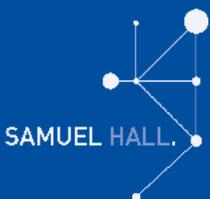Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

RURAL EMPLOYMENT

# Global lessons learned
## on sustainable reintegration in rural areas

SAMUEL HALL.

KNOWLEDGE MATERIALS

# Global lessons learned
on sustainable reintegration in rural areas

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| BCAOS | Bureaux Communaux d'Accueil, Orientation et de Suivi (Senegal) |
| DACAAR | Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FFR | Facility for Remittances |
| FFS | farmer field school |
| GIZ | German Agency for International Cooperation |
| ICA | Integrated Country Approach |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IGAD | Intergovernmental Authority for Development |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| ONG PAARDIC | Organisation Non Gouvernementale du Programme D'appui aux Actions Rurales de Développement Industriel et Commercial (Cameroon) |
| PACERSEN | Projet d'Appui à la Réduction de la Migration à travers la Création d'Emplois Ruraux au Sénégal |
| PARI-JEDI | Programme d'Aide au Retour et à l'Insertion des Jeunes Camerounais de la Diaspora (Cameroon) |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UN-HABITAT | United Nations Human Settlements Programme |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| USD | United States Dollars |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

# 1 Introduction

> "The pandemic has magnified the importance of cross-border travel for migrant workers (…), including return migration, and the access and opportunity gaps between resource-rich and resource-poor people on the move."
>
> (Benton *et al.*, 2021)

## Research background

In a context of a global pandemic, the focus on areas of return has increased. More governments have had to assist and repatriate their citizens while abroad (IOM, 2020a). This has presented considerable challenges for many stakeholders. Returnees are the first to suffer from unplanned and involuntary returns. Migrant workers have had to return to their communities of origin due to lost jobs caused by country-wide lockdowns, as seen in Nepal (ACAPS, 2020). Reverse migration of migrant workers from cities to rural areas of origin has been understudied in this context, notably in terms of how they have reintegrated within their communities and what kinds of support they have needed and received.

To address the knowledge gaps above, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) commissioned Samuel Hall to undertake a two-part effort to inform policy and programming on sustainable reintegration in rural areas in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The two outputs of this collaboration include:

- the present lessons learned report that offers the framework, and
- the associated Rural Reintegration Toolkit that presents the tools for practitioners to improve policy and programming on sustainable reintegration in rural areas.

The primary audiences of these outputs are: i) migration stakeholders who have been sensitized on the importance of addressing the needs of reintegration in rural areas and ii) agricultural and rural development stakeholders who understand the importance of including returnees in policy and programming. The lessons learned through the programmes mapped within the scope of this research have been integrated in this study, which has a global scope, and builds on existing learning to chart a way forward for more coherence and standards when working on sustainable reintegration in rural areas.

For many years, an urban bias has marked the field of policy and practice on reintegration. It has been assumed that migrants and returning migrants (referred to as 'returnees') are first and foremost drawn to urban areas for the access to services and jobs they provide. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a change in mobility patterns, marking the beginning of a reverse migration trend back to rural areas of origin. A 2021 FAO study, which highlighted these trends and revealed the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on rural mobility, noted "the daunting task for under-resourced local governments to meet and accommodate the socio-economic needs of returnees amidst a crisis-stricken and undeniable challenged rural economy" (FAO, 2021). Whether from overseas or domestic destinations, as migrant workers or failed asylum seekers, the number of returnees to rural areas has increased globally. In light of this changed context of returns, this study asks:

*What can be learned from returnees' experiences of reintegration in rural areas, and how can their reintegration process be supported?*

Findings and recommendations are based on existing practice and shared in this Global Lessons Learned Report, and its twin output, a Rural Reintegration Toolkit. The aim of these outputs is to provide a roadmap for collective action in support of returnees in rural areas and rural communities across a range of development settings as well as fragile and conflict-affected areas. At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact mobility, there is an opportunity to support rural environments as spaces of protection and inclusion for returnees.

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## 1.1 Defining sustainable reintegration and its links to sustainable development

To frame these outputs, we must first consider and define the concept of sustainable reintegration, and deconstruct the pairing of two terms 'return' and 'reintegration'. These terms are often joined together in policy and practice. References to 'return and reintegration' assume a seemingly natural process that takes migrants from the country of destination to the country and location of origin. Yet, while 'return' refers to a movement between two physical places, 'reintegration' is instead a multi-dimensional and multi-levelled process that involves economic, social and psychosocial factors, as well as individual, community-level and structural stakeholders, to make it successful or sustainable. The literature review in Chapter 2 dissociates the two concepts, looking at returns first, and at the process of reintegration separately. Although there is no global consensus on the definition of reintegration, the present study builds on the International Organization for Migration (IOM) definition of sustainable reintegration:

> Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of **economic** self-sufficiency, **social** stability within their **communities**, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice rather than necessity (IOM, 2017).

This definition responds to multiple biases.

First, an economic bias. While reintegration has traditionally been equated with the ability to find work, other needs (e.g. access to services and mentorship support) represent a challenge and an opportunity, especially in rural areas. It is now widely acknowledged that reintegration means more than finding decent work and livelihoods; it also requires achieving social and psychosocial well-being. At the community level, this will involve not only efforts to revitalize communities that have been marginalized, but also efforts to build social cohesion that can allow returnees to be reintegrated sustainably.

Second, an individual bias. While reintegration was often seen and understood from the prism of the individual migrant returnee, and mostly from the perspective of male migrants, it is now acknowledged that reintegration has to be understood from the perspective of women, youth and children, and the broader community and society of return (Diker *et al.*, 2019; Samuel Hall and IOM, 2021). In other words, the lived experiences of return need to be disaggregated to be adequately understood.

Finally, the bias of reintegration processes being managed by migration actors only. Reintegration requires coordination and partnerships across a range of stakeholders, from policy to practice, and working with returnee groups, civil society, trade unions, public and private sector actors, rural institutions, and layers of government, from the national to the local levels.

The definition of sustainable reintegration therefore introduces the operational need to adopt an integrated approach to reintegration and expand the range of actors involved in reintegration support. The integrated approach to sustainable reintegration is described in the report, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration*, which introduces the ecosystem approach required to support reintegration (Samuel Hall and IOM, 2018). What emerges from this approach is the need to map the actors who can play key roles in the realization of sustainable reintegration. Sustainable reintegration does not happen in isolation but is a concerted effort that requires harmonization and collaboration among stakeholders and actors surrounding any individual returnee, and covering a spectrum from humanitarian to development action.

**FIGURE 1.** The ecosystem approach to returnee reintegration

Structural factors, government, culture, norms — **Macrosystem**

**Exosystem**

Formal & informal response, assistance & services — **Mesosystem**

**Microsystem**

Vulnerability, exposure to exploitation & agency

Family, friends, neighbours

**Individuals (sex, age, health etc.)**

**Chronosystem** Time & aspirations

Source: (Samuel Hall adapted from U. Bronfenbrenner, 1981)
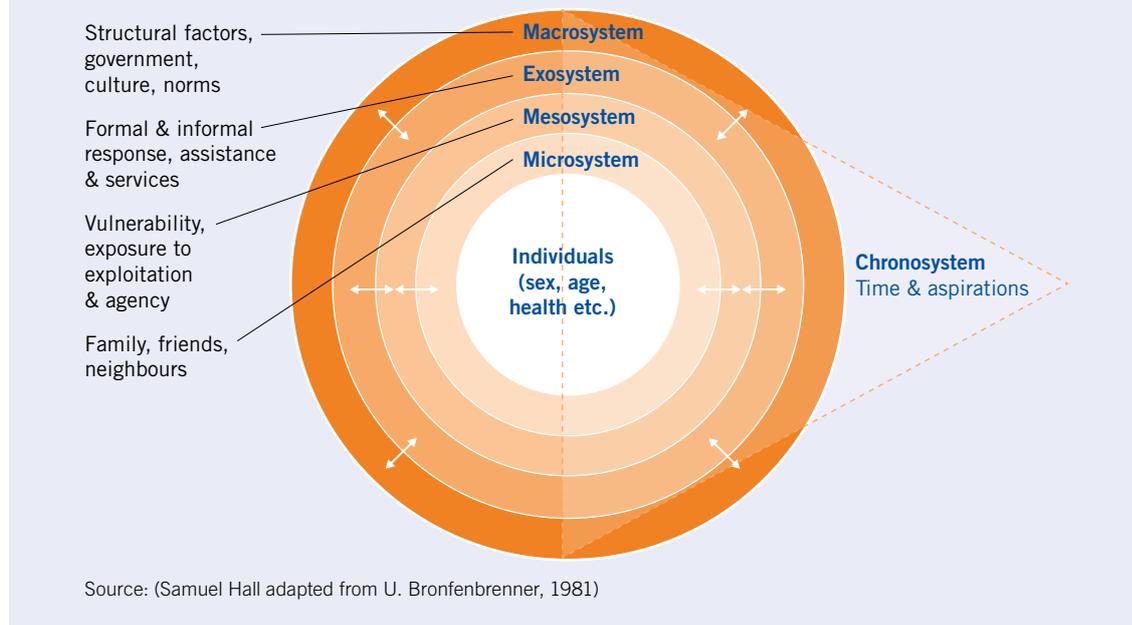
### 1.1.1 Global attention on planning for reintegration and the links to development

The interlinkages between reintegration and development appear in several targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM), and have been emphasized by the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Yet policies on return have tended to be disconnected from development processes. Reintegration assistance has been traditionally conceived as an individual support rather than a tool for development in countries of origin. Attention is shifting with recent initiatives to develop and implement operational frameworks on reintegration and development (Samuel Hall, 2022).

The evidence consistently shows that under certain conditions sustainable reintegration can positively impact sustainable development (European Union-IOM, 2021a). As a result, the focus on migrants as agents of development has gradually shifted beyond remittances to include their non-monetary contributions to their home countries. New skills and enhanced social and cultural capital obtained while abroad put returning migrants in an advantageous position to act as agents of social change in their communities of return.

Subsequently, at the same time as high expectations are placed on returning migrants to

contribute to local development in various ways and act as brokers in transferring knowledge and building capacities. These migrants are undergoing the strains of a major life transition. Consequently, returnees may be unable to live up to the community's expectations upon return. The assumption that returnees will be welcomed and supported by their social networks is often factored into assistance packages upon return, but evidence shows that migrants' networks may not provide them with the resources they need to fulfil their development potential and reintegrate sustainably (Majidi, 2020). Communities and individuals therefore need to be suitably supported through targeted services that can connect, safeguard, and improve the well-being of both returnees and the receiving communities. Cooperation between stakeholders on the development and reintegration sides is vital to resolve these tensions and fulfil existing potential. However, this cooperation remains limited. Enhancing partnerships between reintegration and development could improve accountability, institutional trust and confidence. In turn, this would minimize gaps and overlaps in the programming and practical implementation of reintegration initiatives, and help the design and delivery of suitably targeted assistance with a 'whole community' approach to reintegration and sustainable development.

For that to happen, a level of skepticism needs to be addressed. Development actors do not have

to follow migration-related policy priorities, yet, as this research and other reports outline, there are opportunities for taking a sustainable development approach to return and reintegration (Knoll, Vernon and Mayer, 2021).

### 1.1.2 Bringing attention to the local level

In 2021, FAO identified the reverse migration trends to rural areas of origin in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (FAO, 2021). The FAO information note revealed the growing concerns and pressures on returnees and their families due to the loss of income, rising debt levels, and growing food insecurity. It also highlighted a trend of involuntary immobility, with returnees not being able to migrate again, as one of the longer-term effects of the pandemic on populations who previously relied on migration as a form of adaptation. In this context, supporting returnees and the communities they return to in their rural areas of origin becomes both an immediate and a structural need.

As individuals as well as countries have struggled in responding to the situation, there is a need to re-think the status quo and revisit reintegration assistance with "a more comprehensive approach to reintegration […], one that also includes people who have returned by their own means and might still face great challenges as they try to reintegrate" (Le Coz and Newland, 2021). The emphasis is not only on the needs of the returnees but also of the communities they return to. Reintegration efforts need to engage with the returnees' ecosystem to maximize positive outcomes for both. Recent literature confirms that the local context is a key determinant of reintegration, and within that, specific actors (e.g. families) and potentially rural institutions, will have a growing role to play (e.g. DRC *et al.*, 2019).

However, studies on sustainable reintegration lack a focus on rural communities. A focus on the link between sustainable reintegration and rural development is equally missing. There is also little understanding of the impact of locally led solutions that are based on the participation of the community of return and returnees themselves. Locally led solutions promoting dialogue, social cohesion and empowerment are particularly important to the realization of sustainable reintegration, which, when successful, can reinforce the migration and development nexus (DRC *et al.*, 2019).

## 1.2 Why sustainable reintegration in rural areas?

*"The reintegration phase is a community's chance to renew with peace and prosperity, and end the cycle of displacement."*
*Antonio Guterres, 2005*

> This study uses the FAO definition of rural development as a process complementary to the definition of sustainable reintegration. Both definitions have a transformative and multi-dimensional approach that seeks local solutions to systemic, individual and community-level challenges.
>
> **Rural development is a process integrated with economic and social objectives, which must seek to transform rural society and provide a better and more secure livelihood for rural people. Rural development, therefore, is a process of analysis, problem identification and the proposal of relevant solutions. (…) The problems that rural development programmes attempt to solve are not only agricultural; such programmes must also tackle the social or institutional problems found in rural areas (FAO, 1985).**

A sizeable share of migrants come from rural areas and rely on agriculture (i.e. crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture) for their livelihoods. According to data from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), between 30 to 40 percent of international remittances are sent to rural areas (IFAD, 2009). Although similar systematic data on internal or domestic remittances does not exist, the importance of non-material and in-kind remittances that flow from internal migrants to their rural families is significant. Based on findings from a 2020 study in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, the World Bank estimates that the percentage of households receiving domestic remittances is much higher on average than the percentage receiving international remittances (Adhikari, 2020). This indicates that rural areas are dependent on migration, and as a result of the pandemic, are the areas migrants will return to and where they will require reintegration support should they desire to stay.

Despite having generally received less attention, these rural movements can be significant. Cattaneo and Robinson (2020), for example, find that rural-to-rural flows represent 55 percent of internal migration flows in India, nearly 40 percent in Ethiopia, and 68 percent in the United Republic of Tanzania. They also find that rural return migration is generally undertaken by a higher percentage of men than women and tends to take place when countries are at different stages of development (i.e. the more countries develop, the less rural return migration). Across regions, return migration to rural areas is largest in sub-Saharan Africa (Our World in Data, 2019). A FAO publication notes that "rural migrants in particular engage more frequently in temporary or circular migration, traditionally linked to the seasonal calendars of agriculture, the backbone of rural economies" (Deotti and Estruch, 2016). The increase in rural returns has not been matched by further investments in rural reintegration support services due to limited financial resources and technical capacities, and insufficient data on returnees' skills and needs to inform a response. This report focuses on two types of contexts for its analysis and to address this gap:

- **development contexts to create an enabling environment that can support agrifood systems and business by improving access to finance, creating incentives to engage with returnees, providing technical support packages, mapping their skills, and leading awareness-raising activities on agricultural and non-agricultural opportunities; and**

- **fragile and conflict-affected contexts to rebuild the agriculture-based livelihoods for returnees and hosts, and at the community level, prevent conflict over natural resources (e.g. land and water).**

## 1.3  Study methodology and outputs

To complement reports received by the FAO country offices, a team reviewed the available data and discovered a common and dynamic phenomenon of COVID-19-related migration across the world (FAO, 2021). In each country, some of those who had returned to rural areas wanted to re-migrate as soon as they could. Others wanted to stay or did not

have the means to try again. In some cases, large numbers of migrants who had not been able to earn an income following their return, re-migrated out of desperation even before borders were officially reopened. Some of these migrants only returned when another wave of coronavirus hit.

The inclusion of migration in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda confirms the inextricable link between development and migration (UNDESA Population Division, 2019). The objectives of the study are to contribute to this link by:

1) **opening up a forum for dialogue for migration and development stakeholders to think through ways to improve future programming efforts and stimulate coordinated action;**

2) **sharing this Global Lessons Learned report, which documents the events that lead to migrants becoming returnees, and how the reintegration process can be planned better to ensure that there is enough support, resources, information, and sustainability of programmes in rural areas; and**

3) **a preparing a Rural Reintegration Toolkit to concretely support existing capabilities, develop capacities and guide action on sustainable reintegration in rural areas. The Toolkit can be used to address the current gaps at the local level, and acts as a 'how-to guide' for rural actors to contribute to sustainable reintegration processes.**

This study draws on six case studies from development contexts and fragile and conflict-affected contexts from different regions of the world: Afghanistan, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova, Nepal, Senegal and Tunisia. The case studies allow us to hear directly from returnees and their communities, as well as from local and migration stakeholders, on how sustainable reintegration approaches can become more effective and collaborative in rural areas. The primary data collection in these countries has been completed by a global desk review.

The full set of research tools is summarized in Table 1.

**TABLE 1  Overview of tools and target participants**

| Tool | Number of participants |
|---|---|
| Online survey | 30 |
| Key informant interviews | 92 |
| Semi-structured interviews with returnees | 30 |
| Semi-structured interviews with community members | 30 |
| Grand total | 182 |

Source: Authors' own elaboration

## CASE STUDY COUNTRIES

Together the selected countries meet five key criteria for selection.

| Relevance to FAO/Past-existing-future projects and partnerships | Regular settings and conflict/fragile settings | Mix of categories of returnees | Geographic diversity and accessibility | Proven reintegration practices and existence of literature |
|---|---|---|---|---|
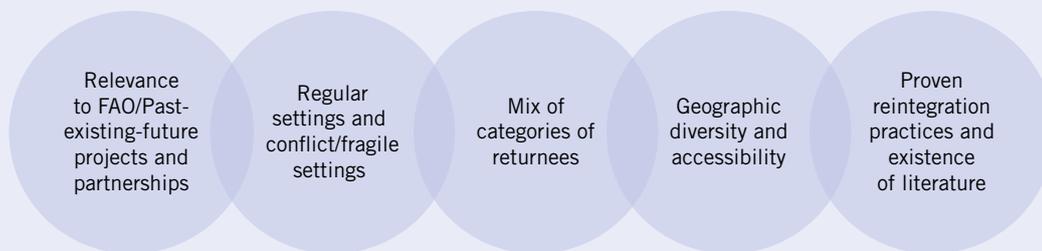
This country selection spans South and Central Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. Other regions (e.g. Latin America) are not included. Their specific conditions were addressed through key informant interviews and global listening sessions held between March and July 2021.

