

# EMN INFORM

## Challenges and good practices in the return and reintegration of irregular migrants to Western Africa

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The aims of this EMN Inform are to consider the impact of assisted voluntary return (AVR) and reintegration programmes on return and reintegration to countries in Western Africa; to describe how Member States adjust their programmes to support return to this region; and to identify challenges and good practices in return/reintegration to Western Africa<sup>2</sup>.

### KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- ★ Political unrest, economic hardship and disease have resulted in significant mixed migration flows from Western African countries to EU Member States.
- ★ Between 2009 and 2013, **124,940** asylum seekers were Western Africa nationals, representing **8% of the total** of all asylum seekers to the EU during that period, whilst **176,840** third country nationals (TCNs) originating from Western Africa were found to be irregularly staying on EU territory.

<sup>1</sup> This EMN inform is based on information collected via the EMN Ad-Hoc Query no. 2014.593 "Return and reintegration programmes to Western African countries". Replies were received by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this Inform, the following 10 countries have been included in the analysis: Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.

- ★ Over the period 2009-2013, the **number of West Africans ordered to leave the EU** has **decreased** from 49,010 in 2009 to 37,340 in 2013 (-24%). Correspondingly, the **number of West Africans returned from the EU 28** has **decreased** from 9,420 in 2009 to 7,965 in 2013 (-15%).
- ★ **EU Member States experience a number of challenges in returning TCNs to West Africa.** Among these are: difficulties to obtain travel documents; limited availability of Western African embassy /consulates in the EU and limited cooperation with authorities in the countries of origin, in particular for non-voluntary returns; political instability in some countries in the region; and some weaknesses in infrastructure and communications.
- ★ Returnees to Western African countries are eligible for **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes** implemented by all Member States. However, some Member States have introduced **tailored** programmes to assist return to specific Western African countries.
- ★ The **specific needs of individuals** are taken into account by Member States through individual assessment procedure to primarily check for vulnerability and the medical needs of returnees.
- ★ The provision of information on voluntary return and reintegration assistance programmes is a key element throughout the different stages of return and the majority of Member States **systematically**

**undertake outreach activities** on their territories aiming to encourage and prepare TCNs for their return. Activities include, amongst others, counselling in reception /detention centres, distribution of leaflets, posters, brochures, online information, free hotline and return helpdesks.

★ **Good practices** in return and reintegration identified include:

- > **Involving the diaspora community** and/or organisations to reach, inform and convince
- > **Tailoring support** to individuals' needs
- > Offering TCNs from West African countries an **employment or business perspective upon return**
- > Mobilising the knowledge of **local organisations in return countries**
- > **Analysing migration dynamics** and the phenomenon of **inter-states migration**

## BACKGROUND

According to the UN definition, the Western Africa region includes the following 16 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo<sup>3</sup>. For the purpose of this Inform, the following 10 countries from this grouping have been included in the analysis<sup>4</sup>: **Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Mauritania, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone.**

Some of the countries of Western Africa have been affected by unstable political situations and internal conflict in recent times. From 1991-2002, an 11-year-long civil war in **Sierra Leone** resulted in widespread human rights violations claiming some 50,000 victims. The Boko-Haram militant Islamist movement based in northeast **Nigeria** has claimed more than 3,000 lives during 2014 and has displaced more than a million persons<sup>5</sup>. Armed conflict in **Northern Mali** has been reported since early 2012, involving Tuareg separatists and an Islamist movement<sup>6</sup> whilst in early 2013, two waves of violent protest against lack of electoral transparency took place in **Guinea** resulting in an ethnic conflict that again claimed several hundreds of lives<sup>7</sup>.

Within the Western Africa region, a number of countries have been subject to a sustained outbreak of

the Ebola virus disease which started in March 2014 from **Guinea** and later spread to **Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Mali** and **Senegal**. Up to 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014, as many as 17,145 cases have been reported and there have been more than 6,000 deaths with a fatality rate of 72% in the most affected countries<sup>8</sup>.

