



MENTORING RETURNEES:

Study on Reintegration Outcomes
Through a Comparative Lens.

OCTOBER 2020

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

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ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
ORION	Operationalising an Integrated Approach to Reintegration
RSS	Reintegration Sustainability Survey

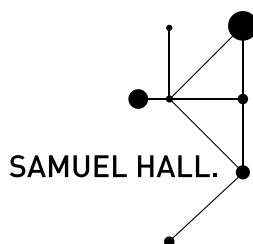
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PHOTOGRAPH CREDIT -

Cover Image - IOM mentor and mentee in Senegal © IOM 2019



METHODOLOGY & OBJECTIVES

This project is the result of a collaboration between the International Organization for Migration, Samuel Hall and the University of Sussex, and analyses outcomes of reintegration in three fieldwork countries (Guinea, Morocco, and Senegal), combined with analysis of data across 14 additional countries. This is done on the basis of standardised indicators developed during a 2017 Samuel Hall / IOM study, which at the time filled in a critical gap: the lack of a common monitoring framework to know how returning migrants or returnees fare post-return. Between 2018 and 2020, IOM has collected data using these indicators and has made this data available to the research team. As a result, this study analyses:

1. Reintegration outcomes based on IOM's Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) database and analysis of scores. While data has been collected across 52 countries of return, the research team examined, a subset containing 5,139 returnee data points for 17 countries.
2. An analysis of the ORION returnee mentoring approach to assess the impact of this pilot project on reintegration in three countries. This included both quantitative and qualitative primary data collection for Senegal and Guinea, and primarily qualitative data collection in Morocco. Data was collected in two locations in each country for a total of six locations (urban and rural) selected based on presence of ORION mentors, returnee profiles, location size, number of non-ORION and ORION beneficiaries, and accessibility. The data included semi-structured interviews (SSIs), family and community case studies, key informant interviews (KIIs), and a complementary phone-based survey.

The full report provides an analysis of reintegration outcomes across these two main bodies of data.

The overarching objective is to examine what the data reveals about returnees' reintegration processes:

- Economic outcomes: are people able to stand on their own feet and be resilient to shocks upon return?
- Social outcomes: are returnees able to access needed services?
- Psychosocial outcomes: are returnees able to 'cope' with their lives upon return? What can be said of their level of confidence, trust, empowerment and social relationships?

Reintegration outcomes

*To what extent have returnees assisted by IOM achieved a level of sustainable reintegration?
Where are the key gaps/needs?*

Outcomes of the mentoring approach

What is the correlation between assistance received and RSS scores? Does mentoring make a difference for reintegration?

Effective reintegration activities

What are existing good practices and effective reintegration initiatives that can be learned from in each country?

KEY FINDINGS: 10 MESSAGES

1. THE MIGRATION CYCLE AFFECTS WHAT HAPPENS POST-RETURN

Reintegration is part of the migration cycle, and is determined by experiences in transit, destination and in the return process. 27% of the sample were 'stranded' migrants, most had spent under six months abroad, and the decision to return was made in one of three contexts – while stranded, in detention, or after a change of mind during the migration process.

2. ALL THREE REINTEGRATION DIMENSIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

Economic assistance has been given primacy in programming and funding, but social and psychosocial support is also necessary. Trauma and difficult experiences occur during migration. Given often difficult and traumatic experiences prior to return (including in some cases situations of detention or being stranded), psychosocial support cannot be considered an 'optional extra', rather it is a crucial component to a healthy and sustainable reintegration process.

3. DATA TRENDS SHOW VARIATIONS ACROSS TIME

The foundational reintegration dimension is economic, while social and psychosocial support are needed to consolidate and sustain reintegration gains. Analysis of trendlines show the mean rate of improvement for each of the countries observed, and highlight where additional support is needed. The data confirms the need for psychosocial support in Senegal, and highlights lessons learned regarding economic reintegration in Ethiopia.

4. CERTAIN VARIABLES HAVE MORE IMPACT ON REINTEGRATION

Regression analyses show that the most impactful variables are:

- The country of residence: with Guinea, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire at the greatest disadvantage. Being in these countries has a negative association with the returnees' reintegration score.
- Training, microbusiness and financial services are positively correlated to score improvements in all dimensions. Financial services may reduce tensions by removing the reliance on loans from family and friends, an area for further investigation given the weight of debt in returnees' lives.

5. NETWORKS ARE THE MISSING LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMMING

Returnees to Guinea face challenges returning to employment and training opportunities into jobs. The role of networks sheds light on this: in Guinea, these were not rated as providing a strong support to returnees; 1 in 5 consider that their networks are "poor or very poor". On the other hand, in Ethiopia, external research shows that networks play a stronger role in reintegration, due partly to well established national and local mechanisms.

6. AN 'ORION EFFECT': POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF THE MENTORING APPROACH

A comparison of ORION mentored returnees and those not benefiting from the mentoring approach showed a contrast across time, between the first and follow-up interviews after return. At the last RSS administered, ORION beneficiaries were better off across all dimensions. Meanwhile, non-ORION beneficiaries stayed at the same level. A regression analysis confirmed the small but statistically significant impact of ORION mentoring on reintegration.