- **Afghanistan (prior to August 2021)**, with a returnee population of over 9 million people over two decades, continues to represent one of the world's largest humanitarian crises (DTM, 2022).
- **Kenya** is a middle-income country and a high percentage of the population is young and rural. The country is affected by food insecurity and climate change. Kenyan returnees are both domestic and international migrants, and include women who have worked as domestic workers abroad. The coastal regions remain key areas of origin and return (Laiboni, 2019). Because the Government is significantly devolved, local actors can influence reintegration outcomes.
- **Tunisia** has a high percentage of international migrants interested in returning and keen to work in agriculture (Zuccotti *et al.*, 2018). There are two significant projects on return being carried out in the country, and the Government has made a commitment to facilitate and improve reintegration. In rural areas, high levels of poverty require a coordinated response.
- **Senegal** is characterized by high rural-rural migration as well as international migration. the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the reality of return migration. A high number of youths are now showing interest in reintegration.
- **Nepal** has experienced higher number of returns following the COVID-19 outbreak. With high rates of rural-rural migration and male out-migration, the Government is developing a reintegration strategy.
- **The Republic of Moldova** has witnessed high numbers of returns during the beginning of the pandemic. Over 1 million of the country's 2.6 million citizens live abroad and their remittances account for 16 percent of the annual gross domestic product (GDP) (Hutuleac, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

## COUNTRY-LEVEL DATA COLLECTION

### Online survey

The survey, which targeted 30 respondents, sought information on:

- key reintegration challenges in rural areas;
- key planning challenges across migration and development actors;
- good practices on reintegration in rural areas for the programmatic case studies;
- lessons learned, including failed practices; and
- key actors to consult in a given country for the key informant interviews.

### Key informant interviews

By establishing best practices, existing opportunities to explore, and lessons learned, key informant interviews elicited operational lessons, including from existing practices, for returnees in rural areas to inform the toolkit to be developed.

### Semi-structured interviews with returnees and community members

Returnee and community interviews were conducted with up to five returnees and five community members in targeted key rural areas of return of each selected case study country. Participants were selected for gender parity and to cover a range of ages. They included questions on:

- direct experience with return and reintegration initiatives and programming; and
- general experience of return and reintegration, particularly since COVID-19.

## GLOBAL LEVEL DATA COLLECTION

### In-depth global desk review

The desk review was the first component of the data collection phase and provides evidence of past and current experiences in rural reintegration.

### Global listening sessions

With the support of the United Nations Network on Migration and FAO, two virtual global stakeholder listening sessions were held in July 2021 to identify emerging practices and highlight key elements for lesson learning on return migration and reintegration in rural areas. The listening sessions also served to consolidate the global perspective of the study and complemented the country-specific information. The sessions provided an opportunity to better understand migrants' needs through the voices of a range of actors that included government stakeholders, civil society organizations, migrants, diaspora associations, youth organizations, academia, the private sector, and development partners.

The focus of the global listening sessions was to create a platform for exchanges on examples of practices and coping strategies. Participants were invited to share their experiences with return and reintegration programming in rural areas in order to provide updates on trends, challenges, best practices, lessons learned, and examples of on-going collaboration between key stakeholders within their respective countries.

Building on these tools, six programmatic case studies linking reintegration and rural development were conducted, one in each country. They are presented throughout this report as practices to learn from. Information from the desk review and interviews was also used to map existing programmes on rural reintegration and development at a global level, and learn about practices in this field from the case study countries and beyond.

# 2 Return to rural areas and rural reintegration: findings from the field

### Key points

The successful rural reintegration of returnees is dependent on i) the circumstances of return, the rural community contexts of return, and the lived experiences of rural reintegration at the individual and community level; and ii) the role played by rural development and local economic development actors in the process at the structural level. Understanding rural reintegration and the support to be delivered requires an analysis of the profile of returnees and their communities, and the profiles and actions of the duty bearers. Creating those connections is at the heart of this report and the accompanying toolkit. These two aspects are reviewed in this chapter and are based on the desk review and primary data collected for this study.

## 2.1 Return migrants profiles and circumstances of their return

### 2.1.1 International and internal returns in 2020–2021

Global data on international return migration is difficult to obtain and is inconsistent. The year 2020, which was marked by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, saw a significant number of migrant workers returning to their countries of origin. This trend is expected to continue. Countries known for sending labour (e.g. Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Viet Nam) witnessed a high number of returns. According to the Migration Data Portal, in 2020–2021, India facilitated the return of over 4.5 million citizens from abroad (Migration Data Portal, 2022). In June 2020, 600 000 migrant workers were expected to return to Nepal (ACAPS, 2020). Returns in 2020, however, did not only involve migrant workers. Return migration is a global phenomenon that affects different groups of migrants and takes place across different contexts. Fragile and conflict-affected countries (e.g. Afghanistan[1] and Ethiopia) had high numbers of returns in the past year as well. Over 868 000 people from neighbouring countries

Iran and Pakistan returned to Afghanistan (OCHA, 2021), and over 50 000 Ethiopians abroad returned home between April 2020 and February 2021 (Migration Data Portal, 2022).

Returns occur both from international and domestic destinations, with higher numbers for internal migrants. The World Bank estimates that "the number of internal migrants is about two-and-a-half times that of international migrants" (World Bank, 2020). Data on internal returns, however, is even scarcer, as internal movements often go unrecorded. The IOM, for example, notes that "official statistics on rural-rural migration are very scarce and inaccurate, owing to scattered locations of sending and receiving areas and the difficulty in enumerating all the streams" (Deshingkar and Grimm 2005). The most recent estimates from the 2018 *State of food and agriculture: migration, agriculture and rural development*, point to over 1.3 billion internal migrants in the developing world (FAO, 2018). The 2018 FAO report further states that, in developing contexts, migrants are seven times more likely to have moved internally (i.e. live in an area other than their birthplace in their country) than internationally.

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[1] The Afghanistan case study and fieldwork for this study pre-dates the fall of Kabul in August 2021.

## 2.1.2 Profiles of return migrants

**FIGURE 2. Profile of returnees**

| Voluntary vs forced returns | A range of profiles | Women returnees | Young returnees |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Key points** <br><br> • Migrants who choose to return are **more successful** in their reintegration <br> • The **stigma associated with returnees** has grown with the pandemic <br> • Returnees **not able to fit in their return community** | **Key points** <br><br> • Return was a **safety net for domestic migrants** during the pandemic <br> • **Rate of international return** has accelerated due to the pandemic <br> • Returnees facing the **same challenges experienced pre-migration** | **Key points** <br><br> • There are **gender differences** in the experiences of, reasons for and success of rural reintegration <br> • Reintegration is **more difficult for women** than men <br> • The welcome upon return and community attitudes are **worse for women returnees than men** | **Key points** <br><br> • Young returnees find themselves **unable to fulfill their family's expectations** <br> • Youth who have been away the longest feel the **most out of place** <br> • Youth do not hold the **key to local resources** (e.g. land or access to financial services) <br> • Youth present **gendered and social difficulties** in their reintegration |

Source: Authors' own elaboration

## The spectrum between voluntary and forced returns

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the definition of who 'chooses' and who is 'forced' to return. The range of choices and decisions has been sharply restrained by mobility restrictions and the global economic downturn. Due to a lack of possible futures at their destination of migration, many migrants have been de facto forced to return. In some cases, it may be the outcome of policy decisions (i.e. the end of a legal stay to remain in a country); employers' decision (i.e. ending a work or employment contract); or family pressures and family expectations (Erdal and Oeppen, 2013; de Haas and Fokkema, 2010). Overall, instead of a binary understanding of voluntary or forced returns, scholars have commented on the spectrum linking voluntary and forced return migration; a spectrum within which the possibility of alternatives is the key differentiator (Erdal and Oeppen, 2018; 2020). The available literature shows that those for whom the return is an active choice and is planned, they are more likely to return with savings that they invest in small agricultural businesses in rural areas (Massey *et al.*, 1988; McCormick and Wahba, 2003).

In both rural and urban settings, returnees who voluntarily choose to return are more successful in their reintegration (Möllers *et al.*, 2017; Solís Lizama, 2018; Farrell *et al.* 2012; Vancluysen *et al.*, 2016). This is in part due to the fact that migrants who return voluntarily are able to better prepare and plan for their return (Möllers *et al.*, 2017; Solís Lizama, 2018; Vancluysen *et al.*, 2016). Another reason might be that returnees going back voluntarily have a more positive outlook on the return area (OECD, 2020). Farrell *et al.* (2012) looked at integration of return migrants in rural areas in western Ireland, which was mostly of a voluntary and planned nature. Returnees stated they were often drawn by the idyllic status of rural areas and mentioned factors, such as 'safe', 'close-knit' and 'a good place to raise a family' when discussing their return. Such a positive outlook on the rural areas of return could potentially aid in the success of the reintegration. However, not enough research has been done in this area.

The stigma associated with returnees, which has been well documented (Regmi *et al.*, 2022), has grown during the pandemic. Previously, stigma had been partly associated with the perception that migrants had been 'westernized' and had returned with new values and a new lifestyle that

were seen as incompatible with local norms and cultures (Schuster and Majidi, 2013). During the pandemic, local anecdotal evidence from Nepal shows instances of 'red marking' of the homes of returnee migrants (Khabarhub, 2021), which is part of a broader effort towards contact tracing and health surveillance, but has social ramifications within communities. At the national level, "central government's response to the pandemic has tended to blame and scapegoat returnee migrants" (Dhungana, 2020). Negative perceptions, both on the part of returnees and the members of the community they return to, have increased. Returnees are seen as carriers of the COVID-19 virus, which has led not only to anti-migrant but also anti-returnee sentiments. During the pandemic, people living in rural communities were cautious and did not want urban migrants, as was seen in Nairobi (Kenya), Dhaka (Bangladesh) and Tbilisi (Georgia). Some returnees from abroad were quarantined without support in difficult conditions, or went into hiding and did not seek help when they needed it, which increased their vulnerability. One of our respondents in Kenya explained that "there were a lot of outcries from people that were treated that way".[2] In Senegal, a St. Louis community member interviewed for this research explains that migrants return because they may have committed crimes, or were in camps, or in the sea, and were frequently dubbed as 'lazy' or 'demanding' upon their return.[3] At the same time, returnees say that the people of Gandiol, Senegal, prefer 'what comes easy'. A mutual negative judgement and lack of understanding remain, and there is a need for a shift in mindsets.

*"When will you return to Europe?", is a key question. "They don't like my behaviour, I am strict on time, on promises, on being paid. They think of me as a foreigner".*[4]

**Returnees may also not feel able to fit in their return community and face greater difficulties due to the pandemic.** Women may encounter additional stigma that can make reintegration more difficult. They may feel in physical danger upon return. This was observed in Myanmar, where returning migrant workers were exposed to gender-based violence and domestic violence, which has been on the rise globally during the COVID-19 pandemic (UNSDG, 2020).

## Who are the returnees? A range of return profiles

Returning migrants will have specific needs compared to non-migrants. Their local networks are often more limited than those of the members of their host community; their lifestyle, and the way they dress and speak may have changed. Their skills may no longer be adapted to local markets, which limit the use of the human and economic capital they may have built. In rural areas, this reality becomes harsher due to the impact of climate change on livelihoods.

**For domestic migrants, return was a safety net during the pandemic[5]**

In Kenya during the start of the pandemic, workers in the hospitality and service industries went back to their homes because they could not to pay rent. They went back to rural areas to set up small businesses in the local towns, selling merchandise for survival. This was widespread in the Kenyan city of Kisumu, where many migrant workers from Nairobi and Mombasa returned to sell local farm produces. "The pandemic saw a reverse migration in which many people went back to their homes as a safety net, to ensure they are able to survive economically, while their psychosocial support is catered for at home", noted one of this study's key informants who was working for the East African Farmers' Federation (EAFF).

**The rate of international returns and migrant workers' repatriation also accelerated**

- **Accelerated repatriation of migrant workers**
  At the international level, the repatriation of migrant workers accelerated from destination countries. For example, in various countries in the Middle East, youth working in construction, the hospitality sector and care services saw their contracts terminated and were repatriated.

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[2]  Key informant interview: Kenya.
[3]  Semi-structured interview 1: Gandiol, Senegal.
[4]  Semi-structured interview 8 Gandiol, Senegal.
[5]  Key informant interview: Kenya.

- **Premature returns**

  The acceleration of unplanned and premature returns in many countries led to gaps in linkages with social services and social protection. In the Republic of Moldova, for example, returnees found themselves barred from receiving unemployment benefits or being entitled to social protection as they had not paid social contributions during their absence. During the spring of 2020, the number of people who applied for these benefits drastically increased as returns accelerated. Returnees were required to buy their medical insurance policy but many could not because of the high costs. Returnees were often forced to come back to settings where they experienced the same challenges (e.g. natural disasters and climate change, conflict or modern forms of slavery) they did before their departure.

- **Return to areas affected by natural disasters and climate change**

  Flooding, earthquakes and drought have displaced populations from rural and urban areas in a number of the countries visited (Afghanistan, Kenya and Nepal). The frequency of extreme weather events and disasters has led to food insecurity that has triggered migration. Environmental degradation and climate change negatively impact the ability of returnees to reintegrate. In Nepal, earthquake, landslides, and lightning had caused catastrophic damage to rural communities where the research was carried out.

- **Return to conflict**

  In some cases where conflict was the main driver of migration, conditions had worsened. Migrants' property was destroyed or lost and t having to restart their lives from scratch. In these situations, the return also involves finding shelter, clothing, medication and meeting other basic needs.

- **Return of victims of trafficking**

  In Nepal, migrants, especially women, have been caught in human trafficking patterns. Community members interviewed for this study explain that "most of the females have been sold". Others have been victimized and forced into labour in Qatar, Dubai or Malaysia. Upon return,

their protection and legal needs are a priority, alongside their social acceptance, psychosocial support and economic integration. One returnee woman interviewed, who was barely 18 when she went to India to work as a domestic worker, agreed to share her return experience: "I came back all of a sudden because I was in fear as I was almost sold. There might be some danger to me as I am a woman and no one can protect me. I have not shared this with anyone. When I said to sir [employer] that my parents didn't allow me to stay in India longer, they threatened me. I returned to Nepal only after quarrelling heavily with sir. I was always in fear that I might be sold. So, I returned back to Jhapa [Nepal]." She continues: "It felt like I shouldn't have returned home. It would have been better to die over there [in India]. I had to return to my village, but I needed to do a check-up [COVID-19 test]. I lost the report needed to return to my village. As soon as I reached home, policemen came to my home to take me and asked me about the report I forgot to bring. I struggled a lot with the police before I was able to settle back home. I have gone through a lot of struggle. Once I finally reached home, my mother questioned me why I returned back in such a situation. You can imagine how I felt at the time."

## Women's experiences of return to rural areas

There are gender differences in the experience rural reintegration, the reasons for and success. Many aspects of reintegration are more difficult for women than for men (Sugden *et al.*, 2020; Hirvonen and Lilleør, 2015; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012; Möllers *et al.*, 2017). This could be due to the fact that in many rural areas, there is increased gender inequality between men and women. This inequality is often to the disadvantage of women, and women often do not enjoy basic human rights (van Leur, 2018). In some contexts, women's migration is not deemed appropriate given local norms, and returnee women are often stigmatized, which that makes their acceptance upon return all the more challenging. Stigma and discrimination might also be particularly acute for women returnees who have been associated with armed groups or have been victims of violence, exploitation or human trafficking (IOM and Samuel Hall, forthcoming).

Women face more financial constraints than men in their reintegration. They often bear a disproportionality large burden of unpaid care work; a burden that increased during the shutdown of schools and childcare facilities during the pandemic and labour shortages. A woman does not always have control over the use of their money, with her family or in-laws being involved in her spending. Additionally, women often have family role expectations they must live up to, which can impede their reintegration (Sugden *et al.*, 2020; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012). Finally, women returnees often encounter gender-specific barriers to access or reclaim land upon their return to rural areas because customary systems that do not recognise women's rights to land or inheritance.

Even though reintegration into rural areas may be harder for them, women make crucial contributions to rural development. Research by Thanh *et al.* (2019) concluded that female returnees play a large role in agricultural development in rural areas in Viet Nam. Particularly at the early stage of return, women seem to engage more with agriculture (Thanh *et al.*, 2019). There was also a clear gender-related difference in reasons for returning to rural sites. For men, economic factors (e.g. poor employment markets at the migration destination) were seen as the primary reasons for returning, whereas for women, health and social reasons (e.g. marriage or family) were more pressing (Sugden *et al.*, 2020; Hirvonen and Lilleør, 2015; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012; Möllers *et al.*, 2017). For women returning to rural areas, their return also often coincided with the end of a marriage, while for men it was associated with poor employment outcomes.

**The welcome upon return, and community attitudes, are worse for women returnees and their families**

The families of women returnees are often harshly judged for having allowed one of their girls to move far away to work.[6] In some countries (e.g. Nepal), women are stigmatized for having been victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking.[7] The best way in which they can be supported is through social inclusion and dialogue, and local structures that can facilitate their reintegration. Women returnees, who often do not want to expose themselves to the community, will need to be welcomed back and supported by community-based or local structures that can understand their needs. In other settings, (e.g. the Republic of Moldova), women that have left their family behind may not be able to reintegrate back into their families because of the men in their household may be dealing with addictions and alcohol issues. Some women, especially domestic workers, suffer through extremely stressful psychological workplace experiences. There are no psychological support services to help them transition into their families upon return.

Women's groups and support systems are one way in which women returnees have worked through their reintegration hardships, as seen in the case study from in Senegal.

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**Hearing from a female returnee in Gandiol, Senegal**

"At first I was a foreigner here, I was often told that I am 'Dakaroise', from the big city. And it's true, after four years, I have adjusted to the way of life here.

Every Tuesday, we regroup as women and contribute to our village savings and loans system (called the 'tontine', a system for raising capital in which individuals pay into a common pool). This is what helps us, once a year, to buy necessities for the family or invest the money. This has helped us move beyond the 'stay at home' image of women, dependent on their husbands. This financing has helped me get involved in the transformation of salt production in the village. We would like to move beyond the traditional and artisanal methods, there is an opportunity to set up a business and value chain to also benefit the youth.

I can also contribute through my restauration skills: the road through Gandiol leads to Dakar, without going through Saint-Louis, which means daily we see buses coming from various regions. They need food, and that is a road restauration project I would like to set up here. I was a cook and a waitress in Dakar. I have followed a NGO-led training on entrepreneurship. I have ideas, but need support."

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[6]  Semi-structured interview 8: Kenya.
[7]  Key informant interviews: Nepal.

## Young people's experiences of return to rural areas

The young people interviewed struggled with rural reintegration. Due to their age, their limited experiences in life, and the fact that migration may have interrupted their education, they find that they are unable to fulfil their family's expectations and the collective hopes invested in them when they first planned their migration. Poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and lack of services are among the main causes that lead young people to migrate. Evidence from Albania shows that the experience of migration and return can be traumatic and can keep young people out of school for longer periods of time (Terre des hommes, 2021). For young people, obtaining opportunities for vocational or professional training is a critical pathway to reintegrate into the social fabric of a community. These opportunities are also a source of hope for the families of the young returnees. However, such training will only have a longer-term impact on reintegration, if they lead to stable employment for young people. Yet, most often, reintegration support is implemented on a small scale and is short lived, and does not meet the long-term needs of young people in terms of training, incubation and accompaniment.

Young men and women who have been away the longest feel the most out of place. They struggle to reintegrate into rural areas because they are often not used to a rural lifestyle and communities where there are less resources and opportunities. In their own words, they find that rural areas offer them less educational and vocational training opportunities, less entertainment, and as a result they feel isolated or alienated. This has led scholars to dub this return an "elusive quest for belonging and adulthood" (Digidiki and Bhabha, 2019a). Without sufficient start-up capital to create their own income-generating opportunities, young returnees often cannot meet their immediate basic needs after return. With that comes the difficulty of earning the respect of their communities.

