

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE

REINTEGRATION:

EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE FOR

MIGRANT PROTECTION AND

REINTEGRATION - FIVE YEARS ON

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



DISCLAIMER

EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration

Project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

For more information, visit: www.migrationjointinitiative.org

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Through a community-based reintegration project implemented in Takoradi, Ghana, 25 members of the community and returnees completed technical training, tailored to their educational background and the needs of the local market. They were trained on skills such as operating heavy machinery but also financial literacy. © IOM 2020/Juliane REISSIG

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FOREWORD

Irregular migration can be a dangerous, degrading process that deprives migrants of their intrinsic worth and rights as human beings. Too often, on the routes through Africa and across the Mediterranean, human smugglers, traffickers and others take advantage of migrants who are fleeing violence, the impacts of climate change, or are desperate to make a better living for themselves and their families.

To reduce the number of people putting their lives at risk, increased regular, safe and legal migration channels are needed. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration was developed to save lives, protect and assist migrants along migration routes, making sure that their rights are not only respected, but that they can access essential support and services. Far from stopping migration or dwelling on migrant numbers, the Initiative aims to ensure that the migration journey is safer, well-informed and better managed from the perspective of both migrants and their communities.

This booklet brings together stories and testimonies from our partners and the people we serve, highlighting some of the key achievements of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative to date.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative was created on the basis of the commitments made by European and African leaders at the Valletta Summit in November 2015. It builds on a unique partnership between the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN) – through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – and their respective Member States.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative enables migrants who decide to return to re-establish themselves in their countries of origin through a comprehensive approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities and has the potential to reinforce local development. Upon return, migrants are eligible for reintegration assistance, including counselling, referral to existing programmes and services or in-kind support. They can join collective or community-based projects with other returnees or community members. The Initiative prioritises local leadership of reintegration services, and capacity building of both state and non-state actors, while aiming to address structural challenges to reintegration.



COVID-19 and the mobility restrictions imposed by governments worldwide to limit the spread of the virus left thousands of migrants stranded at borders and in more vulnerable situations. In response, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has supported governments across West and Central Africa to organize humanitarian corridors allowing for the voluntary return of more than 3,000 migrants and enabling the provision of timely pre- and post-arrival COVID-19 assistance, including quarantine services.

As we mark the fifth anniversary of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, I look forward to continued cooperation with the EU and partner states to realize the opportunities of human mobility and address common challenges with the commitment to leave no one behind.

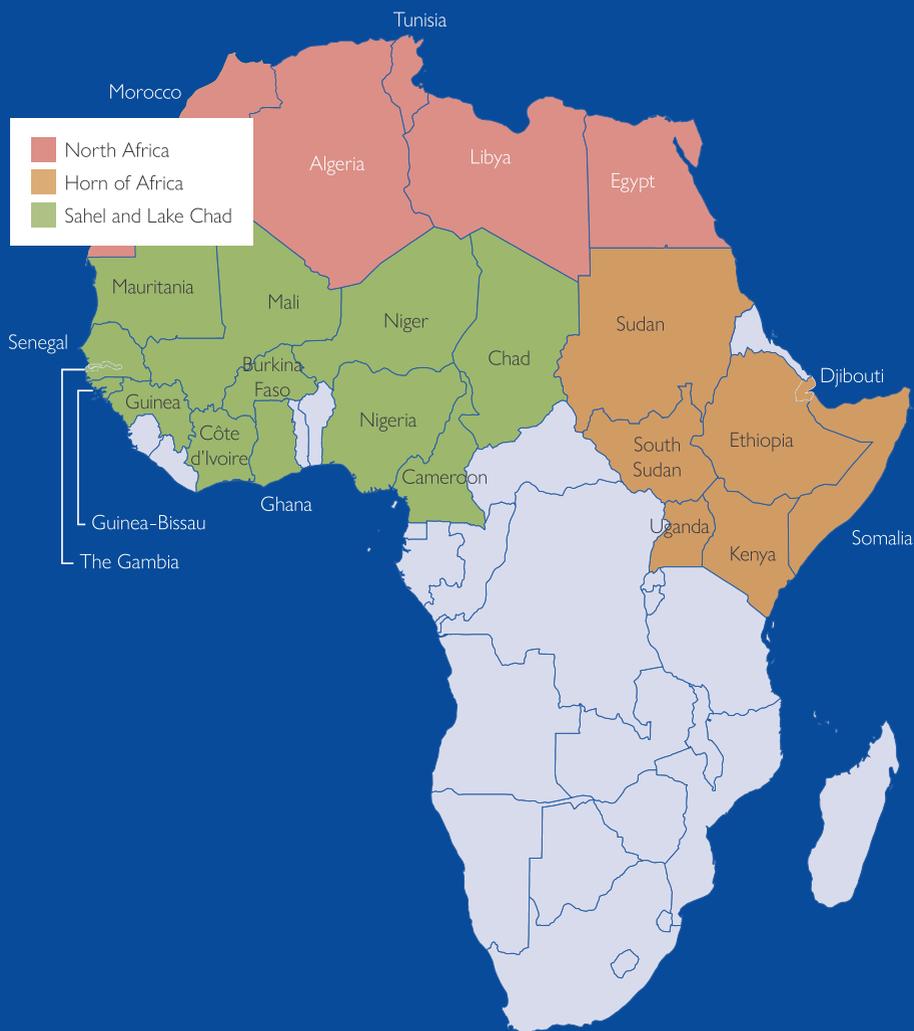
A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "António Vitorino". The signature is fluid and cursive.

