

The Return and Reintegration of Rejected Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants

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The Return and Reintegration of Rejected Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants

**An analysis of government assisted
return programmes in selected European countries**

Prepared for IOM by

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May 2001



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a July 12th, 2000, speech, Antonio Vitorino, the EU Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs, outlined the need for “...migrants to have possibilities of moving on or going back as the situation develops in their country of origin and elsewhere in the world”, and for “...innovative ideas to encourage the voluntary return of migrants...in a framework of supported reintegration in countries of origin.” These principles apply to rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants as much as they do to all other migrants.

Rising asylum applications, steady rates of refugee recognition and successful backlog clearance exercises have meant that European countries are hosting increasing numbers of unsuccessful asylum seekers. Their return is rising on political agendas. Previous approaches, focusing on unassisted, involuntary return, have sometimes had limited success. The stable and successful return of irregular migrants is likely to be closely linked to their effective reintegration in their country of origin. Without this there is the likelihood that return will not be sustainable and migrants will try again to enter Europe illegally. For these reasons, a number of European governments have been willing to adopt more innovative approaches to return and have begun to experiment with assisted voluntary return programmes offering pre-departure and post-arrival reintegration assistance to rejected asylum seekers and other irregular migrants. This report compares the experiences of a selection of these assisted return programmes, and draws out implications for future programmes focusing on implementation, targeting assistance and evaluation.

Five key prerequisites for the successful implementation of assisted voluntary return programmes are identified. One is to secure cooperation in the country of origin. Although the programmes covered in this report adopt different approaches, and with different levels of success, they share three common characteristics in trying to secure this cooperation. First, consistently one of the criteria for targeting specific countries of origin is existing trade or aid links. Second, an explicit link between trade and aid and return programmes is consistently avoided. Finally, the most important condition required of countries of origin besides the readmission of those assisted to return, is the readmission of those who have opted not to participate in assisted return programmes.

A second prerequisite is to improve coordination between government ministries. All of the programmes in this report have been the combined efforts of a number of government ministries, usually including the interior ministry and the ministry responsible for development. At times their priorities have clashed, and a lack of coordination has undermined return programmes.

A third prerequisite is to recognize that there are other stakeholders in the return process, not least returnees and the communities to which they return. Including migrant community organizations – in both countries of asylum and origin – was successfully demonstrated by one programme to be a way to involve these other stakeholders, and to overcome some of the obstacles associated with return.

Only two of the programmes explicitly included an element of post-return monitoring. Both established local offices in the country of origin and provided for vocational training courses and advice sessions. In both cases return for the majority was judged to have been sustainable. A fourth essential prerequisite for successful implementation must be monitoring.

The final prerequisite identified is to limit the alternatives to participating in assisted return programmes for migrants. In several cases covered in this report, numbers participating in assisted return programmes and subsequent return rates were disappointing, in part because migrants recognized that there were alternatives to participating other than involuntary return.

There was no consensus across the programmes about how to target assistance. Five possible strategies emerged. The first is to delimit the aims and objectives of programmes. Some programmes combined – either implicitly or explicitly – multiple objectives. These included physical return, sustainable return and local development, and the discouragement of further migration. At times these objectives appeared to clash – for example return may not be the only way to encourage local development in countries of origin. At times they proceeded from largely unfounded assumptions, such as that the return of irregular migrants will deter further irregular migration. Further research is needed in this area.

A second strategy is to target specific populations. Different programmes targeted different migrant categories – ranging from a specific focus on rejected asylum seekers to a far wider focus on all irregular migrants. There are concerns that in fact different categories of irregular migrant, and even different groups within a single category, may both “deserve” and “require” different forms of protection and levels of assistance. The danger of too broad brush a policy is to paint over such differences, and the implication is that at least some returns may be less successful as a result of a lack of attention to detailed requirements.

A third strategy is to target specific countries or regions of origin. Three main criteria are variously used, namely: targeting countries from which a significant number of asylum applications had been made; targeting countries in which significant migration potentials had been identified, and targeting countries with which

cooperation had a chance of being secured. Several concerns arise. First, the experience of several programmes demonstrated how hard it is accurately to enumerate the irregular population, thus casting some doubt on the value of a numerical criterion. Second, and similarly, migration potential is difficult – perhaps even impossible – accurately to measure. Finally, the implications of targeting assistance on irregular migrants from some countries but not others need more careful consideration. The availability of assistance might actually attract irregular migrants from targeted countries. Alternatively, irregular migrants from countries other than those targeted might be tempted to falsify their nationalities appropriately.

