Community assessments and projects

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Before undertaking community-level reintegration assistance it is necessary to undertake a comprehensive community assessment, also called a community profile. A community profile identifies the needs and resources of a community and the impact of return migration on these. It pinpoints the drivers of migration, barriers to sustainable reintegration and sources of community resilience. The community profiled is based on the definition of the community in the particular context.

The community assessment can then be used as a guide to understand where that assistance would be most effective and the different project approaches that can be taken. These assessments and programme development processes should be participatory and include both returnees and nonmigrants from the community.

A study carried out in 2016 by Altai Consulting for IOM Morocco suggested that the following criteria provide a favourable environment for implementing community-based reintegration projects:

- Sufficient number of migrants returning to the same community within a short period of time;
- Adequate migrant profiles (that is, returnees' skills were well-matched to the reintegration project);
- Local community interest and motivated migrants;
- Availability of basic infrastructure in the region;
- Availability of services such as health care, education, housing, and so forth;
- Stability, security and economic opportunities in the return area;
- Civil society activism.

It is therefore important to carefully assess the community's context to determine whether these criteria are met.

This chapter presents a detailed overview of the first steps for developing a community-based project.

3.2.1 Community profiles and analysis

Community-based reintegration assistance is typically based on comprehensive community profiles in the communities with a high concentration of returnees or strong outmigration pressure. These profiles help the lead reintegration organization understand how reintegration activities can support both returnees and return communities and how the reintegration process affects the community.

As part of the community profile, community-level indicators provide information for determining which interventions are appropriate in each target area. In addition, the profile gives insight into potential challenges or risks of community-level interventions. Analysing indicators along with information from the community profile helps pinpoint specific issues, like lack of resources, that could cause tensions between returning and non-migrant community members. Assessment activities should always apply a conflict-sensitive lens by highlighting any feelings of resentment or hostility towards returnees that can arise if individual returnees are seen as receiving benefits or rewards disproportionate to the non-migrant population.

Indicators that can be useful for community profiles include but are not limited to:

Sociodemographics
? Age distribution

? Gender distribution

? Social activities

? Support networks

? Social inclusion (discrimination, violence, harassment based on sex, gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, migrant status, religion, dis/ability, sexual orientation)

? Ethnic distributions

? Educational achievements

? Migration rates

? Perception of migration

Community-based resources
? Safety levels, including risks of environmental disaster and political (in)stability

? Income and employment

? Access to services (including housing, health care, and schools)(s)

? Essential needs coverage (including food security, health, education and training, WASH, shelter

? Diaspora links or projects

? Land and tenure security

? Language(s) spoken

? Access to effective remedies and justice

? Resilience to environmental risks, including those related to climate change

? Existing reintegration or local development projects

Sociodemographics	Community-based resources
	? Social participation and activities including existing formal and informal theatre, visual art, music, dance, sports and other interest collectives and groups

Assessments should consider how available community-based resources are to community members and whether access to resources varies based on age, gender, family size, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability or other personal characteristics. This analysis can be done by comparing resources against the sociodemographic profiles to understand how resources are distributed across a community.

Once the basic community profile is completed, the lead reintegration organization should carry out more in-depth research and analysis. It is important to first check for existing assessments and analyses that the lead reintegration organization or others may have done and use those whenever possible. In this respect, those working on community-level support should communicate frequently with case managers providing individual support to returnees in the targeted communities, because their experiences can inform community interventions.

The table below highlights questions to use or adapt when assessing a community and proposes data collection methods.

Table 3.1: Research questions for in-depth community analysis

Phase	Research questions	Data collection
Community profile	**Migration drivers**	• Desk review
		• Focus group
	1. What is the role of mobility in the community? (past/ present)	• Discussions
		• Individual survey
	2. What are the key drivers that influence migration? (look at economic, governance, social, political, environmental, structural, security dimensions)	
	3. What are the personal motivations of migrants and returnees for considering/deciding to depart and to return?	
	4. What is the role of collective decision-making on migration? Who are the key actors shaping migration decision-making?	
	5. What are the enabling factors	

Phase	Research questions	Data collection
	conducive to irregular migration? (financial, human, logistical and so forth).	
	Reintegration programming	• Desk review • Focus group • Discussions • Individual survey
	6. What are the factors that prevent or foster reintegration at economic, social and psychosocial levels?	
	7. What type of reintegration support (at economic, social and psychosocial levels) is needed to make reintegration sustainable?	
	8. Which actors are appropriate to implement these activities?	
	Community perceptions	• Desk review • Focus group discussions • Individual survey • Community consultations • Community historic mapping
	9. What are sources of tension and sources of social capital in the ecosystem? What perceptions do community members have of each other?	
	10. What are key events that have shaped this community in the recent and distant past?	
	11. What are the existing levels of awareness and attitudes towards migrants and returnees?	
	12. What are the communities' perceptions of migrants and returnees as actors in the ecosystem?	
	13. How do community members engage with returnees and how do returnees engage with community members?	
	Economic system analysis	• Desk review • Key informant interviews with private actors • Individual survey • Labour market assessment (*see section 1.4.2*)
	14. Map a system of economic exchanges and production, including service delivery	
	15. Establish a typology of the	