Between 2009 and 2013, asylum seekers from Western Africa<sup>9</sup> numbered **124,940**, representing 8% of the total of all asylum seekers to the EU during that period<sup>10</sup>. The top-two countries of origin were **Nigeria** (49,330) and **Mali** (15,295). **Nigeria** has also suffered 3,300, 000 displaced people in its territory this year, being among the 10 countries in the world with the highest number of internally displaced persons in 2014<sup>11</sup>.

As many as **176,840** third country nationals (TCNs) originating from Western Africa were found to be irregularly staying on EU territory from 2009 to 2013<sup>12</sup>, which represents on average 7.4% of the total third country nationals returned from the EU 28. Within the same time period, a total of **210,180** nationals from Western Africa have been ordered to leave, i.e. on average 8.3% of all TCNs irregularly staying in the EU 28.

Between 2009 and 2013, **43,135** Western African TCNs were returned from the EU<sup>13</sup>, representing on average 4.6% of the total number of returns enforced in the EU 28. Among these, **Nigeria** and **Ghana** were the top two nationalities of Western Africans returned, counting for 74% of the total across all 10 of the countries included in this analysis. By contrast, **Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Mauritania** and **Guinea-Bissau** were the nationalities with the lowest number of returnees from the EU, amounting overall to some 5% of the total.

### **EU Member States experience numerous challenges in returning TCNs to West Africa.**

Among these are: difficulties to obtain travel documents; the geographical position of the embassy/consulate within the EU Member States; cooperation with authorities in the countries of origin, in particular for non-voluntary returns; political instability in some countries in the region; and weaknesses in infrastructures and communications in most of these countries.

### **Some Member States have taken measures due to the recent outbreak of the Ebola virus disease**

<sup>3</sup> See UN country grouping at <http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Decision adopted by the EMN REG during the workshop of 18<sup>th</sup> June 2014.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/28/nigeria-multiple-bomb-blasts-kano-mosque>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/mali/>.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/24/us-guinea-violence-idUSBRE96N15L20130724>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/situation-reports/en/>

<sup>9</sup> The statistics for Western Africa analysed in this Inform take into consideration the 10 priority countries listed above.

<sup>10</sup> Calculations based on Eurostat data [*migr\_asyappctza*]

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1729\\_1415183713\\_atlas-en.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1729_1415183713_atlas-en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Source: Eurostat [*migr\_eiord*].

<sup>13</sup> Source: Eurostat [*migr\_eirth*].

in parts of the region. Some returns to Ebola-affected countries have been suspended in **Germany** based on individual cases. **Malta** temporarily suspended forced returns to Nigeria which have now been resumed; several voluntary departures have also been affected. Other Member States also decided to postpone some Frontex Joint Return Operations to Nigeria; however, these Joint Return Operations will also be resumed in 2015. In **Sweden** restrictions on travels to Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone are in place for staff in relation to escorted travel. Other countries, including **Lithuania**, the **Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom** are carefully monitoring the spread of the Ebola virus disease in Western African countries to inform their return decisions. .

## 1. TRENDS IN RETURN TO WESTERN AFRICA FROM THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES<sup>14</sup>

### 1.1. Overall EU trends in return to Western Africa

Over the period 2009-2013, the **number of West Africans from the 10 priority countries ordered to leave in the EU** has **decreased** from 49,010 in 2009 to 37,340 in 2013 (-24%). Correspondingly, the **number of West Africans returned from the EU** has **decreased** from 9,420 in 2009 to 7,965 in 2013 (-15%).

In 2013, 37,340 West Africans ordered to leave the EU **represented 8.7% of the total number of persons ordered to leave** (430,230). The number of West Africans returned (7,965) **represented 4.3% of the total number of TCNs returned** to a third country following an order to leave (185,090).

