20Returned%20Overseas%20Filipino%20Workers.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023); IOM Philippines, COVID-19 Impact Assessment on Returned Overseas Filipino Workers (July 13, 2021), p. 10: https://crest.iom.int/en/resources/reports/covid-19-impact-assessment-returned-overseas-filipino-workers (accessed February 27, 2023); United Nations, Philippines' Submission of the Voluntary National Review For the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, (April 6, 2022): https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/imrf-philippines.pdf (accessed February 27, 2023); Jong Woo Kang and Ma. Concepcion Latoja, "COVID-19 and Overseas Filipino Workers: Return Migration and Reintegration into the Home Country—the Philippine Case," Asian Development Bank (February 2022): https://www.adb.org/publications/covid-19-ofws-return-migration-reintegration (accessed February 27, 2023).

88 Rodrigo Dominguez-Villegas, "Protection and Reintegration: Mexico Reforms Migration Agenda in an Increasingly Complex Era," Migration Policy Institute (March 7, 2019): https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/protection-and-reintegration-mexico-reforms-migration-agenda (accessed February 27, 2023); Mónica Suárez and Nuty Cárdenas Alaminos, Back on your Own: Return Migration and the Federal Government Response in Mexico," (February 17, 2021): https://doi.org/10.33679/rmi.v1i1.1731 (accessed February 27, 2023); and Rietig and Dominguez-Villegas, "Stopping the Revolving Door" (see note 3).

lar migrants are less likely to be abused by employers and more likely to report abuse to the police and authorities since they do not have to fear deportation. Legal migration agreements also matter for political messaging. They enable origin and destination countries to jointly steer migration flows and increase the (perception of) control of migratory movements. This is welcome to governments who want to signal to their citizens that they are actively shaping migration and buffering its negative sides. Finally, the existence of legal migration pathways also helps reintegration since returnees who migrate safely and regularly tend to find it easier to reintegrate. Good reintegration processes start with safe outmigration.

Governments should actively seek the input of returnee networks when designing labor migration agreements. Especially returned labor migrants or students can provide valuable reality checks on the design and usefulness of planned agreements. Just like the involvement of returnee networks in adapting reintegration services has unique advantages, including the networks in shaping regular pathways can also improve these pathways, since former migrants know about migratory aspirations, missing support systems, and practical obstacles. Bringing the experiences of returnees into migration policy design is overdue – in reintegration programming and beyond.

ANNEX I – CONCEPT NOTE EXPERT WORKSHOP

DGAP CONCEPT NOTE

The Migration Program of the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) cordially invites you to the hybrid expert workshop

RETURNEE NETWORKS FOR REINTEGRATION: WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DON'T KNOW
THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2022, 11:00 – 12:30 AM CEST
DGAP, RAUCHSTRAßE 17, 10787 BERLIN *AND* VIA ZOOM

Good reintegration needs local actors. That is why development actors increasingly invest in building local capacity and work closely with state and non-state actors in countries of origin. However, one type of local actor has not received a lot of attention so far: returnees themselves.

Studies suggest that returnee-led projects can be more sustainable than government programs or other third-party projects because they tend to have greater credibility and ties within migrants' and origin communities. But despite the potential benefits of these networks, we know little about them. Where are they located? How are they created? What are the limits of such networks? When can we foster them – and when not?

The goal of this meeting is twofold: (1) to get a clearer picture of the state of knowledge on returnee networks and their role in reintegration, and (2) to enable networking and knowledge exchange between practitioners and experts from the scientific community, government, international organizations, and civil society in the field of return and reintegration.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

10:30	11:00	Registration and Coffee
11:00	11:15	Welcome remarks by DGAP and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
11:15	11:30	3 short kick-off inputs by participants
11:30	12:20	Open discussion of the following guiding questions:
		1. The Who: Who are (typically) the founders and participants of returnee networks? What are their motivations? Who engages in returnee networks? Who does not engage and why?
		2. The What: What services do returnee networks offer? Which limitations do they typically face?
		3. The How: How do returnee networks get in contact with new returnees (and vice versa)? How are returnee networks organized?
		4. The Effects: What are positive effects of engaging in returnee networks? What are limits of returnee networks and their work? What do we know about the effects of such networks on mobility?
12:20	12:30	Closing: next steps