António Vitorino
IOM Director General

ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| AU | African Union |
| AVR | Assisted Voluntary Return |
| AVRR | Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration |
| DGPC | Niger's General Directorate for Civil Protection |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EU | European Union |
| EUMS | EU Member State |
| EUTF | EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa |
| FMPs | Flow Monitoring Points |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| IGAD | Intergovernmental Authority on Development |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MHPSS | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support |
| MiMOSA | Migrant Management Operational System Application |
| MRRCs/MRCs | Migrant Resource and/or Response Centres |
| MRRMs | Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NSOs | National Statistical Offices |
| RDH | Regional Data Hub |
| RECs | Regional Economic Communities |
| SNNPR | Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region, Ethiopia |
| SOPs | Standard Operating Procedures |
| SSWA | National Secretariat for Sudanese Working Abroad |
| UASC | Unaccompanied and Separated Children |
| UN | United Nations |
| VHR | Voluntary Humanitarian Return |
| VoTs | Victims of Trafficking |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

COUNTRIES COVERED BY THE EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE



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INTRODUCTION

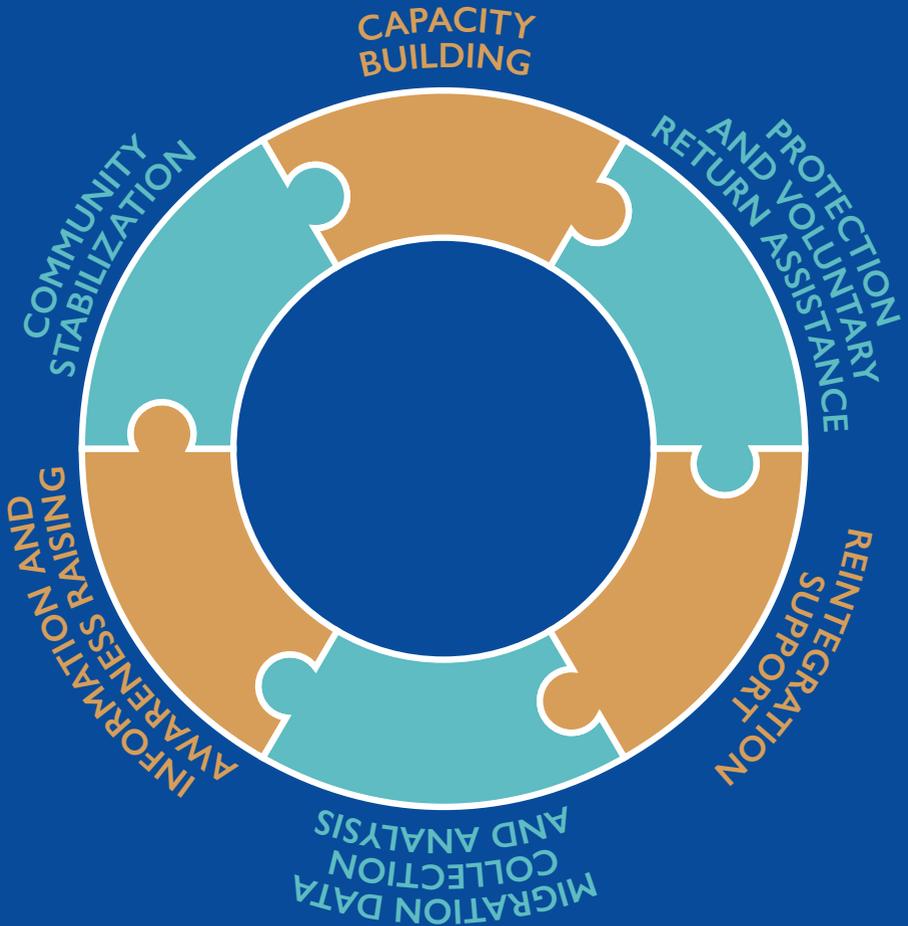
Launched in December 2016 with funding from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration is the first comprehensive programme to save lives, protect and assist migrants along key migration routes in Africa.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative enables migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, in full respect of international human rights standards and the principle of non-refoulement. In close partnership with state and non-state actors, it provides assistance to returning migrants to help them restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that seeks to address returnees' economic, social and psychosocial needs while at the same time including communities in the reintegration process.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative covers and closely cooperates with 26 African countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad region, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa.

The EU and EU Member States (EUMS) have mobilized important financial resources through the EUTF totalling over EUR 490 million.

The actions address six interlinked pillars: (i) capacity building; (ii) protection and voluntary return assistance; (iii) reintegration support; (iv) migration data collection and analysis; (v) information and awareness raising and; (vi) community stabilization.



KEY RESULTS

(MAY 2017 – JANUARY 2022)



76,100+ Migrants assisted in Search and Rescue Operations at sea or in the desert, protecting and providing life-saving assistance to migrants stranded in Niger and Libya.



18,400+ awareness raising events and activities organized to enable migrants and potential migrants to make informed decisions about their migratory journey and to sensitise communities of origin.