Between 2009 and 2013, the **top-five Member States returning the highest numbers of TCNs** with West African nationalities were **United Kingdom, Spain, France, the Netherlands** and **Italy**, amounting together to **81% of the returns** by EU Member States to this region for that period. For example, in 2013, these five Member States returned 6,360 TCNs with West African nationalities. This constituted 80% of the total number of TCNs with West African nationalities returned by EU Member States for that year (i.e. 7,965).

### 1.2. Focus on Nigeria and Ghana: the two Western African countries receiving the highest number of returnees from the EU

Comparison between the statistics shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 in the Annex shows that, **of the TCNs with**

**West African nationalities** returned from EU Member States, **most are of Nigerian and Ghanaian nationalities**. In 2013, 4,600 **Nigerians** and 1,270 **Ghanaians** were returned, representing respectively 58% and 16% of total number of TCNs returned from the EU28 to Western Africa (i.e. 7,965).

### Nigeria

Between 2009 and 2013, the **number of Nigerian nationals ordered to leave the EU decreased** from 16,195 to 12,475 (-23%). In 2013, the 12,475 Nigerian nationals order to leave represented **3%** of the total number of TCNs who received an order to leave the EU (430,230).

The **number of Nigerian nationals returned from the EU decreased** from 4,910 to 4,600 (-6%). In 2013, the 4,600 Nigerian nationals returned represented **2.5%** of the total number of TCNs returned following an order to leave (185,090).

In 2009-2013, the **Member States returning the highest number of Nigerian nationals** were **United Kingdom** (14,700), **Spain** (1,725), the **Netherlands** (1,720), **Italy** (1,075) and **Austria** (935): together these countries returned 80% of the total Nigerians returned.

As to **assisted return**, 2,278 **Nigerian nationals were supported to return**<sup>15</sup> over the period 2009-2013, representing **9.3%** of the total number of Nigerian nationals returned (i.e. 24,475). The percentage of returnees supported has increased from 7.4% in 2009 to 10.4% in 2013. In the same period, **4.4%** of returnees (1,077) **received reintegration assistance**<sup>16</sup>. Overall between 2009 and 2013, the percentage of returnees granted reintegration assistance has increased from **3.5%** to **4.8%**<sup>17</sup>.

Between 2009 and 2013, the top-five Member States supporting Nigerian nationals to return were **United Kingdom** (801), **Austria** (316), **Sweden** (281), the **Netherlands** (259) and **Germany** (191). In the same period, the top-five Member States providing them reintegration assistance were **United Kingdom**<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> "Support to return" indicates the provision of any incentive to return, e.g. material assistance (e.g. travel assistance) prior to departure or in-cash assistance at the point of departure to the returnee.

<sup>16</sup> "Received reintegration assistance" indicates those returnees who have been granted assistance for reintegration after arrival in the country of return, such as housing, education and business start up.

<sup>17</sup> Percentages on "supported to return" and "granted reintegration assistance" should be considered as estimates, because calculations are based on statistics from different sources (Eurostat for returns enforced and national sources for returnees supported to return and granted reintegration assistance). For this reason, data may not be always directly comparable.

<sup>18</sup> The UK has provided statistics for the number of asylum assisted voluntary returns (AVR) as an approximation for the number of persons granted reintegration assistance by calendar year. Some non-asylum seeking irregular migrants returning under AVR may

<sup>14</sup> All numbers concerning people ordered to leave the EU and people returned following an order to leave the EU are sourced from Eurostat database, [*migr\_eiord*] and [*migr\_eirtn*]; extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014

(405), **Germany** (190), **Austria** (180), **Malta** (97) and **Ireland** (70).

### **Ghana**

Between 2009 and 2013, a **decrease** of -9% occurred **in the number of Ghanaian nationals ordered to leave the EU**, from 4,695 to 4,265. The 4,265 Ghanaian nationals ordered to leave in 2013 represented **1%** of the total number of TCNs receiving an order to leave the EU (430,230).