Additionally, young women and men do not hold the key to local resources (e.g. land or access to financial services). Young people appear to struggle more in accessing land once they return to rural areas and are less attracted to agriculture as a livelihood (IOM, 2013, Sugden *et al.,* 2020, Samuel Hall and IOM, 2018). In its Rural Youth Mobility (RYM) project in Ethiopia and

Tunisia, FAO teams found that young returnees had trouble accessing land in rural areas. The project supported rural youth, including returning migrants by opening up sustainable employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture. Other projects implemented by FAO and other agencies specifically focus on the reintegration of rural young people and meeting their different needs (European Union-IOM, 2021b). A key conclusion from research studies and reports on youth reintegration is that adequate funding and local financial resources will be needed to directly support youth reintegration (Digidiki and Bhabha, 2019b). Along with lack of access to land, one of the main challenges concerns is access to financial services, as there are generally few financial products tailored to youth. This is particularly true for young people under the age of 18. In Uganda for instance, research has shown that the majority of the young adult population that is currently financially excluded reside in rural areas and are mainly female (Benni, Berno and del Puerto Soria, 2020). The question of the resources available to facilitate their transition back has been raised in settings where young people are reintegrating into societies that are dealing with the aftermath of war (Honwana, 2006). As more investments are sought, young women and men's own voices will need to be heard more clearly and loudly in evolving discussions on migration, return and reintegration.

Finally, as seen in our data, young returnees also present gendered and social difficulties in their reintegration. In rural areas such as Kenya's Kwale County, both men and women migrate to urban centres, but the experiences of return are not the same. For young women who migrated while older women stayed behind, their return was seen as a source of support and care for the elderly. On the other hand, some young men were said to have forgotten or abandoned their families and were merely forced to return due to COVID-19. They found themselves confronted with "not entirely enthusiastic families" and their profile changed to becoming burdens at home. Those who had sent money back home while away were welcomed back more warmly. Key informants agreed that the experience of return may become an important lesson about not forgetting about one's rural home and village when migrating to towns. There is a hope that return may "discipline the younger generation, whose behaviour is more difficult to

socially and economically reintegrate back in the community than women and old people".[8]

In Afghanistan, young returnees to rural areas were aware of the cultural differences in rural communities compared to urban settings. They knew they had to be more careful and more attentive to traditions, but grew frustrated at "unnecessary and useless traditions which people who have lived in cities do not like", according to a young man interviewed in May 2021.[9] Young Afghan men and women spoke about the difficulties of reintegrating beyond the immediate family circles, and the challenges in developing friendly relationships with the rural community. They felt different, especially those who had migrated to study and returned to rural communities where the levels of education were lower and there was less understanding of the wider world than in urban communities. However, because of their education these young people felt they had a social responsibility: "educated residents can use their knowledge and experience to bring positive change in society, but it is not and will not be easy. People in Afghanistan do not welcome change", explains a young returnee, who returned when his university was closed due to COVID-19.

## 2.2 Specific contexts of return and related protection considerations

Rural return migration is interlinked with broader issues such as natural resources, land tenure, climate change, and food security (Solís Lizama, 2018; Farrell *et al.* 2012; European Union-IOM, 2021a). In fragile and conflict-affected states, rural reintegration is linked to larger strategies of the eradication of the structural causes of armed conflict (Honwana, 2006). Research by Tang and Hao (2019) expands the definition of rural return as 'return to their home villages', which is usually implied. In a study of rural migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic in China, it was found that in a context where there is limited support from governments and employers, return meant at the very least having access to the most basic needs, such a having a 'roof over their head' in their parents' home, given the effects of the pandemic on jobs and housing in cities (Tang and Li, 2021). Understanding the specific contexts of return will have an impact on the types of programmes that can be found, and the impacts that can be sought across rural communities of return.

**FIGURE 3.** Specific contexts of return and related protection considerations

| Protection-sensitive approaches in fragile contexts | Protection sensitive approaches in forced returns | Reintegration challenges in poor communities | Specific challenges of reintegration to rural areas |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Key points** • Rural returns can trigger **local disputes and tensions** • Returnees feel the **uncertainty of public support systems** • Reintegration into a fragile setting **further impedes reintegration** | **Key points** • **Reintegration outcomes are more challenging** in cases of forced returns • Human and financial costs of forced returns | **Key points** • **Communities can't support returnees' reintegration** • Returnees without any money are seen as a **burden** • Returnees face **financial and psychosocial burdens** • Community members have unrealistically high hopes for r**eturnees' contribution** to improving services | **Key points** • **Agriculture is the main source of income** for rural returnees • **Access to natural resources** is a key challenge • **Local labour markets** represent another challenge for rural returnees • **Community and family ties and socialization** are more prominent in rural areas |

Source: Authors' own elaboration

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[8] Semi-structured interview 4: Kenya.
[9] Semi-structured interview 7: Afghanistan.

### 2.2.1 Protection-sensitive approaches in fragile and conflict-affected contexts

Rural return migration can trigger local disputes and tensions, especially in fragile settings. In fragile, post-conflict settings, where communities can be strongly divided along ethnic, religious or political lines, return migration into rural areas can create tensions (European Union-IOM, 2021a). Significant return migration can disrupt or alter social balances among ethnic or religious groups and lead to increased competition over scarce natural resources (e.g water in landlocked countries such as Afghanistan). Respondents who were living on land provided by the Government for the integration of returnees and internally displaced persons spoke of the lack of agreement with neighbouring rural communities on sharing access to water resources. After the returns, Difficulty in access to land or a lack of agricultural land can also lead to tensions between host communities and returnees Fransen and Kuschminder 2012; 2014; Jacobsen, 2001). Research by Fransen and Kuschminder (2012; 2014) in rural Burundi underlines this increase, with returnees and locals having to share their land, not without conflict. By having positive impacts on reconciliation dynamics and economic recovery (e.g. rebuilding agricultural livelihoods), sustainable reintegration can be a key element in peace building in rural areas (European Union-IOM, 2021a).

## Returnees feel the uncertainty of public support systems

Returnees may have been receiving government aid and living on government land in fragile and conflict-affected settings, but they did not see this situation as sustainable. In Afghanistan, living rent-free on government land, caused returnees to fear that they could be asked to leave any day. The fragility of the government was a sign of the fragility of their own lives post-return. Returnees interviewed in Afghanistan were living on Land Allocation Sites that had been set up by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) throughout the country to solve the problem of landlessness among returnees. The Land Allocation Sites were on peri-urban locations that were not integrated into rural rehabilitation plans, and not urban enough to provide access to services, jobs and food (Majidi, 2013).

The issue of land tenure security in fragile and conflict-affected states has led to a reliance on settlements, rather than a home or a place that can offer a sense of belonging or a sustainable future for returnees. In fragile and conflict-affected states, returnees cite access to land and shelter as their biggest challenges to protection upon their return. Returnees find themselves not only forced to return, but also unable to choose where they return to.

## Reintegration into a fragile and conflict-affected situation further impedes the reintegration of returnees after their return to rural areas

Returnees may find fragile or insecure situations upon their return and be exposed to additional risks that not only undermine reintegration efforts but the well-being of individuals themselves. A 2018 background paper by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) argues that "the failure to safeguard migrants' rights in the context of return has been demonstrated to lead to a number of serious human rights concerns" (OHCHR, 2018). Before migrants return, there are legal limitations on the ability of States to return or repatriate migrants (e.g. prohibitions on collective expulsion) and, in the case of refugees, on non-refoulement obligations. There are procedural safeguards and protection protocols that must be applied to ensure that returnees will not be exposed to protection risks resulting from their return to fragile and conflict-affected situations. After return, it is ever more critical in such contexts to find solutions to the reintegration challenges of young people, in order to not only provide them stability but also prevent the occurrence of conflicts. Honwana (2006) explains that for reintegration to occur after war, it requires addressing "the total societal crisis" in such states, building on the potential of youth and the fact that the world's future rests on them.

### 2.2.2 Protection-sensitive approaches in forced returns

Scholars have documented how reintegration outcomes are often most challenging for those who are forced to return. (i.e. when they are physically removed from the territory of one state to return to their country of origin or nationality) (Cherti and Balaram, 2013; Oeppen and Majidi, 2015; Ruben *et al.*, 2009; Schuster and Majidi, 2013; Sinatti, 2011). A key theme in the literature is that those who choose to return can do so in a way that is planned and better informed, which leads to more sustainable reintegration outcomes (Cassarino,

2008). Returnee preparedness is the cornerstone of successful reintegration.

The same logic applies to the structural settings that they return. In most countries, governments are themselves not prepared to welcome returnees: "Many migration countries find themselves with inadequate instruments aimed at supporting the permanent and temporary return of migrants, let alone their reintegration needs." (Cassarino, 2014). Findings from Afghanistan (data collected before August 2021) revealed that the lack of legal status and documentation abroad, together with the lack of recognition of refugee status and asylum claims, led to increases in the number of Afghans forcibly returned from Europe, Iran and Pakistan.

Forced returns carry human and financial costs. Respondents could still feel the shock and brutality of their forced return years later. In the case of 28-year-old Fawad, he explained that "the government told us to leave the country or else we would be put in jail. We returned in 2018, after three years there."[10] Beyond the human cost was a financial one, as the costs of forced returns from neighbouring countries have to be borne by the migrants themselves. In Afghanistan, returnees were obliged to pay 200 US dollars upwards, the main hope of some of these returnees was to be registered by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and to receive cash and food grants. However, the speed of I return often left them with no time to prepare, and they relied heavily on rapid logistical arrangements to rent trucks and move belongings across the border by land.

### 2.2.3 Reintegration challenges in poor communities

Returnees often find themselves in communities that cannot support their reintegration. In fragile and conflict- affected contexts, and low-income communities, high levels of poverty mean that returnees are often expected to contribute rather than be supported upon return. However, after a long absence returnees often have lost their contacts and networks. They may also no longer follow local traditions and norms and feel that they have been rejected by their communities. Fawad said that "the community people were telling my wife and family members that Afghanistan isn't good, and that we should not be returning back."[11]

In Kenya for example, there were accounts of returnees who wanted to sell land being resisted by family members, which sparked family conflict.[12] Others have noted the shock that some returnees had when, upon return, they discovered that the remittances they sent back to the rural area they had planned to return to were not used as expected, or that their farms had been deserted.

Returnees without any money are seen as a burden. As Fawad noted, "nobody considered us as human."[13] The importance of not being another mouth to feed means that, for those who are unable to contribute, they are often tagged with difficult labels (e.g. 'thieves', 'useless people') or bear the stigma of being considered as 'foreigners'. This sentiment was echoed in testimonies of migrant workers in the construction sector in one of our countries of study, who were let go when the COVID-19 pandemic began. Their salaries were not paid, and their deportation was carried out at their own cost. Police officials and employers worked together to return workers who were no longer needed due to the declining demand in services, which resulted in lay-offs of low-skilled workers.

Even in cases where returnees are able to resume work, stakeholders note that the difference between the salaries for members of the host community and returnee salaries is excessive. "They don't like our wages", explains one social worker in the Republic of Moldova. "We got used to them, but they say they don't know how we live here", translating a lack of comprehension between migrants and hosts. In Senegal, those who stayed and invested in agriculture are seen to contribute more to the local economic development than returnees who set up a small shop.

The burden faced by returnees is not just financial, but also social and psychosocial. In the words of one female returnee who was forced to return, "We have faced mental problems since we could not get a job and earn money. I was not able to search for a job since I am not familiar with this area. My husband is not here to help me with this. If I had a sewing machine, I could sew

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[10]  Semi-structured interview 1: Afghanistan.
[11]  Semi-structured interview 1: Afghanistan.
[12]  Key informant interview: Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF).
[13]  Semi-structured interview 1: Afghanistan.

and teach others, like I did in Pakistan."[14] In other cases, frustrations were voiced by families who had adapted to an urban lifestyle and could not re-adapt to a lack of running water or tap water, and no electricity, and suffered emotional distress from the change in lifestyle.[15]

Community members in return settings hope that returnees make a contribution to improving services in terms of access, quality and maintenance. Women interviewed explained that returnees have skills and ideas to contribute, but that they have not seen any support that could capitalized on those skills. "They can contribute in the construction of buildings, schools and roads in our community but they have no resources to do so. The government should provide them support so that they can contribute and add value to our community."[16]

### 2.2.4 Specific challenges for reintegration to rural areas

For many people in many rural areas, agriculture is the main source of income, and this is also true for rural returnees (FAO, 2016, 2021, Ballard 2003, Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006). Rural returnees are more likely to return to agriculture-based livelihoods, especially in the early stages of their return (Chen and Wang, 2019). Although commercial agriculture is generally considered to be a low-profit activity, it can diversify incomes in the returnees' households and guarantee food security. Women in particular seem to engage more with agriculture at the early stages of their return (Thanh *et al.*, 2019). For example, after the massive return of migrants to rural communities in India following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many returnees hoped that in their home villages they would be able to earn an income from agriculture (Singh and Mishra, 2020). In 2016 in Senegal, a policy to support youth employment was developed, and some of the land reserves were set aside for Senegalese citizens abroad who intend to return and/or invest in agriculture and food-related businesses in the country (FAO *et al.*, 2018).

Ensuring equitable access to natural resources is a key challenge. In all the contexts reviewed, whether fragile or development contexts, natural resource-related disputes were a key reason why reintegration was difficult. Lack of access to land and water make reintegration into rural society harder (FAO 2019; Ballard 2003; Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006). Research by Ballard (2003) on the integration of Hmong refugees returning from Thailand to the rural area of Ban Pha Tha in the Lao People's Democratic Republic found that the unequal distribution of land influenced the success rate of reintegration. Families who received more land after their return reintegrated more successfully. Research by Thanh *et al.* (2019) in Viet Nam found that for returnees to rural areas, land ownership, agriculture and farm employment is a guaranteed source of income upon their return, which is an indication of the importance of land for rural returnees. Their research also found that agriculture can act as an economic buffer during the early stages of their return, whereas some returnees seek other work opportunities around their home village. Similarly, research by Özerdem and Sofizada (2006) and Macdonald (2011) has looked at the importance of land and land-related challenges for returnees to rural Afghanistan. Both studies concluded that landlessness of rural returnees is one of the biggest obstacles to their successful integration. Similarly in rural communities in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nepal, the issue of limited access to land for returnees, especially young people, has been highlighted (Sugden *et al.*, 2020; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012; 2014). The remoteness and the wide expanse of return locations in rural areas also means there is limited access to public services to support reintegration (Ruiz Soto *et al.*, 2019).

In rural settings in developing countries, the ways labour markets function and wages are determined present additional challenges. Rural economies are structurally complex. Many types of work arrangements are possible, including wage labour, agency contracts, the provision of personalized services and self-employment. Labour markets in rural areas are defined by small-scale production, commercial agriculture, non-farm activities and migration. The force behind rural-urban migration is typically the wage differential, which has been documented, including in analyses of circular migration in Kenya (Bigsten and Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 1995). Large influxes of returning migrants have a direct effect on reducing the average wage in rural areas (Leliveld 1997). As a result, in host communities there is the perception that returnees

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[14]  Semi-structured interview 8: Afghanistan.
[15]  Key informant interview: Kenya.
[16]  Semi-structured interview 5: Afghanistan.

destabilize the local labour market without making any contribution to reinvigorating the local economy. This can lead to social tensions between returnees and host communities and differences in expectations.

Social factors (e.g. community and family ties) and socialization are more prominent in reintegration into rural areas. Life in rural areas is usually far more centred around family and community than it is in urban areas, and returnees tend to be more dependent on their community and family. Therefore, social factors related to reintegration in rural areas are magnified and play a large role in the success or failure of reintegration (Fleischer, 2012; Ruiz Soto *et al.*, 2019; Farrell *et al.*, 2012; Sugden *et al.*, 2020; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012). Research into return to rural areas by Thanh *et al.* (2019) found that all return migrants in the study were driven by some form of family obligation and shaped by norms and culture of the home community (Thanh *et al.*, 2019). According to research by Samuel Hall (2019) and the IOM on reintegration in rural Nigeria, religious organizations, cooperatives, and trade associations are the main vectors of social participation. Opportunities for socialization and social participation however are generally much fewer in rural areas (IOM and Samuel Hall, 2019).

## 2.3 Factors influencing reintegration and opportunities for reintegration in rural areas

### Key points

There are three key factors influencing reintegration: i) information and awareness on the benefits of rural returns, the profiles and skills of returnees; ii) the closing of gaps in services gaps in rural areas, and iii) linking urban and rural systems as a key to sustainable reintegration. These three factors together respond to the majority of reintegration challenges documented in this report and seen in rural areas.

### 2.3.1 Information and awareness on the benefits of rural returns, and the profiles and skills of returnees

The return of migrants to their places of origin promotes the development of their communities (Masanja, 2018; Démurger and Xu, 2011).

Research has found that returning migrants in rural areas possess financial capacities, bring innovative ideas and augment the local labour force, which can help to revitalize rural economies and alleviate poverty (FAO, 2016, Masanja, 2018; Démurger and Xu, 2011). A catalyst in this process is agriculture. Research in rural areas of the United Republic of Tanzania by Masanja (2018) found that returnees brought innovative ideas with them, which promoted development in their communities, when their knowledge was adequately tapped into. There is also a heightened amount of entrepreneurship in rural returnees compared to the host community (Vancluysen *et al.*, 2016; Masanja, 2018; Démurger and Xu, 2011) and returnees who received more education are more likely to become entrepreneurs compared to returnees bearing less education (Masanja, 2018).

The benefits of migration (e.g. skills, knowledge, ideas, money, and other forms of capital) that returnees can bring are often not sufficiently mapped or well understood. Depending on their backgrounds, personal histories, circumstances, and migration trajectories, returnees have very different skill sets that are likely to be beneficial for developing the rural area they return to. However, these skills must be put into use and capitalized on in the right way. They must therefore be assessed adequately. The toolkit that accompanies this report provides several tools for mapping the needs of communities, as well as the skills and profiles of returnees.

There are different options for securing livelihoods in rural areas. And returnees might need to learn new skills, or adapt their skill set to fit the rural context, to these take advantage of these options. In the agriculture sector and related value chains, returnees might need to acquire technical competencies and understand the stage of the value chain their skills can provide the most benefits. Gathering information about returnees' experience and consolidated skills is needed to design specific training and support the returnees in seizing employment opportunities; gain an understanding of the mismatches between their skills and the demand in the labour market; and support them in a coherent process of personal and professional development.

The data collected in rural areas in Senegal revealed how remittances from migrants and returnees in specific sectors led to the processing

of agricultural products, as well as innovative initiatives and new enterprises being set up in rural areas. These contributions have been recognized by host communities. "They don't waste money, they invest in enterprises", explains a Gandiol resident. The same acknowledgement over the

perceived benefits was expressed in a rural area in Nepal where a host community member was interviewed. To seize these opportunities, it is necessary to make these benefits more visible and understood to all actors, and build on them to address concerns over competition for resources.

### 2.3.2  Closing service gaps in rural areas

When practitioners from the six-country survey were asked to define the main challenges for rural reintegration, concerns were voiced in all countries over a lack of participation and investment by national governments and local authorities in rural reintegration. The survey asked stakeholders, who were mostly representatives of international, national and local organizations, what they would require to better serve rural returnees and their communities. Stakeholders required more information and guidance on:

- **The type of support, resources and skills available to returnees in rural areas that could be used as a basis to design programmes**
  Participants were interested in the challenges and needs that returnees experience during transit and the legal documentation they required, as well as the competencies, resources and skills they bring to their communities.