113,800+ Stranded and vulnerable migrants supported with their voluntary return, enabling those who find themselves in dire conditions to return to their country of origin if they decide to.



3,205,000+ Individuals reached through awareness raising activities.



103,000+ Migrants provided with reintegration assistance, thereby addressing returnees' economic, social and psychosocial needs, and involving communities of return.



820 community stabilization activities – local/regional activities to improve livelihood opportunities for local youth, promote regular work and improve infrastructure.



83 Flow Monitoring Points

(FMPs) in place to strengthen data on migratory movements and on needs of vulnerable migrants, aiming to support evidence-based policies and programme design.



370 state and non-state

actors involved in providing return and reintegration assistance to migrants across the three regions covered by the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.



37 Migrant Resource and/or Response Centres

(MRRCs/MRCs) established or rehabilitated to protect and provide direct assistance to migrants in vulnerable situations.



130+ Partners

which signed an agreement for referral or support to provide reintegration assistance. This allows for tailored support, wider geographic coverage and complementarity between actors.



153 offices and sub-offices of the IOM network working in the EU-IOM Joint Initiative countries to enable continuity of assistance and protection of migrants' rights throughout the migration continuum.



239 capacity building activities

– building ownership and investing in state and non-state actors, strengthening migration governance.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative builds on strong ownership and significant investment of state and non-state actors in the countries concerned. This approach aims to support partner countries in responding to migration governance challenges and opportunities, while ensuring the sustainability of the actions under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.



Strengthening partners' capacity to protect vulnerable and stranded migrants and facilitate safe and dignified voluntary return

Based on needs assessments and in coordination with relevant authorities and/or civil society, national, regional or multi-country capacity building activities allow for knowledge sharing and exchange in areas of common interest such as protection, assistance for migrants in vulnerable situations (e.g. unaccompanied or separated migrant children; migrants with health-related needs).

Through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, IOM has partnered with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to strengthen protection of children on the move in cross-border areas across the **East and Horn of Africa** region. This initiative aims to strengthen joint advocacy and mainstreaming of child protection and child-centered approaches within the IGAD regional programmes. Through this partnership, IOM is supporting IGAD to build capacity of relevant government entities to identify and address child-rights violations, expand national and regional partnerships with child protection actors, and improve access to services for children on the move.



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Strengthening partners' capacity to ensure the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants and ownership of reintegration activities at national level

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative conducts capacity development activities at national, regional and cross-regional levels to strengthen reintegration systems and migration governance mechanisms. These include the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), partner mapping, and referral system setup.

During a two-day Regional Forum on Safe and Dignified Return and Sustainable Reintegration in **North Africa**, in May 2021, government officials from Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia as well as EU and IOM representatives discussed the link between safe return, sustainable reintegration and sustainable development, and ways to strengthen return and reintegration policies in North Africa.

“The implementation of voluntary return and reintegration assistance programmes requires the participation of different actors, including migrants, civil society and local governments. Return and reintegration can contribute to local, national and regional development in the return countries. This is an example of South-South cooperation.”, Delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco to the Forum.

PROTECTION AND VOLUNTARY RETURN ASSISTANCE

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative aims to strengthen mechanisms to protect and assist migrants all along the migration routes, making sure that migrants enjoy their rights and access to services and that the migration process is safer and better governed.

Migrants may face significant protection issues, including violence, exploitation, and abuse at the hands of smugglers, traffickers, and others. Some may face hostile environments in transit and destination countries and find themselves in vulnerable situations.

SAVING LIVES AND SEARCH & RESCUE

Saving lives is the highest and most urgent priority. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative is supporting relevant authorities to conduct search and rescue operations in the desert and at sea in full respect of migrants' rights.



In the **Niger**, migrants who leave Agadez trying to reach Libya or Algeria through the Sahara can sometimes find themselves, for various reasons, abandoned or stranded in this desert. As part of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, IOM, in collaboration with the country's General Directorate for Civil Protection (DGPC), is undertaking search and rescue operations to find and bring migrants to safety at three of IOM's Migrant Resource and Response Mechanisms (MRRMs) centres in the Agadez region, where they are provided with psycho-medical assistance and counselling.

"These life-saving operations need to be conducted in a timely manner, and this can only be possible through the effective collaboration of all stakeholders.", Barbara Rijks, Chief of Mission, IOM Niger.



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PROTECTION OF MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative is supporting protection and assistance initiatives for migrants in vulnerable situations including victims of trafficking (VoTs), gender-based violence (GBV) survivors, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), migrants with health-related needs, and other individuals at risk. Specific assistance is available prior, during, and after return. The Programme also builds the capacity of local and national actors on protection, countering GBV, counter-trafficking, and human rights.

Seven-year-old Amara was one of 60 migrants attempting to return from Yemen to the Horn of Africa via **Djibouti** in April 2021 when their boat broke up and sank. The incident killed her mother and brother, along with dozens of others. Djibouti is a major transit point for Ethiopian migrants travelling across the Arabian Peninsula through the 'Eastern route.'

"Migrant children along the 'Eastern route' are especially vulnerable to violence, forced labour, trafficking and detention, which is further intensified for unaccompanied or separated children who are often unable to protect themselves during their risky journey." Mouna Ibrahim, Protection Officer, IOM Djibouti.