From 2009 to 2013, the **number of Ghanaian nationals returned from EU Member States decreased** from 1,450 to 1,270 (-12%). In 2013, the 1,270 Ghanaian nationals returned represented **0.7%** of the total number of TCNs returned following an order to leave (185,090).

With regard to Ghanaian nationals, the **five Member States returning the highest** numbers from 2009 to 2013, were **United Kingdom** (4,275), the **Netherlands** (955), **Spain** (375), **Germany** (315) and **Malta** (185) amounting to 90% of total number of Ghanaian nationals returned by the EU.

Between 2009 and 2013, on average **15% of Ghanaians nationals** (1,056) were granted **support to return** out of the total number of Ghanaian nationals returned (7,020). The percentage of returnees supported has increased from 13.4% in 2009 to 20.4% in 2013. During the same period **7.3%** of returnees (509) **were granted reintegration assistance**<sup>19</sup>. There has been an overall increasing trend from 6.4% of returnees granted reintegration assistance in 2009 to 12.6% in 2013.

Between 2009 and 2013, the top-five Member States supporting Ghanaians nationals returned were **United Kingdom** (309), the **Netherlands** (247), **Germany** (130), **Italy** (74) and **Malta** (73). In the same period, the top-five Member States providing them with reintegration assistance were **Germany** (130) **United Kingdom**<sup>20</sup> (109), **Italy** (74), **Malta** (73) and **Sweden** (46).

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING RETURN TO WESTERN AFRICA

### 2.1 Types of AVR assistance provided

Returnees to Western African countries are eligible for **Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration programmes** implemented by all Member States.

- ★ For most Member States, the assistance provided under such programmes does not differ according to the country of origin and is thus not tailored to the specific circumstances in Western African countries;
- ★ Some Member States, e.g. **Austria, Finland** and **Germany** however do adapt the assistance provided under their general return and reintegration programmes, insofar as the amount of in-cash/in-kind assistance varies depending on the country of return. In **Austria**, the amount of in-kind reintegration assistance can be up to 4,000 EUR in Nigeria, due to the high prices for accommodation, especially in Lagos, the city receiving the majority of returnees. In **Germany**, the amount of in-cash assistance varies according to a categorisation of countries of origin into three groups. TCNs returning to West African countries receive a support of 150 to 300 EUR<sup>21</sup>.
- ★ In **Finland**, whilst in-kind support is the same to all countries of origin<sup>22</sup>, in-cash assistance ranges between 500-1,000 EUR<sup>23</sup> depending on the country of origin's ranking in the OECD's Official Development Assistance / Development Assistance Committee list (ODA/DAC).

### 2.2. Specific AVR and reintegration programmes: type of assistance provided

Some Member States have **tailored** programmes or projects to assist TCNs to return or reintegrate to specific Western African countries, including Nigeria (**Austria, Belgium** and **United Kingdom**), Cape Verde (**France** and **Netherlands**), Ghana (**Netherlands** and **United Kingdom**), Ivory Coast (**France**), Mali (**France**), Gambia (**Netherlands**), Sierra Leone (**Netherlands**) and Senegal (**France** and **Netherlands**).

These programmes or projects aim to address specific challenges identified in the respective countries. Where in kind assistance and reintegration support are provided these include tailored: assistance for

<sup>21</sup> Returnees to Ghana, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Sierra Leone receive 300 EUR if aged more than 12; 150 EUR if younger than 12.

<sup>22</sup> 1,300 EUR for adults, 650 EUR for children.

<sup>23</sup> Nigeria and Ghana: adults 800 EUR, minors 500 EUR. Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone: adults 1000 EUR and minors 600 EUR.

also be granted reintegration assistance but figures for the number of such cases by calendar year are not published. Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014. (Table rv\_06: Removals and voluntary departures by country of destination and type: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014#removals-and-voluntary-departures-1>).