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ANNEX II – LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFERCI	Association des Femmes Rapatriées de la Cote d'Ivoire
ALSARE	Alianza De Salvadoreños Retornados
AME	Association Malienne des Expulsés
ARTD	Association Retour Travail Dignité
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
DIMAK	Deutsches Informationszentrum für Migration, Ausbildung und Karriere (German Information Center for Migration, Vocational Training and Career)
DRRP	Department for the Reintegration of Repatriated Persons
ETAHT	Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking
EU	European Union
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GERA	Greater Esan Returnees Association
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People
ILO	International Labor Organization
INSAMI	Instituto Salvadoreño del Migrante
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KAEF	Kosovo American Education Fund Alumni Association
MaM	Migrants as Messengers
MRC	Migrant Resources Center
NAPTIP	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OKUP	Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program
PCI	Patriotic Citizen Initiatives
PMD	Programm "Migration & Diaspora" (Program "Migration & Diaspora")
PME	Programm "Migration für Entwicklung" (Program "Migration for Development")
RENACERES	Red Nacional de Emprendedores Retornados Salvadoreños
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TLP	USAID Transformational Leadership Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VHR	Voluntary Humanitarian Return
YAIM	Youth Against Irregular Migration

ANNEX III – LIST OF INTERVIEWS

1. Hajjaj Mustafa, Programme Executive, ETTC-Reintegration Programme in Iraq, virtual interview on May 31, 2022.

2. Susanne U. Schultz, Senior Expert, Bertelsmann Foundation, virtual interview on May 31, 2022.

3. Mansoor Khan, Head of Centre, Nighat Aziz, Research and Reintegration Advisor, and Faisal Shabbir, Counselling and Cooperation Advisor, Pakistani-German Facilitation and Reintegration Centre (PGFRC), GIZ, virtual interview on June 1, 2022.

4. Sandra Vermuijten, Head of the Advice Centres, Eseosa Okuku, Coordinator Benin City, Ivy Basil-Ofili, Senior Employment and Reintegration Advisor, and Tolulope Olaiya, Coordinator Abuja, Nigerian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration, GIZ, virtual interview on June 1, 2022.

5. Katie Kuschminder, Senior Researcher, University of Amsterdam, virtual interview on June 1, 2022.

6. Peter Neelen, Senior Program Manager Return and Reintegration Facility, and Nazanine Nozarian, Program Specialist on Return, Readmission and Reintegration, ICMPD, virtual interview on June 2, 2022.

7. Welella Negussie, Senior Project Assistant AVRR, IOM Germany, virtual interview on June 3, 2022.

8. Markus Rudolf, at the time Senior Researcher, Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), interview in Berlin, Germany, on June 13, 2022.

9. Judith Altrogge, Researcher, University of Osnabrück, virtual interview on June 17, 2022.

10. Stefanie Barratt, Head of Data Standards & Analytics Pillar, and Rebecca Frischkorn, Director of Programmes Unit, Samuel Hall, virtual interview on June 17, 2022.

11. Jonathan Chaloff, Senior Policy Analyst, and Mona Ahmed, Junior Policy Analyst, International Migration Division, OECD, virtual interview on June 24, 2022.

12. Annette Reimer, Head of Iraq Component, and Redar Abdlsalam, Economic Policy Advisor, German Center for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration (GMAC) in Erbil; and Vivianne Guérin, Project Manager Civil Society Component, Programme Migration for Development (PME), virtual interview on June 29, 2022.

13. Katja Schuler, at the time Communication Specialist, Programme Migration for Development (PME), GIZ, virtual interview on July 1, 2022.

14. Virtual interview (anonymous) on July 4, 2023.

15. Jean-Pierre Cassarino, Visiting Professor, College of Europe Natolin, and Adjunct Professor, University of Tuscia, virtual interview on July 5, 2022.