However, context matters: in Guinea, RSS scores improve over time in all dimensions for ORION beneficiaries; in Senegal, there is almost no improvement for ORION returnees and a decrease in scores for non-ORION returnees.

7. THE MENTOR IS A POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE INFLUENCE...BUT ONE AT RISK

Levels of trust in mentors are high, and mentors have increased the confidence and social growth of returnees over time. However, there are four key challenges that test this relationship. These include: keeping track of returnees; engaging with returnees' families; project sustainability and duration; and the mentors' inability to support returnees materially. Programming is siloed, and delays in economic support can damage a trust in the mentor.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUDING LOCAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Government involvement varies most when it comes to active involvement in reintegration programming at local levels, whether in the form of municipal or civil society engagement. Mentors and KIs in Guinea highlighted the impact of municipal involvement on the psychosocial dimension. In Senegal, gaps in regional and local involvement were obstacles to building effective reintegration initiatives. In Morocco, returnee numbers are low, and while local involvement in returnee affairs is new, the local interest in reintegration is higher than in previous years. The cooperative model in Morocco holds the potential of greater synergies benefiting returnees. Overall, effective reintegration initiatives connect the returnee with their ecosystem – other returnees, families, and local actors.

9. REINTEGRATION OUTCOMES SHOULD BE THE FOCUS

IOM's definition of sustainable reintegration requires returnees to achieve economic self-sufficiency, social stability and psychosocial well-being to be able to cope with their situation, and to make any future migration a matter of choice rather than necessity. To meet this goal, the mentoring approach should be strengthened through linkages with other programming and increased autonomy for mentors on all dimensions. Returnees speak of high levels of stress in spite of the support from mentors – connections are missing and more confidence building is needed.

10. MENTORING'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON REINTEGRATION CAN BE ENHANCED

The ORION country contexts are among the toughest across the RSS dataset for reintegration indicators, and ORION shows a positive impact. How to turn this minor impact into a major one? The study recommends integrating the ORION mentoring in all reintegration programming, systematically. Lastly, donor-driven programming has to be replaced by flexible, returnee-driven programming at the level of the individual, joining up the successes of the mentoring approach with critical need in terms of income and livelihoods for returnees.

“The Action which consists in returning the individual into the activity he was doing before he left, or in a new activity: that is reinsertion or insertion.

But the action that allows him to have confidence in himself, and in the community that protects him, that is reintegration.”

Mentor, Guinea

RECOMMENDATIONS

TOWARDS MORE ADAPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING

1. Strengthen the role of mentors in the economic dimensions of reintegration (linking with the private sector and job opportunities) and aspects of the social and psychosocial dimensions (link with the returnee's social ecosystem). Expand their role into a more holistic case management approach.
2. Empower mentors to determine when economic support should be made available. Mentors can initiate a staged approach to assistance, in coordination with IOM.
3. Adopt a revolving cash fund to support short- to medium-term reintegration needs of returnees via small grants.

CONNECTING THE THREE DIMENSIONS WITH SYNERGIES AT LOCAL/NATIONAL LEVELS

4. Build formal referral networks for returnees to access social services and documentation at the local level, and provide communication platforms to better leverage information and awareness about access to and use of services to enhance reintegration.
5. Pursue systematic linkages with national development plans that are increasingly decentralised in many countries of return, offering links to community-level programming. The ORION mentoring approach can contribute to building trust between returnees, communities and governments.
6. Engage more actively in local, participatory fora on reintegration, to involve a range of local actors and start building a sense of ownership and understanding of the benefits of reintegration for all.

BUILD SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

7. Invest in research and pilot initiatives for a stronger use of technology in support of reintegration programming and information sharing. While previous investments in technological innovations have focused on Europe and on refugee interventions, investments are needed in support of migrants' decision-making processes, preparedness for return, and if they choose to return, for their sustainable reintegration.

DOCUMENTING PROCESSES FOR STRONGER MONITORING OF RETURN OUTCOMES

8. Strengthen data management processes at country and sub-office levels.
9. Agree on common standards for monitoring reintegration outcomes to compare outcomes across programmes regardless of the implementing agency or donor. Monitoring standards are still weak and remain essential for accountability to returnees and to donors.

ADVOCATING FOR A MORE DIGNIFIED AND SAFER RETURN PROCESSES

10. Advocate for better conditions for migrants, and specifically for the provision of protection for those on fragmented and dangerous journeys. This report provides further evidence on the difficulties of reintegration when return is compounded by trauma of violence experienced at the hands of border authorities and others. A possible extension of the mentoring approach can be to include mentors in countries of transit and destination, in recognition of the fact that reintegration does not start upon return, but can be planned ahead of time and prior to departure.

As psychosocial support is necessary and crucial upon return, mentoring cannot be considered optional in such cases – the ORION mentoring approach should be systematic, and this study demonstrates the reasons for this. The full report is available in both English and French.

ABOUT SAMUEL HALL:

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. Our mandate is to produce research that delivers a contribution to knowledge with an impact on policies, programmes and people. With a rigorous approach and the inclusion of academic experts, field practitioners, and a vast network of national researchers, we access complex settings and gather accurate data.

Our research connects the voices of communities to change-makers for more inclusive societies. Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan, Kenya, Germany and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, please visit www.samuelhall.org