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 13.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 14.

obtaining travel documents; psychotherapeutic support; accommodation support to address complex housing markets; training and financial assistance for business start-ups.

A tailored entrepreneurial skills development programme is provided by the **United Kingdom** through the "Halfway House" reintegration programme in Nigeria. Further examples are available under the **ERIN (European Reintegration Instrument Network) Programme** (see Section 2.6).

### 2.3 Identification of the special needs of returnees

The specific needs of individuals are taken into account by Member States through individual assessment procedure to primarily check for vulnerability and the medical needs of returnees. Most Member States apply the following procedures, which are not mutually exclusive:

- ★ Individual consultation
- ★ Vulnerability assessment
- ★ Medical assessment

Member States differ as to how special needs are assessed, not only in methods but also in timing. Most commonly, an individual consultation with the TCN is conducted both pre-departure as well as post-arrival. Should any signs of vulnerability be identified, the returnee is referred to a specialist who will decide on any additional special needs requirements and the assistance provided is tailored to the individual's circumstances. Medical assessments are carried out both in the host country or in the country of origin, depending on the Member State.

### 2.4. Provision of information to returnees

The provision of information on voluntary return and reintegration assistance programmes is a key element throughout the different stages of return. The majority of Member states systematically undertake outreach activities on their territories aiming to encourage and to adequately prepare TCNs for their return. Activities include, amongst others, counselling in reception /detention centres, distribution of leaflets, posters, brochures, online information, free hotline, return helpdesk etc.

Some Member States reported on challenges in reaching TCNs and providing information. For example, some Member States find it more difficult to reach TCNs residing illegally, as opposed to (rejected) asylum seekers. Challenges regarding information provision include language barriers and the lack of data on specific reintegration options in the country of origin. Member States report that such challenges apply to West African countries, but also more broadly for return to any third-country.

In terms of promotional activities for the return of TCNs to West African countries that have worked

particularly well, a few Member States (**Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland and United Kingdom**) underscore the **important role of the diaspora community and/or organisations**. Practices include:

- ★ Setting up a focal point for the diaspora organisations in the relevant migration authorities in the Member State (the **Netherlands**);
- ★ Meeting with representatives of diaspora organisations / members of the diaspora community to provide information on the activities it undertakes to support voluntary return and to foster goodwill in the diaspora organisations in order for them to convey the message to the potential returnees (**Austria, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom**);
- ★ Undertaking outreach work with the support of a local community leader (**Ireland, Poland**).

While quantitative / hard evaluation evidence is lacking<sup>24</sup>, some **positive impacts of this engagement of the diaspora organisations and wider community** reported by Member States include:

- ★ members of the diaspora are *better* informed about the programmes;
- ★ the information is considered *trust-worthy*;
- ★ *more* potential returnees are reached, including those who live outside of reception facilities and/or stay irregularly on the territory;
- ★ *more* TCNs opt for voluntary return;
- ★ diaspora organisations request government funding to provide reintegration assistance directly to returnees, in turn stimulating participation in AVR.

Hence, the involvement of the diaspora **fosters the effective dissemination of information on voluntary return and reintegration assistance programmes and potentially a higher uptake of these**.

### 2.5 Monitoring of returnees post-arrival in Western Africa

Monitoring and evaluating the impact and appropriateness of return and reintegration assistance can make an important contribution to ensure the

<sup>24</sup> The EMN will address this issue in its 2015 Study on 'Information on voluntary return to third country nationals with an obligation to return and who reside outside organised facilities' (working title)

appropriate use of funding and to enable an assessment of project effectiveness and efficiency.