- **The level of targeting and participation that can be expected from communities**
  A key question raised was whether the family or the community would be better suited as a target for rural projects. Participation and decision-making were highlighted as key missing elements in rural reintegration plans, and calls were made for participatory approaches to be reinforced.

- **The sustainability of rural programming**
  As a condition for further investments, stakeholders would like to know the future plans of returnees and the type of programming that could be considered sustainable in rural areas.

Sustainable reintegration of returnees in rural areas should not have to happen in a vacuum. Rural-urban links can reinforce development opportunities. Mayer *et al.,* (2016) suggested that a reinforcement of the urban–rural dichotomy can contribute to making asymmetrical economic

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**Hearing from a male host member in Nepal about the positive impacts of returnees' skills**

"Returnees are ready to contribute and create employment opportunities in the community. They want to earn and employ the people around them. Some of them are really creative. They are trying to bring change. New techniques and fertilizers to better manage the growth of cucumber, luffa etc., in a way that there is no waste of land. Instead, resources are well utilized for farming. This type of awareness has entered from the creative returnees who worked in agriculture and animal farms abroad."

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**Hearing from a female host member in Gandiol, Senegal about the positive impacts of returnees' knowledge and ideas**

"Agriculture production has decreased in our area in recent years, leading people to leave, either to Europe or to the sub-region, in the Gambia or Mauritania, or elsewhere in Senegal. With COVID-19 pandemic, migrants have returned, for holidays or commemorations, most are either involved in fisheries or trade. Permanent return has been difficult – those who return permanently are seen as strangers, foreigners, with different habits. But with this pandemic, we understood that they are tired of life in the cities, where they spend their money on consumption.

Returnees look at us as people who need support, who need to think about developing our area, to be open to development. They are motivating us. They have returned here and have transformed key sectors – soap making, but also fruit production, they have transferred their knowledge to improve our work. They are sharing their knowledge through our village associations, through debates, monitoring, training, and personal development. They have also given back to vulnerable families who needed help during COVID-19 pandemic. The key is to provide the opportunities to share these experiences, and to provide financing as returnees come back with ideas to start businesses and activities, and will also need support to do that."

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relations even stronger, which inevitably leads to unsustainable economic development: "Urban and rural are intimately connected and interdependent. A perspective on linkages acknowledges that urban and rural, center and periphery, are connected along a continuum" (Mayer *et al.,* 2016). Drawing on the sustainable livelihoods literature, Black and Gent (2006) make the important distinction between sustainability for the individual returnee and aggregate sustainability for the place/country of return.

Even when migrants return to somewhere a place they have lived previously, because of the passage of time and the changes both the migrant and the people and places they are returning to have experienced, it cannot be assumed that reintegration will be straightforward. Much of the qualitative empirical literature on returnee experiences illustrates this challenge (e.g. Erdal and Oeppen 2018; Graham and Khosravi, 1997; Muggeridge and Doná 2006; Oeppen, 2013).

From Nepal to Kenya, it was a common consensus that "government should be at the forefront of identifying returnees, their families, their needs, and how they can be supported. Programmes that manage returnee reintegration should be developed and implemented at the community level."[17] Stakeholders also agreed, across all contexts, that

better skills mapping is needed, and returnees should be involved in the process of policy making so that they can give their opinion. The toolkit that accompanies this report provides several tools for mapping the stakeholders who need to be involved in rural reintegration programmes.

One Kenyan female returnee shared her expectations of local government's engagement on reintegration: "the local administration ought to know the whereabouts of people so that they can know when people return home. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will come and go, but the local administration and community policing initiatives are here to stay as they are part and parcel of the community."[18]

Delivering services to rural areas is a mandate for governments and they require support to link these services to reintegration. Meeting this mandate is rendered more complex due to fiscal challenges, demographic pressures, and COVID-19 restrictions. Rural areas are habitually less well serviced because of their remoteness and low population densities, which increase the costs of services and bring down economies of scale. This is a constraint that new technologies can help address by filling the gap in human resources. However, returnees may also come with the skills needed to support service delivery in rural areas.

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17 Key informant interview: Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF).
18 Semi-structured interview 5: Kenya.

The most important issue for service delivery in rural areas, and a key issue for reintegration in general, is the integration of public services across a range of sectors. Several international institutions have been working on approaches to different models of public service delivery and of integrated spatial planning (see below).

Models of integrated public service delivery in rural reintegration contexts include:

- **The IOM approach in the Gambia that ensures water access is available to rural communities of return through the use of water milling machines. These machines provide a sustainable livelihood for returnees, and clean water for villages of return (often for the first time) and replace manual water pumps. The profits generated are used to continue serving the community. This approach was complemented by the establishment of village development committees, and migration subcommittees, through which returnees can work hand in hand with local development committee members.**

- **The UN-HABITAT approach in Somalia recognizes that cities are dependent on rural areas for access to food and vice versa. UN-HABITAT developed an approach that recognizes the linkages between urban and rural areas as being a key to durable solutions to social challenges, such as reintegration, and takes into consideration the fact that government cannot reach rural areas. Supporting the federal government to make plans for improving access to rural areas and delivering basic services has become a focus for UN-HABITAT.**

Research in Mozambique by Batista, Seither and Vicente (2018) showed that returnees brought with them knowledge of political institutions abroad, which led to greater political participation for men and women in their social networks. Returnees can therefore play a role in mobilizing rural communities, helping to better articulate their demands for services from the government, and raising awareness about available services. Returnees provide information about processes and services that can be expected and can help other men and women (both returnees and hosts)

to realize their capacities to bring about improved governance. Such models can be replicated to ensure that returnees can also generate greater investments by public sector actors in specific communities of return.

### 2.3.3 Linking urban and rural systems using a spatial and food system approach to rural reintegration

A value chain "describes the full range of activities that are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the intermediary phases of production and delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use" (Kaplinsky, 2004). According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), "this includes activities such as design, production, marketing, distribution and support services up to the final consumer. The activities constituting a value chain can be contained within a single firm or divided among different firms, within a single geographical location or spread over wider areas" (Nutz and Merten, 2015). FAO has contributed a sustainability element in defining food value chains. FAO considers a sustainable food value chain is reached when it meets requirements of economic sustainability (profitable through all of its stages), social sustainability (broad-based benefits for society), and environmentally sustainable (positive or neutral impacts on the natural environment) (FAO, 2014).

Using a value chain approach for sustainable reintegration, or reintegration-smart interventions, requires an understanding of the various stages of the value chain that can provide employment opportunities for returnees, and leverage their skills and knowledge on multiple levels. A value chain approach is both applicable to the development context and to fragile and conflict-affected contexts. In both settings, common lessons have been learned about the role of markets in strengthening resilience to crises, and building prospects for sustainable reintegration. Value-chain-based reintegration programmes can lay the foundation for recovery efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Value chain analyses linking rural production and urban food security can support rural livelihoods and reintegration (IOM and Samuel Hall, 2019). Investing in value chains, specifically value chains that are related to agriculture and agrifood systems, can create a wide range of job

opportunities for rural communities and rural returnees (IOM and Samuel Hall, 2019). focus on agribusiness activities can respond to the expectations of younger generations of jobs that offer better career perspectives than traditional small-scale agriculture. Research by Samuel Hall in collaboration with IOM (2019) on rural reintegration in West Africa supports this. In the Gambia for instance, promoting value chains (e.g. the rice value chain) was not only essential for food security but also for overall economic development.

The increasing demand for processed products in urban areas can offer multiple employment opportunities for rural youth. This demand can stimulate economic diversification, the development of agribusinesses, and the creation of livelihoods for rural returnees or many rural returnees, this is particularly important in the context of COVID-19. For instance, the FAO COVID-19 response in Asia and the Pacific from January 2021-December 2024 focuses on supporting key value chains to create livelihoods for the rural returnees in the region (FAO, 2020a). In Uganda, a country where 79 percent of youth live in rural areas, Mwesigye and Nguyen (2020) found that a substantial proportion of employees in coffee value chains were young, illustrating the importance of the value chain for rural youth employment. Women's empowerment, after return, can also be fostered by supporting agricultural value chains, and improving the terms and conditions of women's labour in these value chains. In Nepal, the role of cooperatives is critical in rural areas and can play a foundational role in reintegration. As community-based enterprises, cooperatives can deliver services that are lacking.

They can also add value by upgrading value chains, provide access to higher-value markets through cooperative-to-cooperative trade, and facilitate the provision of economies at scale. In Eastern Africa, the added value of cooperatives in bringing about positive social outcomes (e.g. the creation of social support and networks, the integration of women and youth into the labour market, and improved health and education) have also been reported (Jaffe and Brockette, 2016). The factors that determine the success of agricultural cooperative can also figure into integrated approaches for rural reintegration.

The conceptual framing for sustainable development by UN-HABITAT and other organizations calls specifically for a "new green mosaic connecting rural to urban areas" (FAO, 2011). A notable initiative in this regard is the Food for Cities initiative, which was launched by FAO in 2000, and continues through donor initiatives such as the Farm to Fork initiatives funded by the European Union. These initiatives can be paired with return programmes to support sustainable rural reintegration. With COVID-19, urban actors are now taking into consideration the food system more seriously. Urban and rural municipalities and institutions are giving more space to food systems in the planning process for reintegration that are more holistic.

The toolkit that accompanies this report provides several tools for assessing market opportunities for returnees, and integrating returnees in strengthened and inclusive value chains that connect rural and urban areas.

# 3 Global lessons learned on sustainable reintegration in rural areas

## Mapping overview

The review included a total of 124 reintegration programmes operating in rural areas in six case-study countries. The information was collected through a desk review, key informant interviews and programmatic case studies and speaks to the wide range of experiences of rural reintegration. The results, which are presented below, together with the qualitative data collected for this study, provide key lessons learned on sustainable reintegration in rural areas.

## 3.1 Mapping of projects and interventions

*"Agri-business has the potential for reintegration and for the general participation of youth to rural development. What is needed is first a mapping: we need to look for local programmes and projects in each district, where young people can be integrated. Then community members need to hold discussions on the different approaches and solutions available to support rural youth."* – Tumwebaze Khamutima, Founder of the Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN)

### 3.1.1 Mapping of rural reintegration programmes

Over 120 reintegration programmes with links to rural areas were identified, but only about 40 percent have links with agricultural or rural transformation activities. The programmes that have adopted a rural development and transformation component are referred to as 'integrated+' programmes. This term refers to programmes that target both rural development and sustainable reintegration, and corresponds most closely the FAO definition of rural development, and the multi-dimensional aspects of the IOM definition of sustainable reintegration. However, there remains a lack of integration of local partners (i.e. local authorities or local civil society organizations). We find that while the programmes are area based and include both returnees and non-returnees, they do not pay sufficient attention to the profile of youth and women in rural reintegration processes. The challenges we identify are also opportunities: building on the existing

### This research reviewed and mapped 124 programmes

- The majority are development led (84), with one third (39) linked to humanitarian funding.
- The majority adopt an integrated approach (83 programmes address more than one component of sustainable reintegration), including 50 with an agriculture and rural transformation components
- Half of the programmes (69) involve more than two categories of actors, including government and local authorities; private sector and financial institutions; diaspora groups; civil society organizations, NGOs and community-based associations, UN agencies and INGOs
- The majority (83) include area-based approaches with both returnees and non-returnee community members as beneficiaries of their initiatives, and one-third (41) follow an individual or returnee-focused approach
- Just under half of the programmes reviewed (58) target mixed demographics that include both gender and youth targets

knowledge; strengthening the coordination and complementariness between programmes; learning from successful examples and good practice; and integrating local partners.

The mapping reveals two types of rural reintegration efforts at the country level. The presence, or lack thereof, of institutional actors, and central or local authorities in the process is a determining factor in rural reintegration programmes. Broadly, there are two sets of country experiences.

**CATEGORY A:** Countries making conscious efforts to institutionalize holistic approaches to rural reintegration

- **Consortia and multi-stakeholder partnerships linking government and non-governmental entities**

- **Functioning under the aegis of a national framework for return and reintegration with clearly delineated roles**

**CATEGORY B:** Countries carrying out disparate and disconnected rural reintegration activities, where relevant stakeholders operate in silos and often duplicate efforts

- **Levels of harmonization between national level and local level activity remain low in these countries**

- **Despite the high impetus for coordinated action on sustainable reintegration, stakeholders struggle to harmonize existing activities and mechanisms**

- **Coordination problems and context-specific obstacles limit the impact of existing programmes**

## CATEGORY A: Countries making conscious efforts to institutionalize holistic approaches to rural reintegration

Out of the 124 programmes mapped, over one third (35 percent) were in **Senegal**. This is partly a reflection of the historical engagement on reintegration by the government, which established in 1987 special offices for migration that are located in regions with high proportion of returning migrants. These offices are known by returnees who visit them upon return. The returnees are then connected to a range of stakeholders (e.g. the national agency for agricultural development) that can assist them with finding work in the agricultural sector. At the national level, 20 percent of the funds within this agency are allocated to supporting returning migrants. In 2021, the government's objective was to increase the role of regional and

local authorities. This involves further sensitizing them on the importance of reintegration as a key policy area of focus and encouraging them to work through networks of returning migrants. This federal approach is a key aspect in the Senegalese approach to rural reintegration and can serve as a model for other countries.

The enabling factors for sustainable rural reintegration in Senegal have included the fact that the government is involving all of its levels of representation, in conjunction with a range of development partners, to deliver on sustainable reintegration in rural areas. This approach resulted from the realization that migration is in essence a rural phenomenon. Young people leaving their villages negatively impacts agriculture and the local economy, which in turn threatens food security in rural households. This realization led the FAO to become more involved with the Government of Senegal through a focus on territorial planning that links the diverse needs of returnees (e.g. tenure security and property rights, especially for young and female returnees), with the needs of communities who require investments in agriculture and food systems to achieve higher productivity, inclusive growth, and improved food security. Specific actions have included the training and incubation of returning and prospective migrants in agribusiness. Training materials were developed as part of the *Modèle d'insertion des jeunes dans l'agrobusiness* (MIJA) approach, and through the piloting of local orientation activities in six municipalities by *Bureaux Communaux d'Accueil, Orientation et de Suivi* (BCAOS). Senegal has also focused on rural transformation through new forms of financing. This has included efforts to increase investments in agriculture and food-related businesses in areas of origin by encouraging returnees and migrants to engage in capital investment schemes to bring innovative solutions to the agriculture and agri-business sectors. The Government of Senegal actively encourages investments in rural areas.

In recent years, **Tunisia** has signed several bilateral and multilateral agreements on migration generally, and reintegration specifically. These efforts have united normative activities (i.e. the development of a national migration policy) and operational activities (i.e. the implementation of a national strategy on migration through the Lemma Project (2016–2019)). This project had several components that involved strengthening access to social services, enhancing solidarity, and building

trust and dialogue at local levels. This approach was reinforced by mentorship opportunities that were made available through complementary reintegration programmes. A European-led, multi-stakeholder process reinvigorated the agribusiness sector by tapping into financing and investments from migrants returning who contributed to the process as highly skilled entrepreneurs. The DiafrikInvest, which was rolled out in Morocco, Senegal and Tunisia in coordination with government institutions in all three countries and key members of the diaspora, served to increase the information and raise awareness about what Tunisians abroad could contribute to their area of origin. The diaspora was brought in at two levels: the micro level to reinforce entrepreneurial capacities at local levels; and the financial level by connecting diaspora investors with green technologies and the agrifood sector. As an example, the link between entrepreneurial experience and rural reintegration was created in Tunisia through an initiative led by IRIS Technologies, whose founder Khaled Bouchacha developed electronic cards to collect data in the beekeeping sector, which were used to boost the productivity of rural beekeepers.

At the time of data collection, in the spring of 2021, **Afghanistan**, a landlocked country whose economy remains mainly agrarian, was an example of a fragile and conflict-affected state that was prioritizing reintegration in its national development plans. Ensuring sustainable return and reintegration of displaced populations and returning citizens was a priority of the previous government's Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017–2021 and its follow up 2021–2025 version, which is currently on hold. In Afghanistan, a whole government and whole community approach was undertaken. Under its peace-building agenda, one of the national priority programmes emphasized reintegration. Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on reintegration, these programmes included a long-term COVID-19 response. The approach in Afghanistan was to integrate short-term humanitarian activities with longer-term development perspectives and actors. Returnees to rural areas were also included in other national priority programmes, including the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the Citizen Charter, which operated through community development councils in villages across the country. The mapping exercise revealed a number of rural reintegration programmes aligned with these national priorities,

including the IOM Reintegration Assistance and Development in Afghanistan (RADA) programme funded by the European Union, and smaller-scale programmes focused on vocational training for rural returnees, and entrepreneurial support from civil society (e.g. the Organization for Sustainable Aid in Afghanistan (OSAA)).

## CATEGORY B: Countries with disparate and disconnected rural reintegration efforts

**Nepal** is also implementing a numbers of reintegration programmes with a rural focus. Reintegration is a more recent issue for the country, but migration has always been an important social phenomenon. Approximately 3.5 million Nepalese (14 percent of the total population) work abroad (Ghimire, 2020). With COVID-19, many migrant workers had to return to Nepal and their rural areas of origin in the southern and western parts of the country. The priority today remains on understanding the capital they return with. In Nepal, reintegration gaps that need to be addressed include information on profiles and skills among returnees. This needs to be done at the federal level through the development of policies and then implemented at the municipality and provincial level. At the moment, one of the enabling factors for reintegration is the capacity of stakeholders to implement and learn from initiatives, such as the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP). This project, which finishes in 2022 and is led by IFAD, the government, and the private sector, has focused on the economic dimensions of reintegration. Another key factor in Nepal is the work led by civil society to ensure the reintegration of women, by applying tailored approaches and innovative ideas, such as the e-rickshaw programme launched by Pourakhi, a local NGO with funding from the UN. Once national policies are in place, they can in turn be customized at the local level. This customization can be done by cooperatives (financial, trade or agricultural cooperatives, which are seen as the third pillar of the economy and can be found in all rural communities. These enabling factors can provide a roadmap on how Nepal can improve its multi-stakeholder partnership and coordination on rural reintegration.

**Kenya** has increasingly focused on adopting an integrated approach that links agriculture, social protection and migration. The Kenya Institute of Migration Studies was set up as a regional centre of excellence for migration studies in the Horn of Africa

and to link knowledge to policy. Youth employment, land governance and resilient food systems have been its key areas of focus, and migration has only recently become mainstreamed in these activities. Recent projects include the FAO Reducing distress migration through local value chain development project in Kiambu county. This is a rural development project that can be linked to reintegration through its approach to value chain development and rural transformation. Increasingly, employment and income opportunities created through agribusiness are being explored, and migration is being mainstreamed in rural development practices. One of the issues is the gap between national and county-level policy development and implementation. Bridging this gap requires focusing on the linkage and capacities to be built at the local level, as well as horizontally, to integrate migration across sectors of intervention. Since 2016, a greater emphasis has been placed on uniting migration and rural development and seeking durable solutions to dealing with refugees, and less on reintegration programmes. Given Kenya's devolved government structure, priority should be given to the county-level actors who can identify opportunities, gaps, and tools to facilitate reintegration.