Amara has undergone vulnerability screening and was referred to a clinical psychologist trained to work with children who have experienced distressful events. She left Djibouti in June 2021 to reunite with her surviving family members in Ethiopia.



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SUPPORTING SAFE AND DIGNIFIED VOLUNTARY RETURN

Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) and Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) are some of the options for stranded migrants facing dire conditions along the routes who wish to return to their countries of origin but do not have the means to do so. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has so far assisted close to 114,000 migrants to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.

Daouda is one of the 166 **Nigerien** migrants who returned from Tripoli to Niamey on a charter flight organized by the EU-IOM Joint Initiative in February 2020. Like many of his compatriots, Daouda travelled to Libya looking for seasonal work. After the conflict broke out in Tripoli and surrounding areas in April 2019, he wanted to return, but had no means to do so. Daouda learnt about IOM's VHR programme via EU-IOM Joint Initiative teams who regularly visit migrant neighbourhoods to inform them of the assistance available. He was able to return home where he has received reintegration assistance.



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CONSULAR ASSISTANCE

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative supports governments to ensure timely access to basic consular services for migrants in need. Upon request from governments, the Programme can also review existent consular procedures and/or the development of SOPs and facilitate dialogue between countries to exchange good practices and enhance cooperation for the issuance of travel documents.

In 2017, IOM launched the first online consular service for migrants stranded in **Libya**. The service connects migrants who wish to return home to their embassy to receive the necessary information ahead of IOM's VHR service. IOM conducts field visits with the relevant embassy representatives to migrant detention centres in Libya to facilitate the procedure of issuing proper travel documentation to migrants preparing for voluntary return to their countries of origin. These consular visits require significant coordination with the detention centres, local authorities and embassies.

“Due to security issues and no means of transportation, migrants in remote areas have difficulty getting their papers processed. We hope this service will give many more stranded migrants an opportunity to return home, if they wish to do so.”, Ashraf Hassan, Project Manager, IOM Libya.

REINTEGRATION SUPPORT

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative assists returning migrants to restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities, involving stakeholders at local, national and regional levels, which has the potential to complement local development, and mitigate some of the drivers of irregular migration.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP OF REINTEGRATION SUPPORT AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS

Facilitating the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants goes far beyond the EU-IOM Joint Initiative mandate and requires strong leadership from national authorities in countries of origin as well as active contributions at all levels of society, starting with migrants, their families and communities, but also the private sector, civil society and international partners.

In the **Sudan**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative reached an agreement with the National Secretariat for Sudanese Working Abroad (SSWA) and Africa's largest mobile operator MTN enabling returning migrants to use its mobile money service MoMo to re-establish their livelihoods in the country. A pilot project has allowed over 2,100 returnees starting small businesses to select their suppliers through MoMo.

"We are here to help the Sudanese people and this pilot could not be done without the collaboration of everyone. We hope for continued support to successfully reintegrate returning migrants to Sudan." Amel Ibrahim, SSWA.

"This pilot goes further to the core of what we believe – to serve those who are unbanked, marginalized, to drive financial inclusion to those who do not have access to bank accounts and benefits of normal financial activity," Malik Melamu, CEO, MTN Sudan.

The collaboration with MTN also extends to its Corporate Social Responsibility programme where the EU-IOM Joint Initiative returnees are supported with job placements as brand ambassadors. MTN also supplies uniforms and sports equipment to a community centre established as one of the community-based reintegration projects.





AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO REINTEGRATION: TAILORED TO THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES

Upon arrival and in close cooperation with national authorities, reception and post-arrival assistance, including a limited cash instalment, is provided to all migrants to cover their immediate needs. All migrants receive counselling support and information. They can participate in general reintegration activities such as orientation and training. Wherever possible, migrants are referred to existing services and projects that are relevant for their reintegration.

In **Ethiopia**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has partnered with 26 government and non-state actors to facilitate the reintegration of returnees across Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). Through these partnerships, returnees receive tailor-made assistance, including vocational and technical skills trainings, job placements, in-kind support for income generating activities as well as shelter, medical and psychosocial support.

"In all the locations, we are working closely with partners, the local government and the local community to deliver reintegration support. These partnerships are expected to strengthen the programme's geographic coverage and monitoring of reintegration support." Sara Basha, EU-IOM Joint Initiative coordinator in Ethiopia.

To help address particularly harsh conditions experienced by migrants, as well as the stigma that many face after return, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) component of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative was substantially reinforced.

In **Nigeria**, the EU-IOM Joint initiative organized a series of psychosocial activities targeting vulnerable returnees including VoTs, single mothers, GBV survivors as well as child returnees, and families of returnees with mental health needs. Group sessions were led by returnees who had been trained as psychosocial mentors, under the direct supervision of IOM officers.

"The project focused on a community-based approach to psychosocial reintegration to bring returnees together in an environment that promotes dignity and allows each member to share experiences without shame or fear of discrimination," Narulita Ayu, MHPSS Project Officer IOM Nigeria.



Community-based reintegration projects are developed in close cooperation with local and national stakeholders and are open to communities of return. These projects cannot address all community needs, but they do contribute to more resilience by strengthening social cohesion and addressing priorities identified by the communities themselves. When carefully planned, community-based reintegration projects and longer-term development interventions can be mutually reinforcing.