Several Member States (**Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal and United Kingdom**) gather data for purposes of monitoring returnees, which is performed by the local implementing authority (i.e. IOM or other NGO's) in West African countries up to 12 months post arrival. On the basis of questionnaires, the following matters may be discussed with the returnee, either face-to-face or via the phone:

- ★ The overall personal situation in the country of return (e.g. accommodation, family relationships);
- ★ The implementation of the reintegration assistance;
- ★ Verification of invoices related to the investments made;
- ★ Level of satisfaction with this assistance and the return decision;
- ★ Future plans and outlook.

**France** also funds one-year long studies on the career-path and follow up of beneficiaries of the programme for reinsertion in employment in Mali.

Member States may subsequently evaluate the monitoring data gathered by implementing organisations on returnees in order to analyse the impact and appropriateness of return and reintegration assistance. This monitoring data may be supplemented with independent follow-up of returnees. **Austria** and **United Kingdom** for example have conducted evaluations of their reintegration programmes to Nigeria. Findings from a **United Kingdom** evaluation of returns during 2006-2007 were that the assisted voluntary return scheme was one of many factors influencing the decision to return but that its existence made voluntary departure possible for returnees who lacked the resources to return otherwise; returnees were generally satisfied with the support received and acknowledged that it contributed to ensuring sustainable return. In 2010 **France** undertook a financial evaluation of the reintegration programme in Mali and a new study to evaluate the impact of the reintegration and its complementarity with the return programme is currently ongoing.

### 2.6 Joint EU MS co-operative reintegration projects to Western African countries

Six EU Member States (**Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom**) and Norway participate in ERIN, a **joint European return and reintegration programme** launched on

1<sup>st</sup> June 2014, and funded through the EU Return Fund.

The aim of the programme is to provide:

- ★ Reintegration support **after** returning to the country of origin (third country); and
- ★ Social and job support for returnees provided by contractual partners in the interests of **long-term reintegration** in the country of origin.

Reintegration assistance includes, for example, arrivals service, advice and support with official, medical and charitable institutions, job qualification programmes, help with looking for a job, support in setting up a business. The support will be offered in-kind.

Reintegration assistance is available to voluntary returnees and those who have been obliged to return to a selection of third countries. **Nigeria** and **Guinea** feature among these as the only countries among the all West Africa region.

## 3. CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE RETURN/REINTEGRATION TO WEST AFRICA

### 3.1 Barriers to return

**Obstacles** that Member States face **to effectively return** TCNs to West African countries include:

- ★ Returnees **may not want to be returned or be fearful of return**, as this would imply accepting that their emigration attempt has failed and possibly losing face vis-à-vis the home community as they return empty-handed;
- ★ **Lack of cooperation by diplomatic representations** in the EU Member States and/or competent authorities in the countries of origin regarding the issuing of travel documents for forced returns (e.g. no, or a significantly delayed, reply);

These obstacles also arise in the return of TCNs to other countries<sup>25</sup>.

**Specific problems in relation to return and reintegration to West Africa** reported by Member States include:

- ★ Not all West African countries have **diplomatic representations in each EU Member States**. As a result, interviews with returnees cannot always take place. This exacerbates the problem mentioned above, and may result in even lengthier

<sup>25</sup> EMN Study 2014 Good practices in the Return and Reintegration of Irregular Migrants

procedures to obtain travel documents for (forced) returnees;

- ★ **An unstable internal situation in some of the countries of Western Africa**, including more recently: the health risks arising from the outbreak of the **Ebola virus disease** can impede both return and reintegration;
- ★ **Difficulty to find local/competent NGO partners in some countries / regions of return**, making it difficult to provide reintegration assistance and to monitor and follow-up, especially in remote areas of West African countries;
- ★ **Lack of infrastructure to cater for the reintegration process and activities of returnees**. For example in Nigeria, this relates to the saturation of the housing market, poor transport infrastructure, widespread corruption, unreliable power supply affecting economic activities, etc.
- ★ **Relatively high cost of living and housing** in some Western African countries. For example in Lagos (Nigeria) house rentals are often not affordable by returnees;

