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## Effective international cooperation

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Successful reintegration programming requires international frameworks that promote effective cooperation between the various reintegration stakeholders. These stakeholders are first and foremost the governments of the host and origin countries, at their national and local levels, but also include international organizations, CSOs, private actors and diaspora associations in host, origin and third countries. Developing the proper agreements and cooperation frameworks is important for establishing and maintaining international systems to support sustainable reintegration.

Any reintegration programme requires international forms of cooperation for the successful return and reintegration of beneficiaries from the host country to the country of origin. The extent and depth of international cooperation can, however, vary greatly.

International cooperation to support reintegration programmes can cover the following components:

- Reinforcement of cooperation between actors in host and origin countries;
- Provision of reintegration assistance starting at the pre-return stage;
- Adaptation of reintegration measures to the needs and capacities of the countries of origin;
- Mechanisms to tailor reintegration measures to the needs of individual beneficiaries; and
- Monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress and success of return and reintegration measures.

This chapter presents an overview of, and considerations to make, for effective international cooperation.

- **4.2.1 Setting up international cooperation frameworks**
- **4.2.2 International cooperation models**
- **4.2.3 Facilitation of regulated mobility channels**

### **4.2.1 Setting up international cooperation frameworks**

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Setting up international cooperation frameworks for stakeholders in host and origin countries relies on the same processes and approaches as the creation of coordination mechanisms at the local and national level. However, the nature of international cooperation and the greater variety of actors involved makes the creation of these frameworks more complex.

The cooperation model depends on the **type of reintegration programme**. While the operational implementation of reintegration programmes can be led by an external organization, it can also be directly implemented by a government agency of either the host or origin country. Although host country governments only rarely implement reintegration programmes themselves, they generally have an important role in the programme in the form of providing funding, and sharing information and statistics on migration dynamics.

? International cooperation is complex given the **variety of actors** involved. Many return and reintegration programmes are designed as multi-country projects at the global level. Partners in the host country require a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the evolving context, including available services, labour market and other information on the country of origin ([see section 1.4.2](#)), in order to provide adequate pre-departure reintegration planning and counselling for returnees. At the same time, partners in the country of origin require accurate information on returnees' capacities and needs ([see section 2.2](#)) prior to their departure from the host country.

### **Figure 4.3: Process flowchart for effective international coordination for reintegration programmes**

#### **Preparatory information gathering**

- Scoping exercise in country of origin
- Assessment of situation of country of origin nationals in host country
- Assessment of migration dynamics and related issues
- Mapping of relevant stakeholders in both countries

#### **Reintegration programme design**

- Design and implementation of reintegration programme (implementation, operations, budgeting) based on both countries' legislative and policy frameworks
- Engagement of implementing partners
- Signature of agreements between relevant stakeholders

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## Development of an international cooperation framework

### Creating a Steering Committee

- Creation of committee comprising lead entity, donors and priority implementing partners
- Designate a steering committee lead for the design implementation and M&E

### Developing cooperation framework from pre-departure to post-return

- Agreement on objectives and roles
- Design and implement a coordination and information sharing mechanism (including SoPs)
- Sign MoUs and agreements of cooperation

### International cooperation models

- International cooperation (including G2G and regional cooperation processes)
- Local-to-local partnerships (including local-to-local PPPs, diaspora engagement, and city-to-city cooperation)
- Local–international frameworks

### Facilitation of regulated safe mobility channels

- Awareness-raising with host country governments at regional and bilateral levels
  - Developing and expanding regular migration channels
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Establishing an international cooperation framework for reintegration programming should take into consideration the following components.

? Taking into account the diversity of reintegration programmes and the variety of actors involved, effective international cooperation requires the establishment of a dedicated steering committee to develop and manage the international cooperation framework. This is particularly important for multi-country programmes, where returns are managed from one host country to a variety of countries of origin, or from several host countries to one country of origin. The steering committee should consist of the following members (at a minimum):

- Lead reintegration organization;
- Host country governments and or donors (typically host country government entities such as ministries of interior, immigration offices or national development agencies); and
- Priority implementing partners (often the governments of countries of origin, relevant partner CSOs and international organizations in the host and origin countries).