16. Jasmin Kelter, Social Worker, Solidarity with Women in Distress (SOLWODI), virtual interview on July 6, 2022.

17. Almamy Sylla, Senior Lecturer, University of Bamako, virtual interview on July 15, 2022.

18. Chylian Ify Azuh, Founder and Head, Female Returnees Forum Nigeria, virtual interview on July 19, 2023.

19. Oluwagbemisola Lawal, Executive Director, Building Bridges for Youth Initiative, virtual interview on July 21, 2022.

20. Olumide Samuel, Founder and Head, Migrants Hope Again, virtual interview on July 21, 2023.

21. Nosa Stanley Okunwa, Founder and Head, Igbinoba Owas Patrick, Secretary, and Aighobahi Kenneth, Head of Media, Greater Returnee Foundation, virtual interview on July 22, 2022.

22. Osita Osemene, Founder and Director, Patriotic Citizen Initiatives (PCI), virtual interview on July 25, 2023.

23. Roland Nwoha, at the time Project Coordinator, Idia Renaissance, virtual interview on July 25, 2022.

24. Brown Okojie, Founder and Director, Prince Eugene Olumese, Program Manager, Happy Otoide, Supervisor, and Alexander Ehimhen, Greater Esan Returnees Association (GERA), virtual interview on July 25, 2022.

25. Olanipekun Adenike Temitope, Founder and Head, Foundation for action against irregular migration (formerly: Returnees Organization of Surviving Emigrants), virtual interview on July 26, 2022.

26. Elizabeth Oladimeji, Senior Project Assistant AVRR, IOM Nigeria, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 18, 2022.

27. Abiodun Folawiyo, Group Head, Shoespeed, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 18, 2022.

28. Returnee from Germany, Trainee at Shoespeed, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 18, 2022.

29. Germain Ndu Okeke, Co-Founder and Chief Information Officer, and Hansel Ndu Okeke, Co-Founder and CEO, Weevil, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 18, 2022.

30. Returnee from Germany, Trainee at Weevil, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 18, 2022.

31. Amaka Nneji and Ruth Okoirhon, Word of Mouth Counselors, The Migrant Project, Seefar, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 19, 2022.

32. Grace Ngozi Nwagwu, Principal, Vocational and Technical Skills Centre of Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment In Lagos, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 19, 2022.

33. Steve Igbokwe, Deputy Director of Project and Development Office, Cletus Linus E., Provincial Technical and Vocational Education and Training Coordinator, Rexon Tete, Project Officer, and Blessing Wilson Salt, Project Officer, Salesians of Don Bosco Africa Nigeria Niger Province, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 22, 2022.

34. Osita Osemene, Founder and Director, Patriotic Citizen Initiatives (PCI), interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 22, 2022.

35. Focus group interview with Lagos-based Returnee Networks, in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 23, 2022.

36. Nigerian Reintegration Stakeholder Meeting, conducted in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 23, 2022.

37. Omar Sadek, Head of Competence Centre Skills Development, and Adedotun Adeoye, Project Assistant in the Competence Centre Skills Development, German Chamber of Commerce Abroad (AHK) Nigeria, interview in Lagos, Nigeria, on August 23, 2022.

38. Roland Nwoha, at the time Project Coordinator, Idia Renaissance, interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 24, 2022.

39. Brown Okojie, Founder and Director, Prince Eugene Olumese, Program Manager, Happy Otoide, Supervisor, and Alexander Ehimhen, Greater Esan Returnees Association (GERA), interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 25, 2022.

40. Focus group interview with eight returnees, Nigerian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration beneficiaries, in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 25, 2022.

41. Nosa Stanley Okunwa, Founder and Head, Igbinoba Owas Patrick, Secretary, and Aighobahi Kenneth, Head of Media, Greater Returnee Foundation, interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 25, 2022.

42. Nduka Nwanwene, Benin Zonal Commander, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Nigeria, interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 26, 2022.

43. Aigbeze Uhimwen, Senior Project Assistant AVRR, and Elizabeth Oladimeji, Senior Project Assistant AVRR, IOM Nigeria, interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 26, 2022.

44. Itohan Okungbowa, Executive Secretary, Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 26, 2022.

45. Oriakhi Onomen Priscilla, Anti-Human Trafficking Program Associate, Emmanuel Nnacho, Monitoring Evaluation Associate, and Omasan Eyikimiaghan, Information Management Associate, Caritas Nigeria, interview in Benin City, Nigeria, on August 26, 2022.