In the **Niger's** Tillabery region, IOM's implementing partner, Groupe Éducatif pour le Développement Durable, set up four agricultural community-based projects in the villages of Filingue, Bonkoukou, Chikal and Tounfaliss, targeting 100 beneficiaries (34 migrants and 66 community members). The training provided included agricultural techniques, asset management and para-veterinary techniques. Beneficiaries received cattle for cattle-breeding activities, and seeds and equipment for horticulture. In addition, four plots of land were made available to the project by local administrations. Beneficiaries have already started to grow their crops in localities where the construction of wells and installation of solar panels were completed.





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The economic, social and psychosocial aspects of reintegration need to be addressed in parallel. Beneficiaries often feel stressed due to financial pressure and inability to provide for their families – while unaddressed trauma from the migration journey can hinder successful economic and social reintegration. Community-based cash-for-work schemes have proven effective in bringing together returnees and host community members and providing income to beneficiaries in a transparent and timely manner.

In **Guinea-Bissau**, the reforestation of the country's eastern Gabu region is part of cash-for-work activities supported by the EU-IOM Joint Initiative. This cash-for-work scheme supports migrants in a critical transition period, while at the same time improving conditions in their communities of return. By involving prospective migrants and vulnerable people in the activities, potential tensions between returnees and local population are mitigated as the project is seen as benefiting all. Returnees were screened by a psychologist, who then followed-up individually with psychosocial counselling, as needed. Following the intervention, many returnees decided to re-invest their savings in collective reintegration projects with the support of IOM.

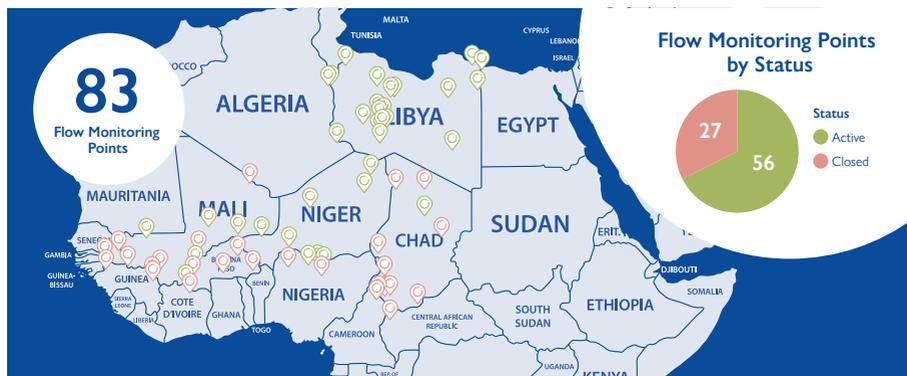
MIGRATION DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Timely data on migration can facilitate a better understanding of current migration dynamics, help improve assistance to stranded migrants and migrants in vulnerable situations, and support governments in the definition of policies and programmes promoting safe, orderly and dignified migration.

FLOW MONITORING

To support evidence-based policy and programming, Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs) set up under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative collect and analyse data along the main migration routes in Africa, enabling a better understanding of intentions, trends, routes, risks along migration routes as well as demographic and socio-economic profiles of migrants.

FMPs enabled the timely identification and protection of large numbers of Chadians returning from Libya in 2019-2020. In the Niger, FMP and Transit Centre data supported the development of the 2020-2035 Politique Nationale de la Migration. In Nigeria, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and IOM are in discussion to launch monitoring units at various border points in the region, replicating the methodology used for the flow monitoring points.



Map includes both fully funded and partially funded FMPs under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative. This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.



COLLECTING DATA ON ASSISTED VOLUNTARY RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative supports the online AVRR data system MiMOSA (Migrant Management Operational System Application) that facilitates data entry, retrieving, and follow-up of each migrant supported with return and reintegration assistance. The system enables monitoring and evaluation of individual return and reintegration assistance, which is used to adjust individual assistance and inform future policies and programming.

Investments in the institutional case management system, analysis and reporting capabilities, a mobile application, as well as new modules for reintegration (featuring close to 150,000 activities) and Monitoring and Evaluation (over 30,000 M&E surveys conducted to date) have enabled IOM to enhance its data management capacity and provide capacity-building training, including on data protection, to partners. Cooperation with the African Union (AU) has been enhanced.

REGIONAL DATA HUB

In the Horn of Africa, the EU-IOM Joint initiative contributed to the establishment of a Regional Data Hub (RDH) to support evidence-based, strategic and policy-level discussion on migration. The RDH aims to enhance technical coordination, harmonise the different data collection activities and foster a multi-layered analysis of mixed migration movements, trends and characteristics across the region.

Through a combination of IOM data collection methodologies, research initiatives, and active engagement with National Statistical Offices (NSOs), Ministries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the RDH aims to fill in the existing gaps in strengthening the regional evidence base on migration. This contribution will, in turn, help improve policy-making programming and coordination between all the stakeholders involved.