Phase	Research questions	Data collection
	formal and informal sectors.	
	16. Analyse the socioeconomic potential of the sectors identified. in terms of (a) business creation and development; (b) job creation in the areas defined by the project, (c) identify government priorities and plans in terms of market development.	
	17. Identify concrete and immediate opportunities for employment, income generation and self employment	
	18. Identify concrete and immediate opportunities for strengthened access to services and protection.	
Stakeholder and services mapping	19. Who are the stakeholders directly/indirectly involved in the provision of reintegration support at the national and local level?	• Desk review (particularly of existing stakeholder mapping and service mapping, *see section 1.4.2*)
	20. How do they interact and coordinate?	• Key informant interviews
	21. What community-based projects exist that are related to reintegration?	
	22. What are the referral mechanisms in place at the various levels (individual, community, regional, national level) that can support reintegration activities?	
	23. What are the existing services available to returning migrants that could support reintegration activities?	
	24. What complementary approaches are available? Who implements these?	
	25. Are there opportunities to	

Phase	Research questions	Data collection
	develop new or strengthen existing partnerships to support reintegration activities?	
Capacity assessment	26. What are the human and financial resources available for stakeholders to intervene at the three levels (economic, social, psychosocial) and three dimensions (individuals, community, structural) of reintegration?	• Key informant interviews (analysis through Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool)
	27. What are the capacity-building activities required to effectively support partners in the provision of reintegration assistance?	

As with assessments at all levels, community profiles and assessments should be reviewed and updated frequently in cooperation with local actors to reflect changes, new challenges and risks or new opportunities for programming.

3.2.2 Developing community-level assistance

When first considering community-based reintegration projects, the following criteria can be used to assess the benefits and drawbacks in a particular context:

Table 3.2: Benefits and drawbacks of community-based reintegration projects

Positive criteria
- Project gathers together several returnees and several members of the community;
- Project proposed by community members and directly responding to identified community needs;
- Project allowing support for the needs of returnees with high vulnerability;
- Project responding to specific needs of the community, inter alia by contributing to improve access to services at community level;
- Project contributing to social cohesion (that is, contributing to improve the attitude of

Negative criteria
- Project that could do harm to the community of return (for instance by competing with existing local initiatives or by negatively affecting the natural environment);
- Project that is assessed as not viable;
- Project that does not take into consideration the community's needs and priorities;
- Project that does not integrate any gender considerations.

Positive criteria	Negative criteria
the community towards return and returnees and viceversa); • Project expected to contribute to improve the community's socioeconomic situation, including by creating employment and livelihood opportunities in the community; • Project closely linked to the local development plan; • Project that is environmentally friendly. This could relate to the "environmental footprint" of the project, or the green nature of the business activity (such as recycling), but could also relate to projects which address environmental threats affecting the community such as exposure to natural hazards, climate change or environmental degradation;[30] • Project that fully incorporates a gender perspective by ensuring that all gender groups benefit and participate meaningfully	

In addition to supporting sustainable reintegration, community-focused projects can have a positive influence on overall peaceful coexistence within host communities by reducing barriers between community members, improving mutual understanding and addressing community-wide issues such as scarcity of resources.

Project approaches

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to community-based projects, because each project depends on the local context, community needs and the profiles of migrants. This Handbook therefore proposes various project approaches and outlines their advantages and disadvantages. These approaches are differentiated by their focus; some community-based projects focus on the needs of groups of returnees and also find ways to involve members of the community, while others focus on the needs of the local community and seek to involve one or more returnees.

Additionally, these approaches can vary depending on whether community-based projects are newly developed by the lead reintegration organization, or they take advantage of already-existing projects, which may or may not already include returnees and address their specific needs.

There are three main possible approaches to community-based reintegration projects:

1. Collective returnee projects;
2. New community-based projects;
3. Existing projects that integrate returnees.

A summary of these approaches and their advantages and disadvantages are included in the table below.

Table 3.3: Approaches to community-based reintegration projects

Type	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Supporting collective groups of returnees	Projects take as a starting point returnees' needs. Individual or collective project of (a) returnee(s) in which the returnee(s) may involve the community.	Strong impact on returnees. Addresses the needs of returnees in the specific context of a local community.	Addresses the community's needs less. Limited impact in terms of reducing the risks of tensions between returnees and their community due to limited community involvement.
Starting a new communitybased project	Projects taking as a starting point the community's needs. Projects primarily designed with/for the community in which returnees are located, such as local economic development projects, community-based climate change adaptation projects.	Strong impact on the community. Provides enabling environment for reintegration. Addresses the needs of the local community.	Risk of limited impact on returnees who may have limited involvement in the project.
Integrating returnees into existing projects	Projects taking as a starting point existing projects. Including returnees in successful projects implemented by the lead reintegration organization or by other actors.	Higher chances that projects continue to be successful. Solution to limited available funding and lack of internal expertise in a given sector by the reintegration actors. Coaching opportunities for returnees who do not have specific skills.	Need to connect returnees to projects. Requires a good relationship between the returnee and the group already created. The referring actor may not have access to information on all available projects.

The difference between these categories, particularly the first two, is conceptual. In reality, community focused reintegration projects can share many characteristics of returnee-focused collective initiatives, and vice versa. And multiple approaches can be used together as part of a larger programme. Nonetheless, distinguishing the different approaches, at least conceptually, helps underscore their potential benefits and drawbacks, and how they might be operationalized.

[30] For a simplified screening tool, refer to World Food Programme's *Environmental and Social Screening Tool* (2018).