The steering committee should be led by a single entity which has full ownership and responsibility over designing, implementing and monitoring the reintegration cooperation system. However, during the design phase of the cooperation system, the lead reintegration organization should consult other members of the steering committee, in particular origin and host country governments and other relevant implementing partners, to take into account their preferences and capacity for participation. In many cases, the lead reintegration organization may already have coherent cooperation systems in place that can be locally adapted; however, these are relatively homogenous across the globe, which allows for regional and international operational synergies and facilitates the identification and exchange of best practices.

? The steering committee should identify and agree the main objectives of the coordination framework. Possible objectives of the coordination mechanism can include:

- Facilitating a continuum of reintegration assistance from pre-departure to post-return;
- Facilitating the systematic gathering, storage and exchange/dissemination of accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on:
  - Reintegration support services available in the host and origin countries;
  - Individual returnees (profiles, needs, intentions, past and current reintegration measures);
  - Situation in country of origin: Dissemination and circulation of relevant up-to-date reports and assessments that show the socioeconomic situation of the country of origin, including situational analyses, security assessments, labour market assessments and market analyses;
- Facilitating cooperation between service providers in host and origin countries through the exchange of information, knowledge, skills and resources; and

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- Supporting scalable and decentralized monitoring to track the progress of individual returnees and collective projects through local partners in the country of origin.

? To meet the agreed objectives, the steering committee can create an integrated information management and sharing system. It is important to consider who the owner and manager of this information management system is, define the technical specifications and indicators to be gathered, establish implementing agreements and SOPs, as well as establish a memorandum of understanding for all stakeholders that includes specific information such as who has permission to enter and view specific data. This should be accompanied by a capacity-building strategy as well as detailed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

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Consistent information management and sharing mechanisms in different programmes is particularly important when a single lead reintegration organization in a country of origin is engaged in different reintegration programmes with multiple host countries. Having separate coordination mechanisms with different information sharing systems and distinct SOPs for each programme would incur unreasonable costs and administrative burdens on the lead reintegration organization and take human and financial resources away from the priority task of facilitating the sustainable reintegration of returnees.

#### **4.2.2 International cooperation models**

As mentioned previously, deciding on an appropriate model for international cooperation depends on the scope of the reintegration programme and the capacity and numbers of stakeholders involved. In general, the wider and richer the international network of cooperation, the more effective, efficient and sustainable the implementation of the reintegration programme becomes, as resources and information are pooled together and different actors in the network bring their specific expertise and capacity. However, it is important to note that a higher complexity of networks of cooperation also requires proportionately greater resources to facilitate effective coordination among all actors. It is essential to check that an evolving web of reintegration-related partnerships at different levels (international, national, subnational and local) does not overstretch the capacities of the cooperation framework.

Figure 4.4 provides an overview of potential forms of international cooperation that can support reintegration programmes at different levels.

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The forms of cooperation depicted above are not exhaustive, but provide an overview of the most strategically important types of international cooperation that can support return and reintegration programmes:

- **International cooperation**, including government-to-government cooperation, joint reintegration programmes and regional processes; and
- **Local-to-local partnerships**, including local-to-local public-private partnerships (PPPs), city-to-city cooperation models and diaspora engagement.

The following sections provide an overview of the role these different forms of cooperation can play in return and reintegration and how the lead reintegration organization can support these partnerships.

## **International cooperation**

International cooperation on return and reintegration can take different forms, most notably bilateral government-to-government agreements, joint reintegration programmes and regional cooperation processes.