46. Joel Zombou, Adviser for Employment Promotion and Migration, and Princess George, Advisor – Migration & Reintegration, Pro-Poor Growth and Promotion of Employment in Nigeria – SEDIN, GIZ, interview in Abuja, Nigeria, on August 30, 2022.

47. Rafael Osterloh, Advisor, Skills Development for Youth Employment (SKYE) project, GIZ, interview in Abuja, Nigeria, on August 30, 2022.

48. Interview (anonymous) in Abuja, Nigeria, on August 30, 2022.

49. Interview (anonymous) in Abuja, Nigeria, on August 30, 2022.

50. Udekwe Kennedy Obinna, Founder and Director, Joyce Obuseh, Member, Harrison Amami, Member, Glory Ifeoma Okoro, Member, Mary Bello, Member, Tracy Gabriel, Member, and Frederick Abugu, Member, Migrants Lives Matter, interview in Abuja, Nigeria, August 31, 2022.

51. Austin Obinna Ezejiofor, Team Leader, Program Migration & Diaspora (PMD), GIZ, interview in Abuja, Nigeria, August 31, 2022.

52. Aihawu Victor, Director, Centre for Youths Integrated Development (CYID), interview in Abuja, Nigeria, September 1, 2022.

53. Olumide Abimbola, Executive Director, Africa Policy Research Institute (APRI), interview in Berlin, Germany, on September 7, 2023.

54. Ramadan Islami, Coordinator, and Emine Dodiq, Advisor, Programme Migration for Development (PME), Deutsches Informationszentrum für Migration, Ausbildung und Karriere (DIMAK) Pristina, GIZ, virtual interview on September 8, 2022.

55. Catherine Udida, Director Migration Affairs, National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI) Nigeria, written interview on September 9, 2022.

56. Solomon Okoduwa, Founder and Director, Initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Reintegration (IYAMIDR), virtual interview on September 28, 2023.

57. Michael Sauer, Professor for Social Policy, Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg, virtual interview on October 10, 2022.

58. Janine Pinkow-Läpple, PhD Student, Leibniz Institute of Agricultural Development in Transition Economies (IAMO), virtual interview on October 10, 2022.

59. Virtual interview (anonymous) on October 21, 2022.

60. Alban Kryeziu, Project Manager "Active Labour Market Programmes", UNDP Kosovo, virtual interview on October 18, 2022.

61. Arjeta Emra, Arjeta Emra, Independent Consultant who led a reintegration project in Gjakova, virtual interview on October 18, 2022.

62. Representative (anonymous), Lady NGO, virtual interview on October 20, 2023.

63. Valon Jashari, Social Advisor, URA project Kosovo, virtual interview on October 24, 2022.

64. Shqipe Breznica, Country Director, Help! Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe Kosovo, virtual interview on October 24, 2022.

65. Luiza Sekiraqa, Project Manager, Caritas Switzerland in Kosovo, virtual interview on October 25, 2022.

66. Ruth Vollmer, Researcher, Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), telephone interview on October 26, 2022.

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73. Kaltrina Kusari, Sessional Instructor, University of Calgary, and Board Member, The Ideas Partnership (TIP), interview in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 20, 2023.

74. Emine Dodiq, Advisor, Programme Migration for Development (PME), and Bardha Gashi Thaci, Social Advisor, URA project, German Information Centre for Migration, Vocational Training and Career (DIMAK) Pristina, GIZ, interview on November 21, 2023.

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77. Representatives (anonymous), Lady NGO, interview in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 21, 2023.

78. Focus group interview with five female returnees, Lady NGO beneficiaries, in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 21, 2022.

79. Focus group interview with eight returnees, DIMAK beneficiaries, in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 21, 2022.

80. Ambassador Jörn Rohde, German Embassy Pristina, interview in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 22, 2022.

81. Interview (anonymous) in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 22, 2022.

82. Muhamet Klinaku, Head of Labor Market Department, Empoyment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo, interview in Pristina, Kosovo, on November 22, 2022.

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85. Armend Behluli, Head of Office, Municipal Office for Communities and Return Gjakova, interview in Fush-Kosova, Kosovo, on November 23, 2023.

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