Since the early 1990s, the **Republic of Moldova** has been experiencing cyclical migration. The majority of rural returnees are migrants who have left for shorter periods of time. In the Republic of Moldova, however, their return is temporary as there are shortages of jobs in rural areas and the returnees need to sustain family income. The second challenge for returnees is social, psychosocial, and often cultural, especially for those who left at a younger age. The focus of the government is on setting policies to provide information and guidance to returnees, and facilitate the recognition of their skills. The government is working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the National Employment Agency to improve services for returning migrants, and build capacities and strengthen government services to support reintegration plans. These efforts, which are in a preparatory and consultation phase, demonstrate the government's growing commitment to capitalize on opportunities for sustainable reintegration. As in other countries, the role of the diaspora in improving the local communities and public infrastructure services is a feature of the support being given to the reintegration of returnees in rural areas of the country.

### 3.1.2 Identifying good practices and enabling factors

The programmes that have the strongest impact on rural reintegration are those that connect the national level policies with the community level actions, and support the capacity of stakeholders to work together across these levels. Echoing the factors of reintegration from the literature review in Part 2, the strongest practices for supporting reintegration in rural areas are those that bring together and plan for three linked factors:

**I)** **a spatial and territorial approach;**

**II)** **government involvement and engagement, at all levels; and**

**III)** **sectoral approaches tailored to the profiles of the returnees and their host communities.**

This was documented in the IOM 2021 knowledge paper on the linkages between sustainable development and reintegration programmes (European Union-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, 2021). The paper highlighted the fact that successful sustainable reintegration require governments to connect with communities (i.e. a top-down approach seen in the territorial and government activities to address community needs), and communities to connect with returnees (i.e. the bottom-up approach seen in tailored initiatives that integrate returnees into the fabric of the community). These connections require a strong focus on partnerships, which are critical to all reintegration efforts, particularly in rural areas.

The most promising initiatives found in the mapping are those that bring together a large array of actors (combining policy and programme stakeholders) to meet the key criteria and enabling factors to sustain rural reintegration efforts.

## 3.2 Main lessons learned for policy and programme design for rural reintegration

### Key content

The next two sections outline the policy and programmatic lessons that have been learned. They explain what they are; why they are important for sustainable reintegration in rural areas; and what they mean in practice. Examples are provided to illustrate the relevance of each lesson. These lessons were triangulated on the basis of the data collected in the mapping and the literature review for the six case study countries.

### 3.2.1 LESSON LEARNED 1. Policy coherence and alignment with global, regional, national policies

"If it is both the county and national government role then we should be having a clear harmonization of these regulations. The national level should be providing a clear framework for engaging county actors. There should be resources set aside to implement these regulations. At the county level, there should also be a particular budget set aside for returnee management. These resources can be set aside to leverage other existing projects, say by FAO, civil society organizations or any other group."
Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF)

A normative approach to rural reintegration is an essential requirement for sustainable reintegration in rural areas in that it ensures that local action will be supported by national policy priorities. Stakeholders from Afghanistan, Kenya and Nepal stated that rural actors, local respondents and communities should not be left on their own to devise plans for reintegration. Local plans need to follow nationally set policies and priorities, and receive adequate financial support. Stakeholders called on national governments to highlight "what they can and cannot do for the agriculture and animal farming sector" and the extent to which they can facilitate and grant "seed distribution, fertilizers, training programmes"[19] to support the income generation of young people and other returnees.

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[19]  Semi-structured interview 4: Nepal.

There are solid opportunities to match legal migration frameworks with national development plans aimed at rural areas. While some countries have developed legal migration frameworks (e.g. Kenya, Senegal, Tunisia), other countries are still in the progress of creating these frameworks (Afghanistan, the Republic of Moldova, Nepal). A consolidated effort is needed in each country to link legal migration frameworks with national development and agriculture-focused development plans. "Investments follow policies, so if the policies are not right, then you do not get the adequate support to rural areas. If it is a national government role, it should be clear; when it can be delegated locally should also be specified", explains a respondent in Kenya. Policy development in Kenya requires further investments to ensure that on-going draft policies, such as the policy on labour migration, include an adequate understanding of the decision-making processes, aspirations and needs of migrant workers in the return stage and reintegration stage.

### Modalities to follow

National planning can take several forms. It can include:

- **a whole government approach, whereby various ministries are involved to ensure alignment across services provided in rural areas;**

- **the alignment of agency strategies with national strategies to bolster buy-in and political will at the national and local levels; and**

- **national coordination plans linked with regional frameworks.**

### Practical implications

Since 2019, the Moldovan Government and its international partners have been working on a diaspora engagement policy with a key component on return and reintegration. Local stakeholders, municipalities and heads of agencies have welcomed this initiative. A mayor in Moldova stressed that when a new law is being drafted and adopted, the public administration must also be consulted, as they are the closest to the

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citizens and understand their needs and problems. Similarly, the director of the national employment agency in Chisinau stated that authorities are now working on one-stop shops, a form of digitalized centres, where a returnee can submit a request for assistance and be referred to the responsible institution. From there, the institutions take over and answer the question. These digitalized services that operate through dedicated centres are well adapted to returnees who have prior experience with similar systems abroad.

In Nepal, while waiting for the development of a national reintegration framework, there are promising steps being taken to link employment schemes with returning migrant workers.

- **The Prime Minister Employment Programme at the federal level has started to include returning migrant workers' applications, which ensures 100 days of work a year at the local level.**

- **The Chief Minister Employment Programme at the provincial level mirrors the Prime Minister Employment Programme with employment for young people at the local level.**

The lessons learned across the six study countries for rural reintegration highlight a threefold gap that needs to be filled.

### 1) Policy gap

A lack of prioritization for reintegration in national policies limits donor support and fundraising activities. This was reported by implementing organizations that were interested in acting on reintegration, but were unable to fundraise without a link to a central government policy on reintegration. Special projects or programmes will be needed at the local level to act as an incentive to engage municipalities and local stakeholders on reintegration. Stakeholders have identified the risks for reintegration to be considered as a cross-cutting theme and not linked to specific sectoral developments.

### 2) Priority gap

To avoid responding to returnees in an ad hoc manner or when a crisis (e.g. COVID-19) emerges, and translate the national policies into provincial and municipal outcomes, stakeholders highlighted the need to make plans for building agricultural markets and strengthening food systems, including in fragile or conflict-affected settings. Focus should be placed on agricultural products and services, and enhancements to value chains.

### 3) Skills assessment gap

When returnees arrive in their rural communities, skills assessment procedures will be needed. This can be accomplished by enhancing the role of national employment agencies, training institutes, or other authorities that can evaluate the skills of returnees, and recognize them through some form of certification. As informants reported, in many cases, especially in rural areas, people might have years of experience or possess highly specialized skills in agriculture or other sectors, but their skills may have not been recognized. Countries will need a system to assess and certify the skills of returning migrants, especially in rural areas.[20]

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[20]  Key informant interview: ILO.

**BOX 1. Diaspora, return and reintegration policy in the Republic of Moldova**

A disconnect remains between central government policy development and the implementation of rural plans. Due to a lack of clear national policies, local authorities often do not have the tools and the means to implement effective rural reintegration programming. In the Republic of Moldova, a way forward is seen in the role played by the national employment strategy, which is in line with the diaspora policy, and has identified the roles of national employment agencies and sub-national bodies.

In the Republic of Moldova, the UNDP has been working the government in the area of diaspora engagement and reintegration. This collaboration, which receives funding from the Swiss government, targets migration and development in general, and has specific components on return, reintegration and local development carried out in partnership with the IOM. The main counterparts and beneficiaries are the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the national employment agency, and the bureau in charge of relations with the diaspora. The activities that target the return and reintegration are mostly related to the development of the national programme for fostering return and facilitating the reintegration of mobile citizens. The collaboration is extending the mechanism for validating professional skills obtained in formal and non-formal settings to include returnees.

**Activity 1:** The draft national programme for facilitating the return and reintegration of Moldovan workers is a mid-term policy document with activities carried out at the local, national, and international levels. One of the main purposes of the programme is to capitalize on the human and financial potential of migrants and maximize the positive impacts of migration. The dialogue has shifted towards community-based services that facilitate economic reintegration and provide support in finding jobs. Beyond economic aspects, the policy will address the need to ensure access to services, including reintegration services (social and linguistic services in schools) for the children of returning migrants. The policy document is currently in a consultation phase involving 20 institutions that at one point or another will be affecting the lives of returning migrants.

**Activity 2:** Capacity building for the national employment agency and 37 sub-national units that handle employment. This second activity focused on:
    a. supporting agencies and local units in providing better services to returning migrants; and
    b. training them to improve communication and better respond to returnees' psychological needs.
This initiative recognizes that returnees can be frustrated by the level of services that they find upon return after having travelled to more advanced economies. This frustration, coupled with mistrust in state institutions, may translate into difficult conversations with public servants and the returning migrants. The aim is to build dialogue and trust, from the policy level to the implementation level. There will be a roll-out of a national referral mechanism to provide returnees with access to other social services (i.e. educational, medical and social services).

**Activity 3**: The piloting of a skills validation service in 2019 led the UNDP to support the Ministry of Education in developing a mechanism whereby returnees and any other Moldovan citizen can validate their professional and vocational skills obtained in formal and non-formal settings. If migrants have worked abroad as chefs or waiters, or as construction workers, but have no formal qualification, they can apply to one of the institutions that are mandated with the validation. They can be tested on theory and practice and their skills can be validated by this centre. They then receive a formal certificate that states they possess the vocational qualification. This process started in 2019 with two centres targeting two sectors: catering and construction. Employment in these sectors is the most popular among returning migrants. The UNDP supported the Ministry in developing the legal procedure and mechanism, and by piloting the process. In 2021, it was extended to more sectors: textiles, beauty, information and communication technology, transportation, early education, and ecology. Because government-financed infrastructure projects do not allow contractors to hire people without formal qualifications, the certificate helps returnees find higher paying jobs and increase their job opportunities.

### 3.2.2 LESSON LEARNED 2. Customizing responses at the sub-national level

Customizing responses at the sub-national level can be done by key actors that have sufficiently strong networks in rural areas. In Kenya, this can be facilitated by the Kenya National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, which can tap into the network set up by programmes such as the National Agriculture and Rural Inclusive Growth Project. This type of rural partnership will be key to customizing programmes at the sub-national level. In countries where the national policy linkages have yet to be made, area-based approaches can be used to support reintegration through investments in rural and resilience programming.

## Modalities to follow

For rural reintegration to be effective, local responses will need to be customized at different levels. These levels are illustrated below through existing practices. To date, most of the focus on rural

reintegration has been geared towards harmonizing responses at the first level (i.e. agreeing on the centrality of area based and integrated approaches), but from there, the needs have to expand to cover three other levels of response:

- **Capacity building**
  - Fiscal and local budget planning with local authorities
  - Technical and advisory mobile teams to provide the technical know-how to remote areas.

- **Referral systems**
  - Village farming support

- **Agricultural support**
  - Land distribution and leasing with authorities and partners
  - Improving the value of the land through irrigation projects
  - Value chain integration

## Practical implications for planning local budgets

In Nepal, the authorities of Chautara Bazaar operated a subsidies programme for returnees and for local economic development. They divided the local budget into two categories: one for health and another for returnees. Based on their fiscal and budgetary planning, local authorities started by providing equipment support through the local budget. Tractors and vegetable seeds were delivered to farmers, and grant programmes were established to help returnees and their communities. The next step was to set aside some of the budget for promoting rural entrepreneurship programmes. Another key requirement was to formulate a land-based strategy and leasing system for agriculture for returnees that assures them that, even though they may not have assets, or may have lost or sold assets prior to their migration (often a cause of their migration), they can have a claim to the use of land.

## Practical implications for land distribution and leasing

In Afghanistan, the response to landlessness has been to provide land to address the immediate shelter needs of rural returnees. This has been accomplished through 'land allocation sites' that were set up by the former Government of Afghanistan with funding from the international community and donors. However, the land was not seen as a productive means of livelihoods for returnees. From the start, the land allocation programme was not connected to the planning done by the Ministry of Agriculture or the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

In 2021, twenty years after the start of these initial land-based solutions for reintegration, the narrative had begun to change. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the government was then able to distribute and lease agricultural lands to returnees. A minimum fee was charged and irrigation facilities were provided so the returnees could cultivate the land. Afghanistan has ample unirrigated land that could be turned into farmland by digging deep wells and pumping water using solar energy.[21]

The change in approach was a result of lessons that had been learned on the value of agricultural leasing, in which the land is used for a particular purpose for a longer period of time than renting. Long-term agricultural leases are the most common form of lease in agriculture and they can free rural returnees from the burden of buying land. They can also provide ageing farmers with a workforce that can maintain farm productivity. Long-term agricultural leases can provide a way for rural stakeholders (local authorities and private landowners) to sustain an income stream and at the same time support reintegration, agricultural businesses and the local economy. The Independent Land Authority of Afghanistan was established to develop and implement a strategy to lease land for agricultural, agricultural processing and industrial purposes. Established to be a 'one-stop shop' for leasing land, the extension and linkage to rural reintegration programming needs to be done to support rural reintegration. In 2021, such leasing had been restricted to companies, mainly.

In response to the type of technical know-how already illustrated in the Nepali example, one of the best practices for upgrading skills to returnees and

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[21] Key informant interview: Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

host communities in the most remote areas has been the provision of expertise through mobile teams.

## Practical implications for mobile teams to provide agricultural solutions to rural return areas

In Morocco, the Ministry of Agriculture has set up work centres in rural areas to provide professional orientation and counselling. The centre-based services are supplemented by mobile response teams, caravans that travel to remote rural areas to guide young people to training and work opportunities. Another initiative, the Improved Reintegration in Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal Project (MOTUSE), was implemented by IOM between 2015 and 2016.[22] The project worked to sensitize government institutions to the needs of returnees. In rural areas, IOM mobilized the national agency in charge of agriculture to travel to rural locations to monitor, evaluate, and provide counselling to support the reintegration of returnees. On rural field visits, the teams would critically assess the choice of food given to livestock or the locations where seeds had been planted, and provide a technical perspective to returnees engaging in agriculture and livestock in

their reintegration process. At the time, the main support provided by IOM was logistical, ensuring transportation for the central authorities to visit rural areas. These investments were temporary and project focused, but they could become part of a system of rotational and mobile outreach by agricultural technicians. In many of the contexts under review, specialized agencies exist but they do not have resources to travel to all the rural areas of the country. Providing for the transportation needs of these agencies and integrating their services so that they can act as a link between reintegration and rural development plans can bring a significant impact. This can be done through local authorities and civil society organizations.

Together these initiatives demonstrate a willingness in these countries to customize subnational rural reintegration efforts to meet the needs of different rural communities and adapt them to the different strengths of local stakeholders, and at the same time align these efforts with national policies and frameworks. For rural reintegration to succeed in Senegal, the involvement of civil society is as important as the involvement of the returnees themselves, as well as the support from the government and donors.

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### BOX 2. Programmatic case study – Senegal
#### Lessons learned from the 'Successful in Senegal' project

The "Successful in Senegal" project, which was funded by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), operated from 2017 to 2021 in Dakar and more remote locations in Senegal, primarily in the city of Saint-Louis and the rural communities in the Saint-Louis region. The GIZ team in Dakar focused on programme deployment, and the GIZ office in Saint Louis worked with local service providers (e.g. local NGOs, associations, humanitarian and development agencies, technical schools, vocational training centres, youth councils, regional agencies) to develop strong lasting partnerships. The focus was on building a local structure of actors that could showcase the capacity to realize the outputs and outcomes of the project. The network had multiple actors and operated on multi-levelled, in recognition of the range of needs involved in successful and sustainable reintegration. The structure was set up to be:

- A well-functioning structure that institutionalizes regular meetings with multiple actors and establish feedback loops for regular reporting
- Inclusive of youth and returning migrants on the implementation – for them to not just be recipients, but also active participants in shaping how the programme functions in practice.

This project was aligned with the objective of the Government of Senegal to strengthen local collaboration, establish conventions between various governmental and with non-state actors, and promote processes for building the capacities of stakeholders. This strategy is implemented through *Bureaux Communaux d'Accueil, Orientation et de Suivi* (BCAOS) [Welcome and Orientation Offices] that serve as the main liaison with local authorities. A representative from the *Direction General de l'Appui des Sénégalais de l'Exterieur* (DGASE) explained that this strategy was based on the recognition that "there cannot be a sustainable reintegration without the active participation of local and regional authorities".

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22  https://austria.iom.int/enhancing-sustainability-reintegration-schemes-migrants-returning-morocco-tunisia-and-senegal-eu

**BOX 2.** *continued*

### Policy coherence: bringing programmes to the local level

FAO has been supporting the Government of Senegal on two projects: "Migration and youth employment in food systems', and "Strengthening capacity to harness positive effects of migration". These two projects promote coordination between migration and agricultural stakeholders, and provide young people and others with services to develop their agribusiness skills and offer orientation.[23] The success of these projects was closely linked to the rural hubs established for training, incubation and agribusiness support. FAO has also supported the establishment of local BCAOS in rural areas in the municipalities of Bonconto, Darou Salam, Toubacouta, Taïf, Keur Momar Sarr and Fanaye. The offices are run by facilitators who have been selected from the officials of the municipalities and trained and coached by FAO. These facilitators have different roles. They welcome migrants, inform them about the type of opportunities for assistance and capacity-building that are available, help them set up productive activities, and identify financial partners.

The research for this study found two other examples of efforts undertaken by local community members to support returnees and young potential migrants in rural areas through donor-led and government-led reintegration projects.[24]

- In Saint Louis, a civil society activist has founded a local association called 'Hahatay' in Gandiol in the outskirts of Saint Louis. The association, which engaged with the local community. Has been building a centre that will mobilize and gather under one roof a variety of territorial actors to foster youth employment, create cultural centres to attract Senegalese artists and cultural actors to showcase their work in Saint Louis, and inspire the young people of Saint Louis. This type of local association can address the multiple dimensions (economic, social, and psychological) of rural reintegration.

- Another example is 'Yamalé', an association that works with agricultural stakeholders in the municipality and townhall of Niomré in the town of Louga in northwestern Senegal. It mobilizes elected local officials and focuses on a municipal approach to promoting rural development. The Yamalé team negotiates with the mayors and public bodies on land tenure. The association is seeking to set up a system where groups of youth and returnees can work on publicly owned lands and be responsible for all the stages of harvesting. Yamalé's works closely with the town hall and the municipality to accompany young returnees in their path toward reintegration.

### 3.2.3 LESSON LEARNED 3. Dialogue and trust building

It is vital for those involved in rural development to invest in building trust. High levels of trust support the multi-levelled reintegration process and ensure a conflict-sensitive approach is followed that considers the perceptions of all actors. Gaining the acceptance and approval of local communities is a critical step in rural areas.

The importance of consensus on a controlled and context-relevant process of modernization to support rural reintegration was expressed by stakeholders from all countries. This aspect emphasises the importance of dialogue and trust building, with individual returnees, their families and their communities in supporting rural reintegration.

## Modalities to follow

Good practices reviewed in this section include:

I. **farmer field schools for youth and development activities accepted by the community**

II. **social protection and safety net systems to support rural reintegration**

III. **accountability to affected populations, guidance and counselling**

IV. **conflict-sensitive and social action frameworks in rural communities.**

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[23]  For further information, refer to European Union-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, 2021a, pages 63–64.