### **? Government-to-government (G2G) agreements**

Government-to-government (G2G) agreements between host and origin countries can provide valuable support to reintegration programmes. Bilateral reintegration support provided by the host country can take various forms and can include pre-departure skills' development programmes, business development training and job matching services. While G2G agreements are in the exclusive purview of high-level government stakeholders, the lead reintegration organization can support the establishment of MOUs between governments to support reintegration programmes by:

- Raising awareness of host and origin country stakeholders of the benefits of concluding G2G agreements that support the reintegration. In some cases, government stakeholders from the country of origin may need to be sensitized to the benefits associated with bilateral government-to-government MoUs that elicit and formalise their support for return and reintegration. Such bilateral negotiations can also be used to explore options for creating bilateral labour agreements that enable the certification of skills acquired by migrants while working in the host country to enhance their employability upon return to the country of origin. Similarly, they can address the portability of social benefits for returnees between the host country and the country of origin.
- Providing expertise and best practices on creating G2G agreements with return and reintegration support components that are tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of migrants in a given migration corridor.
- Facilitating the dialogue between host and origin country stakeholders and encouraging their continued support for the formalization of bilateral assistance models.

### **? Joint reintegration programmes**

Similar to G2G agreements, joint reintegration programmes involving different governmental or international stakeholders can take several forms:

- Joint reintegration programmes involving the lead reintegration organization, a country of origin and several host countries. Pooling the resources of several host countries provides

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synergies and allows for economies of scale in the design and implementation of a reintegration project. This fosters the creation of more effective and sustainable reintegration approaches at both individual and community levels.

- Joint reintegration programmes involving a lead international organization, a country of origin and several agencies and ministries from a single host country. In some contexts, return and reintegration activities are conducted in parallel by different actors, and no single entity in the host country has clear ownership of the overall return and reintegration process. Here, coordination among the different stakeholders managing reintegration programmes is essential at all stages to transform parallel reintegration initiatives into a truly joint reintegration programme. Setting up comprehensive coordination -and information- sharing frameworks is crucial. This can pave the way for an effective and concerted approach that involves government stakeholders, returnees and service providers, to avoid duplication of efforts.

## ? Regional cooperation processes

Beyond G2G agreements, regional cooperation processes can play an important role in resourcing and harmonizing return and reintegration processes at international and national level. (See *Case study 16, below, for information on the Puebla Process, a regional migration cooperation mechanism in Latin America and the Caribbean.*) Regional cooperation supports return and reintegration programming in various ways. Contributions range from the harmonization of policies and SOPs, to cross-country cooperation in pre-departure counselling up to regional coordination and allocation of funds according to established disbursement criteria.

Created with Sketch. Case Study 16:

## Puebla Process on return and reintegration

The Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) covering Central America, North America and the Dominican Republic, also called Puebla Process, is a non-binding multilateral mechanism of 11 Member Countries that was established in 1996. The Puebla Process aims to strengthen regional cooperation on policies and actions related to migration.

Over the years, the Puebla Process has been a platform to discuss the return and reintegration of migrants and to seek a harmonized and coordinated approach to these matters.

Based on strategic considerations raised in 2014 during Member-led consultation workshops, Members drafted a policy-guidance document, the *Guiding Principles for the Development of Migration Policies on Integration, Return and Reintegration of the Regional Conference on Migration*. This statement set common grounds of understanding for policymakers, and each Member Country agreed to adapt its Principles to their national legislation and policies.

To operationalize these policies, IOM developed the Manual for the Drafting of National Reintegration Policies in 2015 for both government representatives and reintegration specialists to develop national strategies that reflected the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions on reintegration. Since then, El Salvador has engaged in a process of developing national protocols, coordination mechanisms and other tools to strengthen the reintegration process for returning nationals.

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Regional cooperation on migration policy and management goes beyond national policy guidance. The RCM has also created a reserve fund for the assistance of regional migrants in highly vulnerable situations, administered by IOM. This regional mechanism provides financial and operational support for the voluntary return of vulnerable migrants, including unaccompanied and separated children, and for migrants whose needs exceed the assistance available under the existing programmes in each Puebla Process country.

Created with Sketch. Tips for success:

Establish a strong technical secretariat to assist with the organization and monitoring of activities and initiatives of the Conference.