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more
information



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EU-IOM KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT HUB ON RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

The EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub (KMH) on return and reintegration was established to strengthen learning across return and reintegration activities, and support the harmonization of approaches, processes and tools under the EU-IOM Actions and beyond. The KMH serves as a valuable tool to ensure that experiences and lessons learnt from programmes like the EU-IOM Joint Initiative can be shared widely with return and reintegration practitioners, to inform future interventions.

The KMH 'Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Bites Series' presents sustainable reintegration outcomes based on data collected in the framework of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative and other EU-IOM Actions. The 'Sustainable Reintegration Knowledge Papers Series' focuses on aspects of migrant reintegration that have been largely under-researched, not implemented to their full potential, or that have consistently been identified in reintegration programmes' evaluations as gaps or opportunities.



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information

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative provides accurate information on migration and return to migrants in host countries, transit countries and countries of origin. The aim is to inform not only about the risks of irregular migration, but also about possibilities of regular migration, and to promote social cohesion between returned migrants and their communities, and current migrants and their host communities.

To inform local youth about trafficking in persons and other risks of irregular migration, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative organized several theatre performances in Benin, capital of Edo state in **Nigeria**. These performances marked the completion of an eight-month training programme in 17 communities in Edo and Delta states, two key migration-prone areas in Africa's most populous country. The open-air event brought together close to 100 individuals who raised awareness about the plight of thousands of people who have suffered deception, abuse or exploitation along their migration journeys.

"We selected returnees, students, potential migrants, and their families to promote social cohesion as we have witnessed that many returnees face stigmatization upon return to their communities.", Cyprine Cheptepkeny, Awareness Raising Officer, IOM Nigeria.



IOM partners with government entities, the private sector and civil society organizations to advocate for safe migration at the individual, community and societal level. Partnerships with local actors lead to efficient use of resources and helps ensure that awareness raising activities are sustainable beyond the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.



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In **Ethiopia**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative signed an agreement with Fana Broadcasting, one of the country's largest private media houses, to produce a special radio series on migration as COVID-19 movement restrictions have increased the risks faced by migrants in the region. The programme will focus on the risks of irregular migration, enabling returnees to share their experiences. It will be broadcasted in different regional languages, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, a close partner of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.

"This platform will help raise awareness among potential migrants and communities by disseminating information on the regular migration processes and oversees employment opportunities. We also hope that it will shed light on the various initiatives underway by different actors – both governmental and non-governmental – and the need to work collectively and in full to make migration a choice and not a necessity," Sara Basha, EU-IOM Joint Initiative coordinator in Ethiopia.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE MEDIA

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has also sought to foster in-depth discussion on the role and responsibilities of media reporting on migration and build the capacity of media practitioners to report on migration issues in a more evidence-based and balanced way, including by giving a voice to migrants themselves.

In **West and Central Africa**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative supported the launch of the Reporting Migration initiative which promotes investigative journalism on migration in order to nuance negative discourses and narratives about the phenomenon in the region. The initiative supports free, high-quality, independent journalism to help raise awareness of the risks of irregular migration. More than 800 journalists have been trained so far in migration reporting, development communication and the role of the media in the fight against human trafficking, in West and Central Africa.



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COMMUNITY STABILIZATION

Community stabilization under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative seeks to ease tensions and address drivers of instability along the migration routes through restoring services and community infrastructure, promoting social cohesion and supporting the regeneration of livelihoods.



INVOLVING LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN COMMUNITY STABILIZATION EFFORTS

Community stabilization works in close cooperation with local stakeholders, including community or tribe leaders, to ensure transparent, fair, accountable and high-quality activity implementation, oversight, and local ownership.

In **Libya**, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative works with Community Management Committees, consisting of community leaders representing a cross-section of tribal groups. These committees support the Programme's community stabilization efforts, providing advice and recommendations for project priorities. Priorities are jointly identified with authorities, migrants, and communities. Local stakeholders are involved in service provision.



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SUPPORTING INITIATIVES AIMED AT COMMUNITY STABILIZATION

Through the community stabilization pillar, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative provides support to communities affected by transit migration and those hosting migrants in Libya, Burkina Faso and Niger. Combining support for migration governance capacity, assistance, and stabilization initiatives at community level helps prevent, mitigate, and reduce the drivers and negative effects of displacement and irregular migration in fragile contexts.

In 2019, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative officially launch its community stabilization activities in the **Niger** during the nomad Festival de l'Air. Held yearly since 2001, the festival is one of the most important events in Niger, providing the opportunity for host communities and local actors to reconnect and celebrate local traditions over three consecutive days.

As part of community stabilization activities during the festival, IOM organized a football tournament for members of the host community, which brought together young people from all corners of Iferouane. The theater group AKOU, one of the most popular in Iferouane, captivated its audience during four different participatory theater plays focused on civil rights and peace.

"It's vital for us to participate in cultural events like these that encourage interaction between different communities," said Maria Veger, IOM Niger Community Stabilization Officer. "Not only is it a way to promote and facilitate the local heritage, but it's also a means of showing the population of Agadez that we are in this together."

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE MIGRANTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has been at the forefront of prevention and response efforts, adapting its programmes to continue delivering assistance and protecting vulnerable migrants across the Sahel and Lake Chad, North Africa, and Horn of Africa regions. Through wide-ranging partnerships and community outreach activities, the Programme has sought to raise awareness on safe migration and solidarity with migrants during the pandemic.