[24]  For more information go to the FAO web page, Tapping into the development potential of migration in Senegal: www.fao.org/rural-employment/resources/detail/en/c/1476540/

## I. Farmer field schools

Farmer field schools (FFS) can target returnees and have demonstrated a capacity to be integrated into reintegration programming through the design of development activities that are accepted by host communities. FFS have become a good practice in rural (re)integration (e.g. in Afghanistan and Kenya). For over 30 years, FFS have been proven to be an effective alternative to top-down approaches to agricultural development. FFS, which promote experimentation, group organization, local decision-making and discovery-based learning, are being implemented in over 90 countries. They have been institutionalized in national programmes and educational institutions, including for young people in employment programmes and schools.[25] FAO is working on mainstreaming these FFS practices into training and higher learning institutions to ensure that extension workers can guide farmers in the FFS approach. In Egypt, FFS programmes have been integrated in the country's overall rural development strategy and have the potential to support rural reintegration. In Afghanistan, the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has implemented an FFS programme. One of the hurdles for the Afghanistan initiative has been the prominence of outside influences, especially for farm products that are in high demand. This has been the case on saffron or chickens, where regional monopolies have limited the ability of FFS to scale up production. Unequal trade partnerships can limit the expansion of the FFS model, but the model still can provide a pathway to reintegration in rural areas.

FFS also foster the type of relationship building that is required to create rural livelihood opportunities. These relationships take time to solidify and require appraisals, testing and targeting that involve a wide range of actors. The FAO FFS approach follows a systematic approach that does more than build skills, it fosters learning and dialogue that can enable the most vulnerable households to make a transition to sustainable livelihoods. FAO Kenya has linked the FFS to a graduation model to build capacities, lift people out of poverty and refer them then to additional development interventions.

## II. Social protection and safety net systems

Social protection and safety net systems are now increasingly part of the conversation on rural reintegration. In Afghanistan, prior to August 2021, FAO was planning to put in place safety nets and other social protection programmes for returnees. The Organization followed an approach that involved collaboration with multiple agencies and many different government ministries. The social protection and safety net programme would have been rolled out through the social protection working group, which includes the UNHCR, IOM, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), to chart a collaborative way forward. These types of initiatives are needed more than ever given the lack of safety nets available for displaced and returnee households.

## III. Accountability to affected populations

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is a key feature for rural reintegration and trust building. The feedback mechanisms put in place through accountability systems can enable a two-way dialogue. In Afghanistan, FAO has a formal agreement with the Awaaz platform, a joint and inter-agency call centre operated by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). FAO has a formal memorandum of understanding with Awaaz to receive referrals and complaints from the field. A hotline number is provided across various areas of the country for people to register their referral or complaint, which is then transferred to the relevant agency. FAO receives referrals related to agricultural interventions, including in high-return areas, and provides individual feedback to each referral. FAO has also initiated a grievance mechanism that provides numbers at distribution points so that people can call directly in case of problems and register their complaint. The hotline number from Awaaz, the FAO grievance mechanism and similar mechanisms address the need for accountability in rural reintegration processes. They also serve to gather accurate data on the problems faced by returnees, which serves to improve future reintegration interventions.

Accountability discussions in reintegration also cover guidance, mentoring, and counselling, which are vital to sustainable and effective reintegration. A recent study has revealed the importance of mentoring for reintegration (Samuel Hall and

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[25]   For more information on Farmer Field Schools, go to the Global Farmer Field School Platform: www.fao.org/farmer-field-schools/home/en/

University of Sussex, 2020). Returnees are known to have a specific need for counselling and mentoring to encourage them to invest, provide guidance on safe ways to invest and expand their economic activities, and resolve potential tensions throughout the reintegration process. In Afghanistan, many returnees were found to have significant psychosocial needs. Some experience post-traumatic stress disorder, which is one of the most difficult issues to address in a rural setting.[26]

**IV. Conflict-sensitive and social action frameworks in rural communities**

In Kenya, an initiative led by the Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics was launched and carried out between 2018–2021 to counter the stigma facing rural returnees, especially women and young returnees, and address the fears among communities and law enforcement agencies that violence or extremism may return to rural areas.[27] Safe spaces have been set up to welcome back migrants who decide to return. Clerics and law enforcement agencies have paired up to ensure that young people can have someone to speak to. The clerics playing a mediating role and have committed themselves to ensuring the returnee's acceptance by the community. After the initial welcome, returnees are given counsel on how to restart their lives. They are given starting kits that includes money and seeds, and are provided with farm training, so that they can become more self-reliant and earn an income by growing their own food.

Safe spaces for dialogue are being expanded in rural areas and can also be linked to reintegration in other ways. This involves consulting with communities on the types of programmes that are meaningful to them and preparing for social action frameworks across rural communities, to benefit rural reintegration. The Bahá'í International Community has developed a Framework for Social Action to lay the groundwork for community-level action in a more coordinated way in rural areas where young people and others are compelled to migrate due to lack of policies targeting their needs.[28] This involves setting up meaningful conversations on the life of the community, with conversational spaces to create relationships; and providing training courses on how to raise individual and community capacities, which include classes on economic life and institutional development even for children and young people. The intended outcome of this training is the design and implementation of development projects, as well as and reintegration projects, for social action in rural areas. As part of the Social Action Framework discussions are held at local, national and international levels about rural sustainability.

Additional elements can be envisaged to strengthen the capacities of returnees and the receiving or host communities to prevent and manage conflicts and establish and reinforce existing mechanisms for conflict resolution.

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**BOX 3.  Community reintegration – a story from Kenya**

**James's story of migration and return**

James migrated from rural Kenya to South Africa in 2009. After staying there for 10 years, he felt like the situation there changed, and he experienced more xenophobia. In December 2019, James decided to return to rural Kenya, on his own, by road. He emphasizes that it was his own, voluntary decision to return. James decided to return to his rural home straightaway when he came back into the country. He felt like he needed peace and quiet, and it was the only place he could think of to return to. He did not really prepare his return, but he did have some finances on him for the return journey.

**Difficulties reintegrating into the rural community**

James' family and friends welcomed his return and were a source of emotional support for him. Re-integrating into the community however was more difficult for him and he describes his return environment as 'hostile'. James felt like the community expected a lot from him and came to him for information or to borrow money. On the other hand, the community felt that he came to take their jobs. This made James feel estranged and different from his community members. To other rural returnees, he recommends to slowly reintegrate wherever you can and don't rush the process.

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[26]  Key informant interview: IOM Afghanistan.

[27]  FAO, UN Migration Network and Samuel Hall, Global Listening Session: Lessons Learned on Supporting Returnees' Reintegration in Rural Areas, July 6, 2021. https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbdl416/files/event_files/global_listening_session_concept_note_return_migration_to_rural_areas_final.pdf

[28]  Ibid.

**BOX 3.** *continued*

## Contribution to the community

Reflecting on his situation two years after an initial period of struggle to reintegrate, James says he is doing well and feels connected and involved in his community. He even feels like he has made an important contribution to the community. In the rural area where James has returned to, most people earn money picking tea and rely on the market for buying their food. He has however decided to start growing his own fruit and vegetables (e.g. pumpkins) to create his own market without interfering with the community's lifestyle. By cultivating his own food, he does not need to buy as much at the market, which saves him money. As a result, more people in the community have started to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

## Lessons learned: what could have improved his rural reintegration experience?

James states he did not receive any support for his rural reintegration and does not know anyone else who did. He has heard stories of people receiving support but warns that these people might spend it on other things. After reflecting upon his personal story, James was asked about the type of support he thinks returnees like him would need. One of the main things James missed and would recommend for other returnees is a 'support group' or 'support system' with fellow returnees. He says that many returnees cannot deal with their return individually and feel lost. A group of fellow returnees who are in a similar situation would be very helpful in dealing with the return. Additionally, James indicated the need of financial support in the form of loans or funds to help returnees start their own business. Besides financial support, health, well-being and psychological support are necessary. For young returnees, James says they need training in particular skills to create their own rural livelihoods.

## Looking towards the future

James is happy with his decision to return and does not see himself migrating in the future. He says he might visit some places but will come back to where he is now. He concludes the interview with the words: "I am comfortable where I am. I feel like I'm building myself up to what I'm supposed to be".

### 3.2.4 LESSON LEARNED 4. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and coordination

Promoting coordination and responsibility sharing is an objective that is explicitly articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration. Along with reintegration, rural communities have many needs that must be met (e.g. social services, food security and humanitarian actions), Meeting all these needs in an integrated manner requires a conscious and dedicated effort to bridge the humanitarian-development gap in both developing contexts and more fragile settings, and in both middle-income and low-income countries. What can effective responsibility sharing look like in rural areas?

Given the low population densities and remoteness of rural areas, partnerships are key for successful reintegration. Building these partnerships requires multi-stakeholder coordination and responsibility sharing not only between local and national authorities, but with a broad range of actors across the humanitarian, emergency and resilience domains. It also requires practical coordination and guidance between actors in the development and migration sectors.

Lastly, government engagement on reintegration is crucial as it can provide the components needed to have an impact and achieve sustainability. Each of the examples provided below shows how governments can participate at different levels: in Ethiopia by working with international institutions (e.g. IOM); in Cameroon by connecting with youth; and in Tunisia by supporting returnee entrepreneurs through facilitated access to land.

## Modalities to follow

Good practices reviewed in this section include:

I. **multi-stakeholder programmes that span climate change, resilience, and reintegration needs**

II. **coordination and dialogue with young people, the diaspora abroad and the government to support rural reintegration**

III. **engagement in collective projects that bring together returnees and local authorities**

**I. Coordinating with multiple stakeholders to implement actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change and build resilience in support of rural reintegration**

The adverse impacts of climate change are both a driver of migration and a challenge for rural reintegration. These impacts reduce job opportunities, cause severe land degradation, reduce water availability for irrigation, and undermine rural livelihoods. In 2019, IOM Ethiopia launched a programme, Reintegrating Migrants while Rehabilitating the Environment that follows a multi-stakeholder approach that brings together communities to address the adverse impacts of climate change in the Amhara region. The programme, which operates at the intersection of climate change and reintegration, works to rehabilitate degraded land, establish irrigation schemes and water points to increase farm production, and provide skills training to improve productivity and income of returnees. The programme improved efficiency of water utilization and diversified livelihoods for beneficiaries and local communities who benefited from cash-for-work projects. It also generated goodwill from local communities to support migrant returnees. As a result, returnees and unemployed young people were able to gain access to irrigated land from local communities and from the government.

**II. Establishing a dialogue and coordination between migrants and the youth diaspora abroad and institutional actors in Cameroon to prepare and plan for reintegration in rural areas**

This practice was one of the success factors of the Programme d'Aide au Retour et à l'Insertion des Jeunes Camerounais de la Diaspora [Return and Reintegration Assistance Programme for Youth Diaspora] (PARI-JEDI), first implemented in Cameroon in 2017. This programme was complemented by two other programmes to support the reintegration of returnee youth in agriculture and agribusiness in Cameroon; the Programme of Support to the Renovation And Development of The Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries Sector (PCP-AFOP); and the Organisation Non Gouvernementale du Programme D'appui aux Actions Rurales de Développement Industriel et Commercial [NGO of the Programme of Support to Industrial Development in Rural Areas] (ONG PAARDIC). PARI-JEDI has built a digital platform to mobilize and engage migrants in a dialogue before their departure, and guide and orient potential returning migrants on the opportunities available at home. The digital platform was a tool to link young people with governmental structures and provide better information to the government on the aspirations and needs of young people upon their return.

**III. Engaging in collective projects that involve returnees and local authorities**

Collective projects are another form of cooperation between stakeholders, involving returnees, and local authorities. In Tunisia, the LEMMA[29] project (2016–2019) led to the selection of two collective projects in rural areas: the construction of an eco-village in the Ain Drahem forest to promote tourism in the area; a recreational zone for families in the Tayara El Mouroui park. Both projects were led by returnees and facilitated by local authorities that made access to the project areas possible.

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**BOX 4.  Examples of multi-stakeholder coordination from guatemala and El Salvador**

Environmental hazards and reintegration in Guatemala

Guatemala is a high-risk country in terms of environmental hazards (e.g. volcanoes, degraded soils). In 2020, a series of severe storms caused many people to migrate from rural areas. Extreme changes of temperature led to crop losses. Labour cycles were significantly affected by these extreme weather events and altered the return cycles of temporary migrants and displaced households. Given these harsh environmental conditions, most returnees considered the possibility of leaving again. The difference in how returnees experienced reintegration was influenced by the work done by local governments. When the local government supports returnees, and provides them with trainings, the returnees feel better equipped for their reintegration and are motivated to stay.

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29   For more information about the Lemma project go to the Expertise France website: https://expertisefrance.fr/en/fiche-projet?id=392874

**BOX 4.** *continued*

## Empowering local authorities is key to shaping sustainable reintegration

At a national level, none of the policies in Guatemala give specific consideration to returnees and reintegration. There are, however, opportunities to strengthen multi-stakeholder coordination. One way can be through the use of remittances, whose potential remains largely untapped. Better access to information about investment opportunities, and policies that encourage and expand investment opportunities in rural areas would allow for a stronger use of remittances. In Guatemala, remittances, which boost the country's economy, exceed tax revenues and sustain the economy. However, remittances have not been accorded any priority within state agencies.

Another challenge to rural reintegration is the lack of detailed information about promising sectors other than agriculture, as well as value chains that merit investment and capacity building. Potential routes for rural economic diversification are fostering cultural and artistic activities in rural areas, and capitalizing on technological innovation to harness the energy of rural youth.

### FAO response in El Salvador

The FAO project "Social and economic reintegration of rural populations with high incidence of migration" (2018–2019) was designed to support rural populations that were prone to outmigration. The Programme strengthened stakeholder coordination on reintegration and supported the creation of agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises as alternatives to migration. The Programme was implemented in three departments with high outmigration rates by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Salvadorians Abroad in collaboration with local governments. This programme resulted in:

- an intra-sectoral plan that was developed at both the central and local level to respond to the need of returnees and enhance the coordination of action with local stakeholders; and
- coordination mechanisms in the municipalities that were established by creating municipal boards for territorial development. Local representatives from business, health, education, gender, youth and security sectors were involved. Another board was established at the central level.

In the implementation of the programme, municipal officials identified new stakeholders and invited them to join the municipal boards. These boards supported the development of strategies for providing assistance to returnees. Promising agricultural enterprises were identified by the municipal boards and the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry supported the returnees and other local stakeholders in building their capacities to support returnee livelihoods. The programme succeeded in establishing 13 agricultural enterprises. Out of the 50 families that benefitted from the programme, 20 were returnees. In coordination with the stakeholders, the capacities of these returnees were built through training, field trips and technical assistance.

## 3.2.5 LESSON LEARNED 5. Inclusive sustainable reintegration in rural areas

An inclusive model of rural reintegration prioritizes a gender-inclusive and youth-inclusive agenda. This inclusive approach was central to rural reintegration activities in all case study countries, as young people generally felt incapable or unwilling to embrace a rural livelihood. However, opportunities exist in rural areas for young people to make a difference in their own lives and their communities. A question was: How can the rural reintegration agenda integrate contemporary developments in agribusiness to meet young people's aspirations?

There are many misperceptions about agriculture and rural employment as indicated in the highlighted quotes. It is widely, but mistakenly, believed that agriculture is not profitable or that land ownership is a requirement. A common challenge to agriculture-based reintegration is

"Most young people don't believe that agriculture is profitable or enticing. For them, its old and it's for the poor. We want to break this mentality and show the youth that engaging in agri-business has great value. We want to show them the ripple effect of working in agrifood systems."

Young Farmers Champions Network – YOFCHAN representative, Uganda

"Most young people believe that to excel in agriculture once must own land, which is not true. They don't believe you can take advantage of the fact that others own land and they produce certain products that you can add value to. And, even in your own backyard, you can do kitchen gardening."

TRACE representative, Kenya

countering these misperceptions and making agriculture attractive to young returnees. Traditional agriculture may not match the aspirations of young migrants. Much has been written on the need to provide more information on opportunities available in agriculture. Programmes are expanding across Africa to expand employment opportunities for young people in agricultural value chains. The key objective is to curb internal and international migration by addressing youth under-employment.

## Modalities to follow

Good practices discussed in this section include:

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**I. building inclusive food systems, through**
   i. youth incubation programmes
   ii. an ecosystem of support around youth farming teams
   iii. return on investment model for rural reintegration
   iv. future looking, environmentally and community-conscious jobs

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**II. designing and implementing gender- and age-sensitive programming: linking youth and women's employment, value chains and gender in agrifood systems that lead to certified, high value products**

### I.i Youth incubation programmes

An example of a youth incubation initiative is the FAO Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for creating decent jobs for young people in agrifood systems. In Senegal, the initiative developed sustainable rural incubation and service provision for youth agricultural entrepreneurs. Developed in conjunction with the Agence *Nationale pour la Promotion de l'Emploi des Jeunes* (ANPEJ), the ICA programme in Senegal has set up three platforms in Mbilor, Leona and Silane. Modules have been prepared on poultry farming, cattle fattening, aquaculture, horticulture, agricultural transformation, entrepreneurship and marketing. The ICA programme brought together cohorts of return migrants and local young men and women to strengthen of a network of trainers who can broaden the initiative, notably through digitalization and expanding it in other countries (e.g. Niger and Togo).

### I.ii Establishing networks and building an ecosystem of support around youth farming teams

In Uganda, the COVID-19 youth engagement initiative promoted by FAO (FAO, 2020b) was launched through a network of youth champions and organizations that have been supported by the ICA programme and collaborated with it to develop other areas (e.g. the National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture and Youth Inspiring Youth in Agriculture initiative). While there is no direct link to reintegration, the COVID-19 youth engagement initiative and the ICA programme approach can be adapted to support reintegration and its focus on networks and ecosystems that can engage young people in agribusiness good practices for reintegration in rural settings.

The ICA programme supported the establishment of the Young Farmer Champions Network (YOFCHAN). a network of young men and women who invest and engage in farm management, building an ecosystem of engaged youth farmers. The concept behind YOFCHAN, which was launched in 2016, was to identify young people who have been working or who wish to work in agri-businesses, build their capacities through technical training, offer legal and financial support to their integration to the labour market, and enable the young farmers to become local ambassadors who encourage other young people to engage in rural agri-business ventures. YOFCHAN receives funding through the ICA programme, as one of the programme's principle objectives is to connect young farmers to opportunities and build a network of young champions who embrace farming as a profitable and sustainable business. Young farmers become champions, helping to improve their image in society and fighting the stigma that returnees often experience. A number of activities have been carried out to build the capacity of rural young people.

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- **Competitions**
  A range of competitions (e.g. 'hackathons', pitch competitions) involving rural youth across the country have been carried out with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. Each winner receives recognition at the national level and from the local community.

- **Farming teams and mutual agreements between farmers, investors and youth**

  The ICA Programme has trained young farmers in agronomy and provided them with the technical skills needed for farm management. After receiving the training, the young farmers offer their services to farmers who need technical support to make their business productive and profitable. The farmers then share the increased profits with the young advisors. The trained youth farmer does not ask for labour costs, but rather a share of dividends after harvest. This activity, which is tailored to young people who have access to resources (e.g. land, equipment) but lack sufficient guidance on how to use and maintain their land, matches skills with existing capital and opportunities. The ICA Programme oversees and facilitates the mutual agreement between farmers and youth on how to share the profits, and offers advice on the terms of reference for their partnership. This model also connects young farmers to investors to create partnerships that can support the agribusiness. It also connects young people who do not own land, but have technical expertise, with young people who have land, but neither the time nor the know-how to farm it profitably. This is youth–youth partnership model enhances youth empowerment and agency, and increases farm productivity and income.