## Local-to-local partnerships

As a basis for decentralized cooperation, international local-to-local partnerships can be established between local stakeholders in different countries. Decentralized cooperation has become an important dimension of the international development system and can encompass activities addressing return and reintegration. Because local and regional actors are directly affected by return migration on their own territories, they often have the political will and the local expertise to proactively support return and reintegration. The key benefits of establishing decentralized cooperation frameworks relate to:

- Proximity of local and regional actors to their citizens and territories;
- Potential for complementing reintegration frameworks and plans and international, national and local migration and development strategies; and
- Horizontal partnerships, which increase local ownership and reduce the asymmetrical relations between the different actors usually associated with top-down, donor–recipient approaches.

There are different forms of transnational local-to-local (L2L) partnerships that are particularly relevant for complementing and supporting reintegration frameworks. In particular, diaspora engagement ([see section 4.1.1](#)), local-to-local PPPs and city-to-city cooperation models can all support decentralized cooperation. The lead reintegration organization can support these different forms of local-to-local partnerships in specific ways to enhance their benefits for return and reintegration programming.

? **PPPs concluded between local private actors in the host country** (companies, entrepreneurs) **and local public actors in the country of origin** (local authorities in areas of return). While private stakeholders engaging in these PPPs often consist of diaspora entrepreneurs in a host



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country, this is not always the case. To initiate these PPPs, the lead reintegration organization should:

- Support local authorities in areas of return in reaching out to companies that are headquartered in the host country but which are locally present in the territory of return to encourage them to provide employment opportunities to returnees (for instance, by creating a PPP for an online job- matching tool that facilitates recruitment of returnees from a host country by private host country companies operating in the country of origin). The lead reintegration organization can also liaise between the local authority and the host country's chamber of commerce in the country of origin to facilitate identification of suitable employers.
- Help local authorities in areas of return create networking events, fairs and online platforms that link their diasporas with local reintegration programmes in countries of origin ([see also section 4.1.1](#), on diaspora cooperation).

? **PPPs concluded between local authorities in host countries and private actors in the country of origin.** These partnerships are well suited to have an impact on, and leverage multiple migration and development issues, including return and reintegration. They can help businesses in host countries expand to countries of origin; facilitate investment in countries of origin; and foster employment in countries of origin. At a strategic level, the lead reintegration organization can also advise the local authorities of both host and origin countries on how to best align the business support measures into existing migration and development strategies and activities.

? **Partnerships between local public authorities in host and origin countries (city-to-city).** Similar to local-to-local PPPs, the benefits of partnerships between local public authorities lie in the partners' territorial expertise and political investment in issues of migration and development. For instance, city-to-city cooperation models can contribute to improved migration governance at the local level in cities located in host and origin countries. The lead reintegration organization can leverage this form of cooperation to benefit return and reintegration programming. When engaging with cities of destination and cities of return, the lead reintegration organization can identify which services are more effectively provided in the host country versus the country of origin. Building on such analyses, the lead reintegration organization can help municipalities in host countries align their capacity-building and service provision strategies with the requirements of pre-departure reintegration services. Furthermore, local-to- local partnerships are platforms of dialogue: they foster networks for the exchange of public and private expertise and facilitate the mainstreaming of migration and reintegration into local development planning.

### 4.2.3 Facilitation of regulated safe mobility channels

Although beyond the direct scope of this handbook, structural interventions at the international level should aim to promote intra and interregional dialogue around creating safe and regulated mobility channels. In line with the definition of sustainable reintegration, which states that returnees should be able to make a free choice for remigration, institutional dialogue between host countries and countries of origin should be initiated and enhanced to facilitate the creation of regulated safe mobility

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channels.

This is especially relevant when labour market saturation in some countries of origin does not allow for returnees to be absorbed (regardless of skill level). In this situation, identifying sectors of mutual interest between host countries and countries of origin is beneficial to both – followed by skill-enhancement training for returnees in these sectors. When returnees cannot be absorbed by their local markets, there should be an opportunity for regular labour migration, whereby international markets could absorb these workers. In this regard, reintegration assistance (especially at the community level) can be used to invest in local vocational training to respond to the needs of both local and international markets – thus linking reintegration to labour and human mobility.

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from JMDI, 2015b.

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