Strengthen partners' COVID-19 prevention and response capacity

As the impact of COVID-19 started to be felt in communities across the Sahel and Lake Chad, North Africa, and Horn of Africa regions, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative stepped in to empower local authorities, migrants and communities to address and mitigate the spread of the virus and prepare for the future.

In partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), the EU-IOM Joint Initiative conducted training and donated medical and protective equipment to strengthen the capacity of the Government of **Mauritania** to manage the pandemic. The Programme also supported the launch of the 'Strategic Diaspora Mobilization' initiative engaging overseas medical talent for WHO deployments to train Mauritanian health personnel on the use of specialized medical equipment, including respirators. To date, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has facilitated 20 missions of experts providing technical support for COVID-19 response to Mauritania's Ministry of Health.

Protection and voluntary return assistance

The COVID-19 pandemic shattered the hopes for an imminent return of thousands of migrants in transit across West and Central Africa, North Africa, and Horn of Africa regions.

In **West and Central Africa**, IOM has successfully negotiated with governments in host and origin countries the opening of humanitarian corridors to allow for the voluntary return of 3,360 migrants waiting in overcrowded transit centres after a perilous journey towards North Africa.

"An increased number of migrants and governments have approached IOM for support in the organization of return operations to countries of origin. Governments are approving exceptions to the closure of borders for IOM to operate and to support the safe and dignified return of stranded migrants," Michele Bombassei, IOM Regional Senior Programme Coordinator for West and Central Africa.

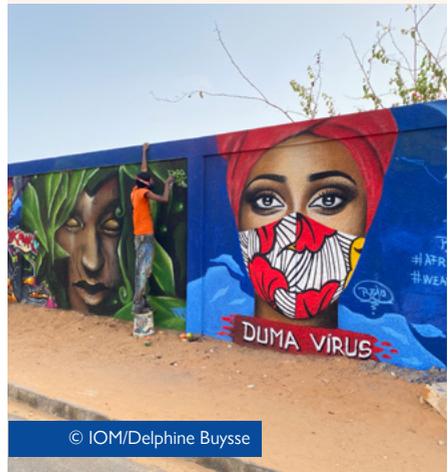


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Information and awareness raising activities

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the spread of misinformation and hate speech against migrants and other vulnerable groups. Anti-migrant sentiment and inflammatory rhetoric have rapidly gained ground in the public domain and online, often causing harmful and discriminatory behaviour towards migrants and the communities.

IOM and the EU Delegation in **Senegal** joined forces with 10 Senegalese urban artists to paint the post-pandemic world on the walls of the capital city Dakar, to raise awareness among the population, including young people, of the COVID-19 and solidarity that must be demonstrated amid the crisis. Ten Dakar-based artists built on their talent to serve the community by painting graffiti on themes including the compliance with barrier measures, stigmatization, and fight against misinformation.



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Mental health and psychosocial support

The COVID-19 outbreak has reinforced uncertainty and anxiety among returnees, exacerbating their existing psychosocial vulnerabilities.

In North Africa, migrants hosted in the two transit centres in **Algeria's** capital Algiers benefitted from remote group and individual mental health and psychosocial support sessions during their extended waiting time for departure due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The sessions were conducted in cooperation with the Algerian Association of Psychologists.

"The lockdown and uncertainty are having a negative impact on the mental health of all the residents of the transit centres. Migrants are afraid of contracting coronavirus and worried about their families and relatives," explained Noureddine Khaled, psychologist at the Algerian Association of Psychologists. "Migrants are constantly asking when they will return home. We listen to all their concerns and report them to IOM. We generally advise them to do regular physical activities and to speak with their families," he added.



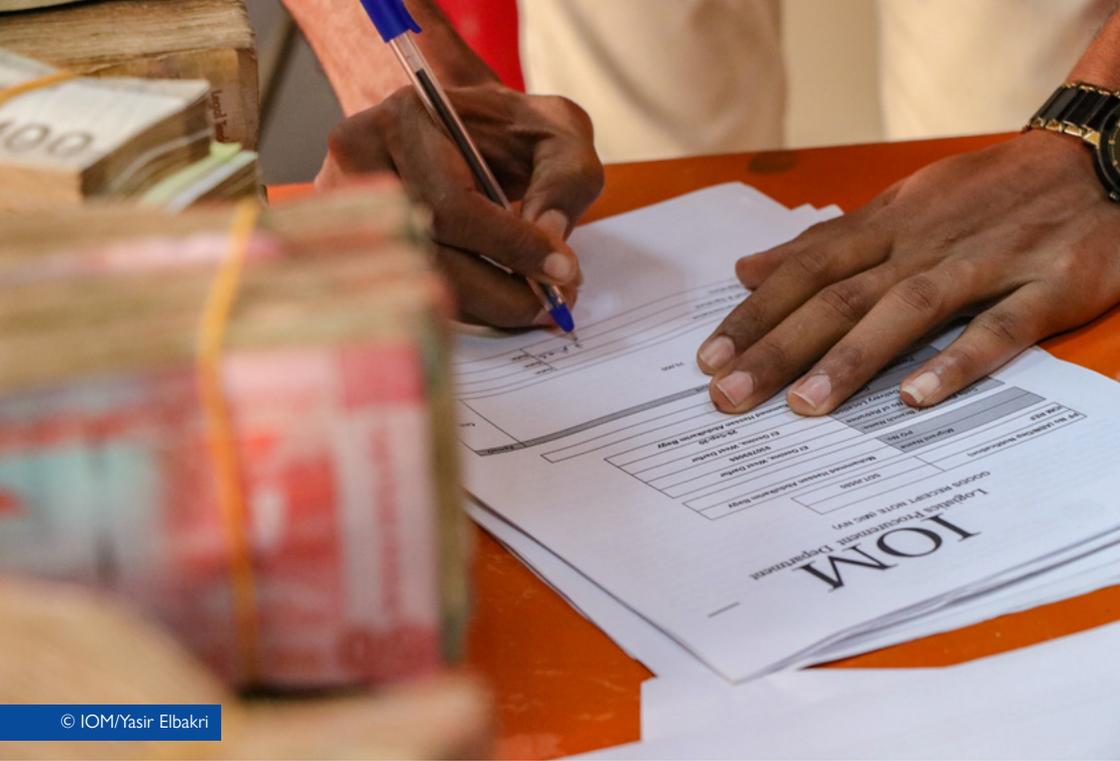
Direct assistance to migrants and communities in need