### 3.2 Emerging good practices

With regard to monitoring and evaluation of assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance to West African countries, some Member States perform monitoring, but few evaluations have been carried out (see Section 2.5). However, Member States report that AVR and reintegration programmes are important instruments to overcome some of these challenges outlined at 3.1, and can **contribute to sustainable return** in several ways, for example, by:

- ★ **Involving the diaspora community and/or organisations to reach, inform and convince** TCNs originating from West African countries to participate in voluntary return and reintegration assistance programmes (see Section 2.5). In the **Netherlands**, this has led to requests by diaspora organisations for government funding to directly implement reintegration assistance projects;
- ★ **Tailoring support to individuals' needs** is undertaken by some Member States to contribute to more sustainable return by improving the chances of successful reintegration based on approaches that take into account individual needs and local circumstances (see Sections 2.3 and 2.4).
- ★ **Offering TCNs from West Africa an employment or business perspective upon return**, thus creating a basis for successful return, thus also a more sustainable reintegration. The

ERIN project (see Section 2.6) provides such opportunities;

- ★ **Partnership/network with competent local service providers can increase the chance of effective reintegration**, as these are likely to have a good understanding of the returnees' needs, knowledge of the economic and social conditions of the country of return and can therefore help to provide individual, tailor-made services.
- ★ **Mobilising the knowledge of local organisations in return countries** (e.g. this constitutes a key focus of the ERIN project);
- ★ **Analysing migration dynamics and the phenomenon of inter-states migration** in the West Africa region. **Portugal** has performed ad-hoc studies aiming to better tailoring reintegration programmes and the impact to local and regional development.

The following provide case study examples of successful reintegration stories:

**Box 1: Case studies on voluntary assisted return and reintegration programmes (VARRP) to Nigeria/Ghana: United Kingdom.**

#### 1. UK VARRP to Nigeria: Refugee Action Choices<sup>26</sup> case study

Life in the UK

Ademola, 36, came from Nigeria to visit his family in the UK in March 2012. His visa expired but he was scared to approach the authorities to seek advice on returning to Nigeria. He worked whenever there was an opportunity to do so but struggled to support himself. In 2013 he claimed asylum but his application was refused straight-away.

The decision to go

"I had already overstayed in the UK, had financial problems, sought asylum and there was no way to find the money to pay solicitors to fight my case or support my stay," Ademola explained. His decision to return to Nigeria was not a straightforward one. "It was a very hard decision to make because I had nothing to go back for," Ademola said. He heard about the 'Choices' service through his solicitor. "My solicitor said if you decide to return to Nigeria Choices can support you," he said. The financial support was also an important element in the decision for Ademola.

Ademola called the Choices helpline number and two weeks later, returned to Nigeria. He was eligible for VARRP (Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme), which includes a free travel ticket, £1,500 financial support, assistance in obtaining travel documents and advice and support from Choices trained caseworkers throughout the

<sup>26</sup> For more information please refer to [http://www.choices-avr.org.uk/stories\\_of\\_return](http://www.choices-avr.org.uk/stories_of_return)

whole process.

#### Arrival

Ademola flew to Lagos in October 2013. "I got there early in the morning. I stayed in a hotel for the first month. The £500 they gave me at Heathrow airport helped me a lot - with that money I managed to feed myself. I bought some clothes and a camera, moved around and started looking for jobs. £1500 is not a lot but is not bad money," he explained.

The Choices partner in Nigeria (ProNatura International) helped him to access what remained of his reintegration assistance money.

#### Plans and hopes for the future

"My hope for the future is to work hard, to be successful, and to make sure everything I do, I do it well," said Ademola. "I think about the positive sides of my experience. The positives are that I can go from one place to another, I am healthy, I can save money and have something to look forward to. I will use my experience from the UK and apply it in Nigeria."