- **Extension of the 'youth farm teams' to the diaspora**

  The ICA Programme has drawn interest from young Ugandans from the diaspora who have migrated to work abroad, but still maintain an interest in farming and are willing to investing in their village and local rural development. The diaspora has now become part of the ICA Programme. Members of the diaspora invest their income from abroad in farms back home, where young, trained farmers can work to intensify production. The objective is to provide opportunities to members of the diaspora to return to an agricultural enterprise they have invested in and provide them with livelihoods for their own reintegration. During COVID-19, young members of the diaspora who had made this type of investment returned to find an activity they could use to facilitate their reintegration.

- **Extension workers, education and matching**

  Extension workers are brought on board to carry out training-of-trainers activities with rural youth. The extension workers, who are employed by the government at the sub-county level, are responsible for providing information, teaching and advice on agronomy. They offer technical expertise that helps the youth farm teams to grow. Extension workers educate farmers on modern technologies for agricultural production and farm management, to bring in more profits, and employ more youth. The extension workers also provide guidance on matching of rural youth to specific crops so that they acquire specialised skills that are marketable.

- **Production offices**

  In every district, a production office, which supports agriculture and local rural development, employs the extension workers. YOFCHAN pays their transportation costs to make it easier for them to reach returnees in rural areas. The ICA Programme facilitates the link between the extension workers employed by the production office and the youth farm teams. This partnership serves to to create and sustain rural agribusiness. "The only challenge for extension workers is to get to rural areas that have limited access. So, we address this by facilitating their transport. Once we addressed that challenge, the extension workers became more than open to join this process of supporting youth farm teams. You just have to find ways to address existing challenges, and then you'll see everybody is eager to help because they see the benefit for rural development, and for the growth of the national economy, because youth unemployment is very significant in Uganda's rural regions".[30]

### I.iii Building a return on investment model for rural reintegration

In a 2021 the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and FAO organized a regional workshop in the Horn of Africa. The central question was asked "what are the challenges that limit diaspora's engagement and investments in agribusiness in the country of origin?". The top three answers were:

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[30] Key informant interview: YOFCHAN, Uganda.

**1) the limited information on investment opportunities along the agricultural value chain;**

**2) the lack of effective mechanism to engage the diaspora; and**

**3) the limited incentives and guarantees for investments in rural areas.**

There are benefits to creating an enabling environment that can harness the potential of the diaspora to act as agents of local development, and supporters of rural reintegration. The FAO programme, 'Strengthening capacity to harness the positive effects of migration', *works* to create income-generating opportunities in agribusinesses by tapping into the entrepreneurial potential of the diaspora. The Programme addresses the lack of engagement by the diaspora by putting in place mechanisms that can connect the diaspora to rural areas (through policy level technical working groups, awareness-raising through radio shows, conferences and investor awards).

Additional activities are needed to build a return on investment model for rural reintegration. Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that "the higher the share of agricultural households benefiting from agricultural subsidies, the higher the share of households with return migrants" (OECD, 2017). Investing through subsidies will generate incentives for return and a positive outlook for reintegration. Examples of incentives and investing in the reintegration process include: the government of Portugal, which offers a return scheme in the form of income tax incentives for five years and cash to help with the relocation; and the government of the Philippines, which, in collaboration with the Development Bank of the Philippines, provides business loans and more diverse financial support packages than are commonly included in return packages.

### I.iv A vision for future looking, environmentally and community-conscious jobs to attract youth

A common realization across all contexts is the ability to incentivise youth to join agricultural and rural programmes if framed in the spirit of making a positive impact on the environment. At the FAO/IGAD workshop in Eastern Africa in 2021 it was recognised that "improving natural resources management and enhancing uptake of climate adaptive practices is key to mitigate climate-induced migration while also restoring landscapes and promoting sustainable reintegration of return migrants" (FAO and IGAD, 2021). Young men and women are very sensitive to the fact that they, as well as the generations that came before them, may have been forced to leave their areas of origin due to environmental factors. These factors continue to negatively affect the prospects for livelihoods for entire communities in their countries. Ensuring young people can become actively involved in the fight against environmental degradation by offering them environmentally friendly and community-minded jobs can provide them with a sense of purpose they seek.

- **Green jobs for young people**
  Stakeholders across Eastern Africa agreed that the desert locust infestation, and to a certain extent, COVID-19, could be transformed from crises to opportunities for young people to make a significant contribution to rural development, to look at the drivers of migration as opportunities of problems to address. Young people are highly interested in protecting the environment and addressing the structural issues that are driving migration. Discussions around technologies for harvesting at the time of the locust invasion in Eastern Africa led to the creation of opportunities for youth to sit down and plan with them. Green jobs can cover a range – from agriculture to manufacturing and construction sectors, as well as emerging sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

- **Social impact training and jobs for young people to generate community-financed public goods and services**
  In Afghanistan, one of the opportunities foreseen is the investment in maintenance work in rural areas of return. A 2020 mid-term evaluation of the European Union migration portfolio in Afghanistan highlighted that linking youth reintegration with infrastructure and maintenance work in rural areas could provide young people with sustainable employment and foster greater community acceptance. Many rural communities in the country suffer from crumbling housing and buildings, lack of electricity and connectivity, dilapidated roads

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and urban infrastructure, and the lack of adequate facilities. A key informant emphasised the need for skills to be developed in a way that can contribute to the maintenance of these local public goods. The security context in Afghanistan remains volatile. In all provinces of the country, infrastructure risks breaking down due to climate, conflict and the passage of time. This precarious situation creates opportunities to train young returnees in the maintenance of hospitals and clinics, schools, government buildings, courts, markets and other service-related buildings. This type of training accompanied by employment opportunities would not only contribute to the well-being of communities, but also improve the perceptions that some community members may have of marginalized and poorer groups. This was confirmed when speaking to local representatives of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs. They emphasized the importance of buildings dedicated to trades, companies, and cooperatives, including women's cooperatives, as well as the maintenance of government buildings, training centres and other public services. This type of investment would be paid for by communities themselves, and could create pathways for sustainable livelihoods for adequately trained construction workers, electricians, plumbers, and engineers. In a mapping of services done by SIGAR-Voxmapp-

IWA in Afghanistan,[31] communities were found to be the largest donor when it came to the upkeep of mosques.

## II. Gender- and age-sensitive programming

Gender- and age-sensitive programming links youth and women's employment, value chains and gender in agrifood systems can lead to certified, high-value products. Ziba Foods in Afghanistan provides an example of an approach to rural reintegration that has integrated women and youth into agrifood systems. Ziba Foods is an artisanal food company specializing in heirloom and wild-grown dried fruits and nuts with superior flavour and nutrition. A socially conscious company, Ziba Foods works to have a positive and sustainable impact on marginalized communities. In Afghanistan, this includes refugees and other migrant returnees, women and youth. The company works with returnees to source and market their products. It plans to become a global superfood brand, exporting goods from frontier markets (e.g. fragile and conflict-affected countries) to retail outlets around the world. In Afghanistan, it has received funding from the European Union, the International Trade Center (ITC), and the Ethical Fashion and Food Initiative (EFI) to work directly with small-scale farms and cooperatives to source the highest-quality products from Afghan markets. Production is based in Afghanistan to create jobs and to provide

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[31]  https://voxmapp.com/mapping-public-infrastructures-in-kapisa-afghanistan/

a reliable source of income for family farms across the country. Ziba Foods believes there is unmet demand for ethical products in top retail markets and under-tapped supply from frontier markets. This gap between supply and demand can be exploited through a business model that Ziba Foods has developed over a 10-year period. The company adds value to food products in the country instead of exporting the produce for processing overseas. This approach creates livelihood opportunities in rural areas and supports returnee-managed farms in the country. Ethical sourcing, processing and distribution can support sustainable rural development and rural reintegration when products are packed and shipped from Afghanistan directly to warehouses in New Jersey, London or Dubai.

Supported by international and Afghan leaders and advisors, Ziba Foods is committed to inclusive staffing. Their staff is 100 percent Afghan nationals, and 85 percent of the staff in Afghanistan are women. Since 2016, Ziba has had 90 percent retention rate for its employees. Ziba Foods is building a global supply chain for international distribution from frontier markets. The company places a strategic focus on raw materials, as well as the introduction and marketing of new products. It supports local community development by purchasing its goods from 5 000 family farms in Afghanistan. Ziba Foods also ensures all its products obtain the necessary certifications and follow environmentally responsible practices.

**FIGURE 4.** **Commodity exports in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan**

**Afghanistan**
Almonds, apricot kernels, figs, mulberries, dried apricots, raisins, pistachios, walnuts

**Uzbekistan**
raisins, liquorice, dried apricots, walnuts, almonds, pistachios

**Tajikistan**
dried apricots, raisins, walnuts, almonds, apricot kernels, pistachios

**Pakistan**
walnuts, onion seed, groundnuts, kishmish, apricot kernels, dried apricots, almonds



Product source    Processing factory    Export point

Source: Ziba Foods. 2021. *The story so far and our 10-year plan.*

## BOX 5. DACAAR programmatic case study – an integrated approach in Afghanistan[a]

The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) implemented a programme to improve livelihoods, health and quality of life of returnees, internally displaced persons, and vulnerable host communities in five rural provinces of Afghanistan. The programme was split into mutually reinforcing thematic areas: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); agriculture-based natural resource management; small-scale enterprise development (SSED); and women's empowerment. The integrated approach and diverse targeting strategy employed in the various outputs of this programme addressed the needs and priorities of communities in a comprehensive manner. A key strength of this programme was how programmatic outputs and expected outcomes were designed to align with national policies and strategies, and the SDGs.

### Key objectives of the programme by thematic area

**Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)**
- ensure durable access to safe water and improved hygiene and sanitation behaviour through the construction and rehabilitation of public wells and water supply systems, construction of solar powered pipe schemes,
- implement a reverse osmosis and ultra-filtration system and gravity feed pipe scheme networks fitted with household connections and encourage behavior change though the Afghan Context Community Led Total Sanitation (ACLTS) project to reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases and enable communities to invest more time, energy and resources into learning new skills, and engaging in the various farm and off-farm income-generating activities offered by the programme

**Agriculture-based natural resource management**
- improve and sustain increases in agriculture and livestock production of men and women agricultural producers through the establishment of farmer field school (FFS), and improve irrigation through the rehabilitation and reconstruction of small-scale irrigation structures

**Small-scale enterprise development**
- improve and sustain business and employment opportunities for unemployed young men and women through the provision of vocational training programmes and business and employment support

**Women's empowerment**
- improve livelihoods among vulnerable women by expanding social and economic opportunities

### The lessons learnt included the observation that the best reintegration projects are those based on community needs and community participation from the design stage to monitoring

To ensure a sustainable impact, DACAAR regularly coordinated with both communities and provincial authorities. This collaboration supported sustainable reintegration through:

- water supply systems with household connections that provided sustainable safe water for all household consumption needs and promoted water-use efficiency with meters;
- the incorporation of Afghan community-led sanitation teams into the WASH strategy to replace the more traditional hygiene education and sanitation approach, which allowed the communities to lead their own hygiene and sanitation practice and determine their own changes in behaviour;
- the incorporation and piloting of reverse osmosis and ultra-filtration technology with a community-based model of operations and maintenance, which was demanded by the communities in areas where ground water is saline or chemically contaminated; and
- the teaching of new trades in certain districts (e.g. solar-panel repairing and electrical wiring).

Evaluations are needed to assess the impact of these interventions. Some vocational training graduates could not find stable market opportunities because of market saturation. The programme needed to respond to this shortcoming and address the underlying obstacles. There were also technical issues related to project implementation. DACAAR field staff required expert guidance and a natural resource management manual to better promote rural development in reintegration settings.

[a] https://dacaar.org/programme/

### 3.2.6 Lesson learned 6. Financing rural reintegration

Given the lack of investment in infrastructure in value chains and markets in remote areas, the cost of rural reintegration activities is higher than in urban areas. These activities require diversified sources of financing to become sustainable. Some of these models were touched upon earlier (e.g. community-funded services in Afghanistan).

The financial situation at the place of origin and the place of return is a critical factor in the success of rural reintegration. Migrants with the most savings are usually most successful at reintegrating and setting up entrepreneurial activities that can sustain their livelihoods. This has been supported by research by Vancluysen *et al.* (2016), who investigated reintegration after return migration to the rural provinces of Azuay and Cañar in Ecuador, and by research by Solís Lizama (2018) on return migration in rural Yucatan, Mexico. Research by Farrell *et al.* (2012) has shown that most of the returnees who did well were successful because of the financial and social capital they brought back with them. Their capital also enabled them to employ others in the area.

## Modalities to follow

Existing practices provide a range of financing modalities for rural reintegration. This section reviews four initiatives that have proven successful for rural reintegration:

1) **matching grants and co-financing**

2) **incentives for banks to loan and for traders**

3) **financial services to link the pre-departure and post-return reintegration process**

4) **setting up investment structures for youth and communities**

5) **Community investments and funds for reintegration**

### I. Matching grants

In 2019, FAO supported migrants, families, and rural communities in Tajikistan in fruit, vegetable and livestock production and value addition activities. This pilot project "Promoting Inclusive Economic Growth through Matching Grants' replicates a model that had been implemented in the Republic of Moldova since 2010 (PARE 1+1). The project approach in Tajikistan uses a similar 1+1 approach, in which the amount of money invested by the returnee is matched by the project funds. The maximum grant is USD 5 000. To be eligible, applicants should be either migrant workers or returnees; women with household responsibilities receiving remittances from a first degree relative; or a forced returnee intending to migrate abroad again.

These grants and capacity development programmes provide incentives to returnees to build skills to run small and medium enterprises in the agricultural sector. The project in Tajikistan established an oversight committee to ensure transparency at all levels. The committee included representatives from various ministries and international agencies (FAO and IOM). It worked to raise awareness among the government agencies and increase programming sustainability. Project locations were selected based on a baseline survey that identified areas with high returns and remittances flows. Following the survey, awareness-raising activities were carried out to inform the residents in selected areas about the opportunities this project could offer them, and ensure that information was shared adequately. Afterwards, 50 applicants were selected, and they participated in a set of training sessions on business management skills and accounting. Following this training, 45 business plans were developed and submitted by the applicants to the oversight committee, and 39 were awarded matching grants. All the plans that received the matching grants were successfully implemented and established small agribusiness, and each grant recipient contributed their share of their remittances or resources. The majority of the successful applicants are increasing their investments to scale up their business.

## II. Incentives for banks to loan and for traders

In Morocco, a royal palace initiative has directed the central bank to guarantee low-interest (1.7 percent) loans for returnees specifically to encourage the creation of commercial enterprises in rural areas. These enterprises can be in agriculture or focus on services to address the gaps in services. Tunisia's and Morocco's trade with Europe, and Afghanistan's trade to Iran and Pakistan, are examples of transnational exchanges that maintain a demand for products from key value chains. These are historic partnerships that unite countries of destination, transit and origin through trade and exports. The diaspora plays an important mediating role between rural producers and exporters and the European markets. Both the members of the diaspora and returnees can play a role in supporting trade and exports.

## III. Financial services and solutions for migrants abroad, pre-return to better prepare their reintegration

*"Returnees should be given the opportunity to have the right financial products at their disposal but also the right financial knowledge that enables them to make the right decision on how to invest the funds that they saved abroad", IFAD representative – Financing Facility for Remittances*

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has launched a series of loan and grant systems in Nepal, and remittance support initiative in the Republic of Moldova. IFAD is now linking these initiatives to reintegration across the migration cycle. The IFAD programme in the Republic of Moldova focuses on building a range of financial services for migrants before their return, such as setting up savings accounts so that they can prepare for their return and financial literacy abroad. IFAD emphasises the need for migrants to plan ahead for their return, both operationally and financially, and understand how much they need to save and for how long, so that return is done in the most beneficial way possible.

The IFAD premise is that if there is financial support when they are abroad in preparing their return, the challenges upon return would be minimised. Remittances should be used in the best way possible and invested in income-generating opportunities whilst using the remittances for consumption and essential needs. IFAD's experience in working with rural savings and credit associations has been positive: The Fund has seen improvements in the way local associations think about migrants abroad and about their return. Building links with migrants abroad before their return enables rural savings and credit associations to better understand the role of returnees.

## IV. Setting up investment structures and programmes for youth at the community level

In Uganda, it was noted that remittances were often sent without a clear arrangement on how to utilize the investment, and as a result the resources earned abroad were often lost. Stakeholders suggested creating clear investment structures and programmes where youth could save their money, invest it in a sustainable endeavour, and later receive the dividends. This type of investment system could replace the current remittance system, which that can cause money to be lost and delivers no returns on investment. Rural youth and diaspora members require guidance to on how to invest and what returns on investment to expect. In Uganda, an existing investment model has been linked to the role of the insurance company in supporting the business and ensuring the best value out of the investment arrangement. The insurance policy ensures that the investment is productive and profitable. The partnership with insurance companies protects young farmers and provides them with the needed assurances on their investment.

## V. Community investments and funds for reintegration

In Afghanistan and the Republic of Moldova, communities are prepared to fund local development activities. Communities in the Republic of Moldova were financially involved in the construction of roads and street lighting. In one rural community (Scoreni), a ramp for the disabled and mothers with children was installed at the mayor's office with contributions from the community, migrant workers abroad and returnees. A bank account to finance projects has been opened to which money can be transferred and returnees can contribute as well. To be awarded a project grant, participants must contribute and become involved in the community life, which fosters economic and social reintegration.

### BOX 6. Financing rural reintegration in Nepal

#### IFAD Financing Facility for Remittances

Since 2006, IFAD through its USD 43 million, multi-donor Financing Facility for Remittances (FFR), has worked to increase the impact of remittances for development by enhancing competitiveness improving outreach to rural areas, empowering migrants and their families. The FFR provides financial education, fosters inclusion, and encourages migrants to make sound investments and entrepreneurship. The aim is to change the development landscape of local communities through this type of financing, with adapted legal and regulatory frameworks for families benefiting from remittances to have more resources at their disposal. The FFR aims to build the human capital of families that are receiving remittance and improve their living standards by improving their access to services (e.g. education, health and housing).

The focus of the FFR is not just on returnees but on opportunities available to migrants while abroad that can support them in preparation for their return and allow them make progress toward financial independence.

#### IFAD in Nepal

Nepal, a country where 80 percent of the population lives in rural areas, is heavily reliant on remittances. IFAD supports rural financial service providers and designs wealth building packages. IFAD focuses on identifying pathways to mobilize a pool of savings that financial service providers have been using to finance new or expanding enterprises by migrant and returnee family members once they have returned. This work includes financial education programmes and involves the public sector by supporting the local government to develop policies for reintegration. The results after two years of implementation have been the ability to mobilise the equivalent of USD 27 million in savings coming from 3 000 migrant workers and returnees living in Nepal.