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has provided direct assistance such as food and non-food items, hygiene kits and personal protective equipment to numerous migrants, including returnees, and host community members impacted by the pandemic across the three regions.

In **Egypt**, in response to requests from migrants, community leaders, partner organizations and embassies, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative distributed more than 2,500 food and hygiene kits in Alexandria, Cairo, Hurghada and Al-Fayoum, and increased COVID-19 related awareness raising activities through community leaders. The Programme engages with the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood as well as other partners for referrals.

"Thanks to the collaboration with IOM, we managed to help many people in our community to cope with the pandemic and raise their awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures," said Ali Abdulrahman, the Eritrean Refugees Community Leader in Egypt. "IOM's support to the Eritrean Refugee Committee in Egypt is helpful during the challenging COVID-19 times."





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Cash-based support to cover returnees' increased needs during the COVID-19 crisis

Across the three regions, COVID-19 needs assessment supported the relevance of the cash-based interventions to ease returnees' socio-economic difficulties caused by pandemic-related restrictions. Post-distribution monitoring enables transparency and accountability on the use of the cash for the intended reintegration purpose.

Fakhredeen is one of the returnees who received cash-based assistance from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, allowing him to start a business in **Sudan**. "Receiving cash gave me the flexibility to add more money and buy a tuk-tuk to use for transportation work," says the 45-year-old.

"The cash-based intervention is effective and allows returnees to live with greater dignity by preserving their ability to spend money and make decisions regarding their priority needs, while also ensuring that returnees have resources available to rebuild their lives and livelihoods, make their own choices and stimulate the local economy in the areas of return." Andrew Gray, Head of Migration Management and Development Unit, IOM Sudan.

CONCLUSIONS



Rooted in strong partnership with African and EU Member States, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has grown to deliver tangible results, supporting local actors to respond to migration governance challenges and opportunities at sub-national and national levels. Close to 370 national and local authorities and non-state actors are involved in the provision of return and reintegration assistance to migrants across the three regions.

Saving lives has been the most urgent priority. Over 76,100 migrants were reached in search and rescue operations in Niger and Libya so far. Since May 2017, close to 114,000 stranded and vulnerable migrants were supported with their voluntary return, while more than 103,000 received reintegration assistance under the Programme.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has made important progress in establishing target countries' ownership and engagement. The significant investments of African partners in the EU-IOM Joint Initiative activities testify to this. The Programme has worked with target countries to develop national SOPs for AVRRC adapted to needs and context. Based on IOM's integrated approach to reintegration, these SOPs aim to ensure that all partners' and stakeholders' contributions are harnessed towards sustainable reintegration, and services and support provided to migrants follow similar standards in all countries.

Through an unprecedented investment in local capacities for reintegration support in countries of origin, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has established referral pathways to local partners (including state agencies and services, local and international organizations, private sector, diaspora organizations, migrant associations, academia) and reinforced strategic links with national development strategies.



A strong route-based and cross-regional dimension has allowed the EU-IOM Joint Initiative to enhance coordination between countries of origin, transit, and destination. The EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub serves as a valuable tool to ensure that experience and lessons learnt from programmes like the EU-IOM Joint Initiative can be shared widely with return and reintegration stakeholders, to inform future interventions.

Prior to the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, many government agencies and local NGOs had limited experience dealing with migrants' trauma and other psychosocial challenges. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative has confirmed the relevance and added value in pursuing an integrated approach to reintegration and the central importance of reintegration counselling and individual needs/vulnerability assessments.

Most recently, the EU-IOM Joint Initiative has demonstrated that it is a valuable tool for COVID-19 response. The Programme has remained flexible in ensuring a needs-based approach that takes into account mobility restrictions, shifting migratory routes and the beneficiaries' resulting needs. This includes provision of cash-based assistance, remote counselling and monitoring, awareness raising activities via traditional and social media.

Building on the legacy of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, future programmes should continue to respond to the needs and commitments of both the EU and African States and foster meaningful multi-stakeholder partnerships addressing common priorities.

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