Box 2: Case studies on voluntary assisted return and reintegration programmes (VARRP) to Nigeria/Ghana: Ireland<sup>27</sup>.

## 2. IOM Ireland VARRP to Ghana

Daniel worked as an irregular migrant for 10 years in Ireland, while his family remained in Ghana. He experienced several difficulties and struggled to meet his basic needs.

He came into contact with IOM online, and learned about opportunities for supported return and reintegration programmes to Ghana. He decided to move back to Ghana to reunite with his family, and received advice, assistance to purchase a plane ticket and administrative support.

Once in Ghana, Daniel was able to access reintegration assistance to start a business, which he used to restart and further develop his former role as a fisherman, which enabled him to pay for his children's schooling.

Daniel is currently aiming to expand his business and foresees good economic opportunities for the future.

## 4. FURTHER INFORMATION

You may obtain further details on this EMN Inform and/or on any other aspect of the EMN, from: [HOME-EMN@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HOME-EMN@ec.europa.eu).

*Produced in January 2015*

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<sup>27</sup> Source: [www.ireland.iom.int](http://www.ireland.iom.int).



## Table 1: Notes

Source: TCNs ordered to leave: Eurostat, "third country nationals ordered to leave" [migr\_eiord]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs returned: Eurostat, "third country nationals returned following an order to leave", returned to a third country [migr\_eirtn]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs supported to return and granted reintegration assistance: EMN NCPs national statistics collected through the EMN Ad-Hoc Query 2014.593 "Return and reintegration programmes to Western African countries"

\* United Kingdom Figures for grants of reintegration assistance: The UK has provided statistics for the number of asylum assisted voluntary returns (AVR) as an approximation for the number of persons granted reintegration assistance by calendar year. Some non-asylum irregular migrants returning under AVR may also be granted reintegration assistance but figures for the number of such cases by calendar year are not published. Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014. (Table rv\_06: Removals and voluntary departures by country of destination and type: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014#removals-and-voluntary-departures-1>)



## Table 2: Notes

Source: TCNs with Nigerian nationality ordered to leave: Eurostat, "third country nationals ordered to leave" [migr\_eiord]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs with Nigerian nationality returned: Eurostat, "third country nationals returned following an order to leave", returned to a third country [migr\_eirtn]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs with Nigerian nationality supported to return and granted reintegration assistance: EMN NCPs national statistics collected through the EMN Ad-Hoc Query 2014.593 "Return and reintegration programmes to Western African countries"

\* United Kingdom Figures for grants of reintegration assistance: The UK has provided statistics for the number of asylum assisted voluntary returns (AVR) as an approximation for the number of persons granted reintegration assistance by calendar year. Some non-asylum irregular migrants returning under AVR may also be granted reintegration assistance but figures for the number of such cases by calendar year are not published. Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014. (Table rv\_06: Removals and voluntary departures by country of destination and type: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014#removals-and-voluntary-departures-1>)



### Table 3: Notes

Source: TCNs with Ghanaian nationality ordered to leave: Eurostat, "third country nationals ordered to leave" [migr\_eiord]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs with Ghanaian nationality returned: Eurostat, "third country nationals returned following an order to leave", returned to a third country [migr\_eirtn]; data extracted on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
TCNs with Ghanaian nationality supported to return and granted reintegration assistance: EMN NCPs national statistics collected through the EMN Ad-Hoc Query 2014.593 "Return and reintegration programmes to Western African countries"

\* United Kingdom Figures for grants of reintegration assistance: The UK has provided statistics for the number of asylum assisted voluntary returns (AVR) as an approximation for the number of persons granted reintegration assistance by calendar year. Some non-asylum irregular migrants returning under AVR may also be granted reintegration assistance but figures for the number of such cases by calendar year are not published. Source: Home Office Immigration Statistics, July to September 2014. (Table rv\_06: Removals and voluntary departures by country of destination and type: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2014#removals-and-voluntary-departures-1>)