IFAD has further worked with Heifer International Nepal to engage women and youth in rural reintegration activities, and has provided an added COVID-19 support for smallholder farmers. Opportunities were developed for returning migrants who want to engage in agriculture and off-farm rural business development.

#### Samriddhi – Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project

The Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP) is a multi-sector joint project of the federal, provincial and *palika* (municipal) governments that includes returnees as part of its target groups. It uses a corridor approach as part of a spatial approach to returnee reintegration and small enterprise development. Samriddhi was the first IFAD project to scale up FFR good practices into an investment project, and the first to promote a comprehensive set of mechanisms to foster remittance investment in rural livelihood development and rural reintegration in Nepal. The project:

- supports remittance recipient households with responsive and suitable financial services;
- enhances these households' access to reintegration services and harnesses their remittances for productive investment in rural enterprises;
- develops innovative financial instruments to stimulate savings and investments in small business development; and
- develops and builds the capacity of financial institutions in rural districts, particularly Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SCCs) and Small Farmers Cooperatives Limited (SFCLs) to deliver responsive services to support rural sustainable reintegration.[a]

#### Supporting returnee migrant women workers and family run businesses

The FFR also adopted gender-sensitive rural reintegration approaches. In partnership with UN Women in Nepal, the FFR supported the entrepreneurial development of 900 women who were migrant workers that had returned. Sixty percent of these upgraded or established their businesses, and another 20 percent made plans to do so. The remainder organized themselves into business groups and initiated a programme to pool their savings in order to lend to each other. This led to these returnee women reporting increased incomes and better living conditions, greater self-confidence, and a willingness to teach others in their communities the skills they had learned.[b]

[a] For more information on the IFAD Samriddhi – Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project in Nepal go to: www.ifad.org/en/web/operations/-/project/1100001724

[b] For more information on the IFAD Financing Facility for Remittances go to: www.ifad.org/en/ffr

### 3.2.7 LESSON LEARNED 7. Location-based and learning-based approaches to rural transformation

For programmes to be effective, they must incorporate local knowledge about local systems and the connections between communities. These approaches bring together both spatial and learning components. The lessons learned highlight the importance of transboundary approaches, urban-rural systems, and community-driven strategies, as well as new applications that can further rural transformation.

## Modalities to follow

- **Location-based territorial approaches**
  - Spaces to connect emergency and resilience projects Urban – rural systems approaches and community driven strategies
  - Transboundary approaches to sustainable reintegration
  - Centre-based approaches to supporting returnees

- **Learning approaches**
  - Operational guidance to mainstream agriculture in rural development
  - Generation of knowledge at the community level
  - Monitoring and evaluation for reintegration

**Opening a space to integrate emergency with resilience projects**

In Afghanistan, FAO partnered with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the UNHCR to register rural people living eight hours away from an urban centre. FAO contributed to opening a humanitarian space and bringing in other actors to address the gaps identified (e.g. civil registration, education kits, health issues). With additional financial resources for longer-term projects, FAO collaborated with UNDP to integrate emergency and resilience projects (e.g. food pantries), to give communities food security, and further combining the initiative with UNDP's strategy of community stores, for people to sell their products with access to internet and other technologies. UNDP also

brought schemes to strengthen skills in financial services. This type of multi-stakeholder partnership was required to achieve complementarities and make progress in rural reintegration interventions.

**Setting up practical and operational guidance to mainstream agriculture in rural development**

FAO and IOM have co-developed a toolkit, *Integrating migration into rural development interventions.*[32] The organizations held extensive consultations also with national partners in Kenya to develop a context-specific version for Kenya – a case study to be replicated and learned from for other contexts (IOM and FAO, 2020). With the UNHCR, FAO is also working on integrating refugees in sustainable value chains in the Kalobeyei settlement in north-western Kenya, notably by developing initiatives with the private sector and around key locally produced crops (groundnuts.

**Connecting national and sub-national plans**

Reintegration is by definition multi-sectoral and multi-levelled. The key is to choose the right partners, build sufficient resources for network weaving, and carry out pilot interventions and monitor them. Network weaving refers to efforts to institutionalize communication channels through information sharing platforms or inter-agency task forces. The link with a community driven development strategy is central with calls to go beyond area-based approaches to identify mechanisms at the local level – associations, agriculture-focused incubation hubs, learning and information sharing networks – that can sustain the work. This links to having stronger central government support to local efforts and local authorities.

**Generating knowledge at the community level**

At a global listening session in July 2021, stakeholders shared how to best build on traditional knowledge among local agricultural communities when considering rural sustainable reintegration. Instead of focusing on knowledge transfer into rural locations, the Bahá'í community is trying to learn how to generate knowledge from the grassroots to strengthen the viability of agricultural life, reduce the drivers of migration, and contribute to successful reintegration. The Bahá'í community is focusing on the local knowledge of farmers to reintegrate returnees, and match this knowledge

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[32] The toolkit is available at: https://publications.iom.int/books/integrating-migration-rural-development-interventions-interventions-toolkit-international

with the aspirations of young people. They ask what young people aspire to, and what kinds of lives and livelihoods are in line their social norms and educational levels, and could therefore be promoted locally. The aim is to use these sources of knowledge to help make agriculture be seen as a viable livelihood and a noble calling essential for the feeding and sustenance of millions of people.

## BOX 7. Centre-based and location-based approaches to reintegration

### Centres for the reintegration of returnees in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is one of the largest migrant-sending countries. Ninety percent of the country's migrants, an estimated 1.5 million people, migrate to work in the Russian Federation. COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll on Kyrgyz migrants, with an estimated 80 000 returning after the first wave of the pandemic in 2020. The reason for the return was the stricter conditions and measures taken by authorities in destination countries.

Upon return, the Kyrgyz returnees faced economic difficulties because they could not find work, and psychosocial difficulties because they felt they were not needed back home. In response, a former government representative of the Ministry of Social Development now working under an NGO has set up two retraining centres in the south of the country with a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry. The centres foster entrepreneurial skills that can help the returnees invest their savings as seed capital in their own businesses. In these centres, returnees receive practical consultations and teaching on how to launch their own business (e.g. greenhouses, organic agriculture and soil techniques). Due to border closures with Tajikistan during COVID19, Kyrgyzstan experienced shortages of fresh produce, which sparked a surge in demand for local produce and opened up opportunities for returnees to engage in small-scale commercial agriculture.

### Agricultural farms for sustainable reintegration in Senegal

With financing from an European Union Trust Fund, the Senegalese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Equipment (MAER), the National Agency for Agricultural Insertion and Development (ANIDA) and young returnees have been working to set up 400 farms. Projet d'Appui à la Réduction de la Migration à travers la Création d'Emplois Ruraux au Sénégal [The project to support the decrease of migration through the creation of rural jobs in Senegal] (PACERSEN), which ran from 2017 to 2020, provided agricultural equipment and infrastructure (e.g. tractors and stables) and livestock (mainly cows for dairy production) to young people, and rehabilitated areas for them so they could sell their agricultural products. A quarter of the beneficiaries were returnees who were trained in agricultural production, irrigation, and maintenance techniques for modern farms in four regions of the country. The farms benefited from additional support through the follow-up PACERSEN BIS project that run until February 2021 and increased support during the winter months to allow for year-round agricultural production. Altogether 170 one-hectare winter farms were established, with infrastructure integrated and equipment provided (solar pumps, wells, and other hydraulic implements). The farms were also provided with transportation equipment. The beneficiaries were encouraged to form collective associations and were introduced to agroecological practices.

### Sow Ranch, Kolda, Senegal

Sow Ranch is an agroecological initiative led by Belal Sow, a Senegalese returnee from the United States of America.[a] In the farming region of Kolda in Senegal, Mr. Sow is mentoring other returnees, including his own niece who studied in Morocco and returned to Senegal to work in the agroecological farm. Farming is often not perceived as an attractive career option for young people, Mr. Sow and his niece are working to change that by promoting agroecological farming practices. Mr. Sow, who is the owner and manager of the agroecological farm, was trained in the United States of America and returned to Senegal. He grows vegetables and fruit, and produces meat and milk, which sells to the community at local markets. He mentors young people, including returnees who have been referred to him by IOM, about agroecological practices and seeks to inspire them to follow in his footsteps. Some of the young returnee trainees become involved in the maintenance of trees and fertilizers; others in crop production; and others in raising livestock. Many aspire to set up their own initiatives. Sow plans to develop a training centre with accommodations so that the trainees can spend time more on his farm.

[a]  For more information about Sow Ranch, go to http://sowranch.org/. For more information about the link between migration and agroecology, consult IOM, 2020b as well as IOM, 2021, a video on migration and agroecology in Morocco and Senegal, in which Mr. Sow self-identifies as a returnee migrant.

### 3.2.8 Integrated+ approaches to sustainable reintegration with a rural transformation component

The review of current practices on rural reintegration revealed a number of 'integrated +' programmes that combine a rural development and a transformation component.

Rural development is a process that incorporates both economic and social objectives. It seeks to transform rural society and provide a better and more secure livelihood for rural people and returnees, and addresses key social and institutional problems in rural areas.

The report has presented the following types of initiatives and cited them as good practices and practices to be scaled and sustained in support of a joint rural development and sustainable rural reintegration. The list below provides an overview of the key elements that characterize the good practices highlighted by the report. These practices can be used singularly or in combination to support returnees' rural reintegration.

**a) Policy and technical assistance approaches that can lead to a translation of national commitments for rural reintegration at the local level**
- UNDP's work in the Republic of Moldova, skills validation pilot programme, and mobile teams in rural areas

**b) Agro-industrial development approaches that can lead to a substantial increase in employment with capital-intensive initiatives**
- PARI-JEDI and ONG PAARDIC in Cameroon

**c) Ecological and organic agriculture, and waste management activities that can promote both sustainable reintegration and sustainable use of natural resources**
- Sow Ranch and the waste management and reintegration initiative in Senegal

**d) Initiatives that provide financial resources, services and access to returnees to address one of the key challenges of reintegration**
- Matching grants in Tajikistan and of government-sponsored loans in Morocco

**e) Interventions that enable farmers to have improved access to markets as a condition for sustainable development. Farmers who are helped to identify local, domestic or regional markets for their products, and who can understand the functioning of markets, or include storage facilities and access to information**
- PACERSEN in Senegal


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**f) Initiatives that involve associations and cooperatives of small-holder farmers to encourage collective action to bring goods to markets together**
- Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP) in Nepal

**g) Initiatives that include certification of foods and higher standards for agricultural products**
- Ziba Foods in Afghanistan

**h) Multi-stakeholder engagement that provide access to land as a key to sustainable rural development and reintegration, as well as sustainable livestock production methods**
- Rural Youth Mobility (RYM) project in Ethiopia and Tunisia

**i) Initiatives that build on a collaborative learning process and traditional knowledge to empower returnees' reintegration**
- Bahá'í community

**j) Initiatives that take the environment as a cornerstone of rural development and rural reintegration**
- IOM climate change and reintegration initiative in Ethiopia

**k) Initiatives that combine natural resource management, social enterprise development and women's empowerment across the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding spectrum in fragile and conflict-affected states**
- DACAAR's programmes in Afghanistan

## 3.3 Where to go from here? A toolkit and diagnostic tool

A practical 'how-to' toolkit complements this Global Lessons Learned study and provides resources to design and implement programmes and projects to facilitate the reintegration of returnees in rural areas. The ultimate objective is to harmonize reintegration efforts with larger rural development and rural transformation efforts. This harmonization will serve to stimulate mutually reinforcing effects that support the achievement of sustainable livelihoods and enhance the well-being for local populations. The use of the toolkit is expected to help stakeholders bridge the gap between the returnees and implementing agencies to better align their perspectives and approaches.

The toolkit, which is structured in four parts, consists of a practical set of tools to support stakeholders in taking concrete actions that align with the recommendations of this report. The tools can be used systematically by actors on the ground from the beginning of the programme cycle to it conclusion. They can enable users to effectively implement reintegration programmes that consider short-, medium- and long-term impacts and effects.

Importantly, the toolkit has taken into account COVID-19, as the needs of both returnees and rural stakeholders, and desired outcomes have evolved as a result of the ongoing pandemic. The tools cover four phases of programming:



**SECTION 1: PRE-DESIGN**
- Context and population specific considerations



**SECTION 2: DESIGN**
- Profiling and mapping needs



**SECTION 3: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**
- Programming between rural development and migration stakeholders



**SECTION 4: MONITORING, EVALUATION, EVALUATION AND LEARNING**
- Adaptive programming

The lessons learned and practices from this report form the basis of the toolkit. The toolkit provides eight tools that can be implemented to develop rural reintegration programmes and partnerships, and monitor the impact of these partnerships. It provides practical, operational steps that can enable all actors to take on the important task of implementing sustainable reintegration interventions in rural areas.

**FIGURE 5. Toolkit structure**



1. Pre-design

Tool 1.
Rural reintegration
programme canvas

Tool 7.
Monitoring & progress
assessment

Tool 2.
Context analysis

4. Monitoring
and learning

2. Design

**Toolkit**

Tool 3.
Mapping (actor,
skills, market)

Tool 6.
Referral

Tool 4.
Theory of change

Tool 5.
Project design
change tool

3. Implementation
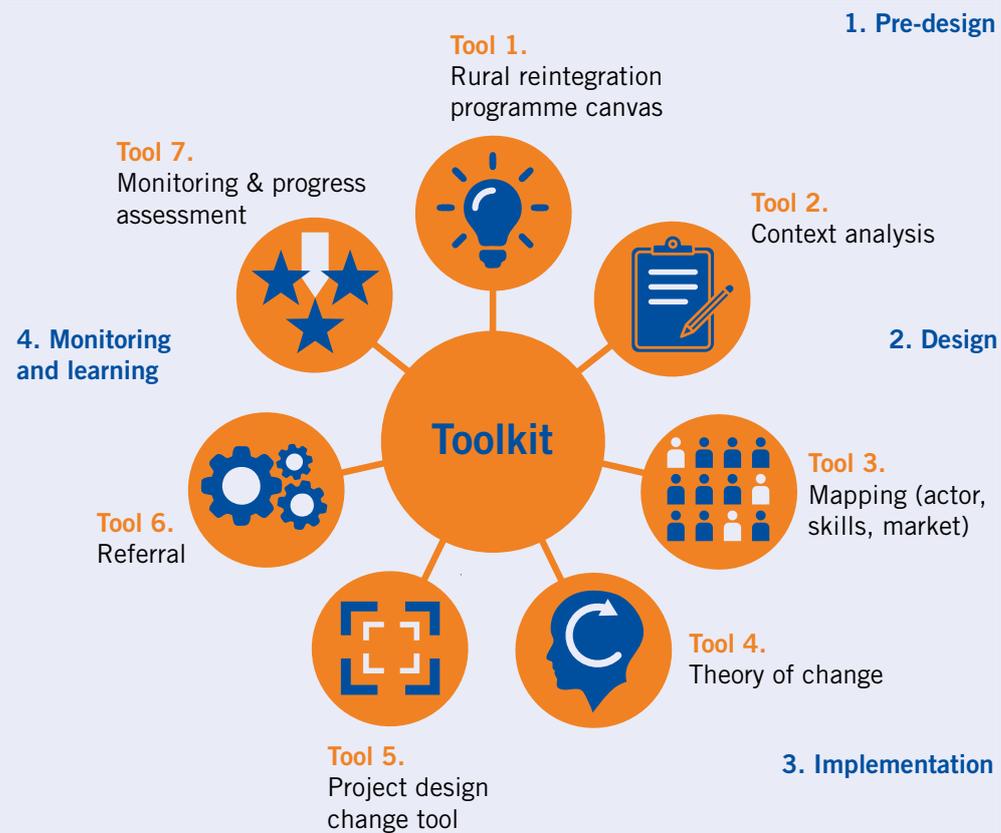
Source: Authors' own elaboration

# Conclusion

**FIGURE 6.** **Global lessons learned**

The **lessons learned** and good practices of this report are a **roadmap forward** for rural actors and migration actors to ensure sustainable reintegration and rural development.

1. **Policy coherence and and alignment with global, regional, national policies**
   Linking reintegration to development plans.

2. **Customizing responses at the sub-national level**
   Sub-national responses reinforced through budget planning, land responses, and technical, mobile teams.

3. **Dialogue and trust building**
   The role of farmer field schools, safety net systems, accountability, guidance and counselling, and social action frameworks that are conflict-sensitive in rural communities.

4. **Multi-stakeholder partnerships and coordination**
   Promoting coordination and responsibility sharing through capacity building and technical assistance, multi-stakeholder programmes, collective projects and country mappings.

5. **Inclusive sustainable reintegration in rural areas**
   Building inclusive food systems, natural resource management, protection and gender-and age-sensitive approaches in agrifood systems.

6. **Financing rural reintegration**
   Exploring a range of financing modalities, from matching grants, incentives for banks to loan, financial services and investment structure for youth and rural communities.

7. **Location-based and learning-based approaches to rural transformation**
   Integrating both spatial and territorial approaches, as well as learning approaches through spaces to connect emergency and resilience projects, or transboundary and centre-based approaches.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and attained psychosocial well-being that allows them to cope with (re)migration drivers. The introductory chapter of the report stresses the importance of adopting an ecosystem approach to reintegration, and mapping and expanding the range of stakeholders involved. Sustainable reintegration can only be achieved through harmonization and collaboration among the actors interacting with the returnees, including actors from the humanitarian and development sectors.

The second chapter of the report analyses the factors that contribute to the success of rural reintegration, ranging from the need to assess the returnees' profiles to the importance of understanding local markets, and how these factors can be addressed in an integrated manner. The third chapter presents an overview of the 124 programmes implemented in rural areas in the six

case study counties mapped within the scope of this research and outlines seven key lessons learned for policy and programme design for rural reintegration. These lessons have been drawn based on the analysis of these programmes, the data collected during fieldwork and the literature available on the topic.

This report calls for integrated support to rural reintegration through dedicated policies as well as by integrating rural development into migration and reintegration policies, and vice versa. All stakeholder interviews in the six case study countries studied for this report (Afghanistan, Kenya, the Republic of Moldova, Nepal, Senegal and Tunisia) reiterate that, while responsibility for reintegration is local, it is also structural. In other words, national governments need to realize the importance of reintegration for local economic development and provide a clear agenda, and public policies to address it. Once the policies are set, and a vision is articulated, local and rural stakeholders can implement the vision and have adequate resources to do so.

It also reminds all stakeholders, especially at a time of COVID-19, of the importance of inclusive approaches to rural reintegration programming, which includes investing in skills development and more inclusive value chains with a focus on women and youth. The report broadens the conversation to specific groups that require tailored approaches and responses. Young people are the first such group, as they are particularly well-suited to rural reintegration programmes, when awareness is raised and information is shared adequately. Nevertheless, many misconceptions remain about the ability of young people to reintegrate into rural areas, and many gaps persist in the ability to make value chains more inclusive for the reintegration of such groups.

Lastly, the sharing of responsibilities and coordination need to span the entire humanitarian-development spectrum. Synergies are going to be increasingly important as they will open the space for coordination to take place locally and allow for the clear detailing of roles and responsibilities. The 'Toolkit' that complements this Global Lessons Learned study provides a pathway for coordination that is inclusive of rural stakeholders, communities and the returnees themselves.

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**Global lessons learned**

on sustainable reintegration in rural areas

Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality
Economic and Social Development
www.fao.org/rural-employment
www.fao.org/migration/en/

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**
Rome, Italy