The fourth strategy involves delimiting the types and levels of assistance available. The programmes include various combinations of four assistance types, namely: the cost of travel, one-off grants, start-up grants or loans for micro-enterprises, and vocational training. Some provide assistance in the host country and others in the country of origin, and advantages and disadvantages for both options emerged. Providing vocational training in the host country, for example, allows migrants to raise money and prepare in other ways for return. Providing vocational training in the country of origin, on the other hand, allows the training to be more appropriately geared towards opportunities in the local economy. Several programmes also try explicitly to link assistance with local development, for example by targeting micro-enterprise loans and grants on enterprises deemed to be of wider benefit to the local return community.

The final strategy for targeting assistance is largely untapped, and involves interacting with existing programmes. Each of the study programmes co-exists nationally with other assisted return programmes targeted on similar migrant categories, yet coordination was usually not apparent. Besides arguments based on efficiency and effectiveness, there is some concern that policy runs the risk of differentiating between different migrants in exactly the same circumstances. In contrast, there is greater coordination between assisted/voluntary and unassisted/involuntary programmes. Most assisted programmes form part of a “dual track” strategy, whereby those who do not participate become eligible for involuntary return.

The report also develops a framework for evaluating assisted return. Effective programme evaluation should include a range of criteria. Numerical criteria include absolute numbers, relative numbers and application rates. Cost-related criteria include direct and indirect costs. Returnee-related criteria include dignified and humane return and the sustainability of return for both individuals and families. Country of origin related criteria include employment generation by returnees, service provision by returnees, and economic, political and social investment by returnees. Properly to succeed, evaluation needs to incorporate a range of stakeholders, including govern-

ments in the country of asylum and origin, local communities in both locations, and the returnees themselves.

A number of priority areas for future research are identified. These are: a profile of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrant populations, an assessment of the impact of assisted return programmes on populations in host societies, an evaluation of methods for disseminating information about return programmes, an assessment of the particular problems faced by women and children during reintegration, an identification of the most effective method for assisting sustainable return, an assessment of the value for returnees of preparation time, an assessment of the economic, political and social impacts of return in local communities, an investigation into the extent to which return deters re-migration and migration within the local community and an examination of the dissemination of information about countries of asylum in origin countries.

Finally, three wider strategic issues surrounding future policy development are identified. The first concerns “joined-up government”. On the one hand it is essential that assisted return programmes incorporate a range of interests in government. On the other hand, it is equally essential to ensure that the agenda of one (for example migration management) is not allowed to subsume that of another (for example development). Consensus building needs to focus on the mutual benefits for all agendas of assisted return.

The second concerns European harmonization. The report identifies a number of obstacles to closer cooperation over the return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants on a multilateral basis. First, different states have different asylum and immigration geographies, and so agreement over a specific list of targeted countries of origin may be hard to achieve. Second, only a few states have yet been willing to offer any form of assistance to a population that many people probably regard as “undeserving” of assistance. Finally, even where they are willing to provide assistance, different states have reached their own conclusion about what type and level of assistance is appropriate. Nevertheless, for sustainable return to be properly successful, harmonization between host countries in the same region will need to be achieved.

The final concern extends the need for cooperation to a more global level. The implication of rising numbers of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and their rising significance on political agendas, is that destination and origin countries will have to engage in positive and mutually beneficial dialogue with an aim to achieving sustainable return. In this way far from being a “problem”, rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants might be viewed as opening up a new opportunity for international cooperation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across most European countries, asylum policies have variously targeted backlogs, decision-making times and the deterrence of “bogus” asylum seekers; however relatively little attention has been paid to the return of rejected asylum seekers. The resulting increase in their numbers, combined with increasing numbers of “illegal” migrants and victims of trafficking, has recently focused attention on policies for facilitating their return.

Where these policies already exist, they have usually operated on an ad hoc basis, and focused on unassisted voluntary return or involuntary return. In the UK, as well as in many other European countries, these programmes have often had a limited impact (IOM, 1999). In response, there is a new willingness in a growing number of European countries to adopt a longer-term and more innovative approach to returning rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants, through offering them assistance, and through trying more explicitly to link return with reintegration and development. Some countries, such as France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, are already piloting such policies; others, such as Denmark, Sweden and the UK, have shown a new willingness at least to contemplate them.

This report has been commissioned by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in order to compare the experiences of a selection of existing assisted return programmes for rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants, and to draw lessons from them for future programmes. Specifically, the report focuses on three aspects: programme implementation, the targeting of assistance, and evaluation. In each case it analyses the experiences of existing programmes, and then makes recommendations for best practice in the future. In its final two sections, the report identifies priority areas for future research, and a series of key policy issues.

The report focuses on six programmes in three countries – France, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Consultations also took place in the UK, Denmark and Sweden, where specific programmes are not yet in place. The coverage is not comprehensive – there are other assisted return programmes for rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants in other countries – however, the selected programmes probably represent the more important national efforts in Western Europe to date. The report does not include analysis of the growing range of IOM programmes for the return of illegal and other irregular migrants, for example in Central and Eastern Europe (IOM, 1997, 1998; Laczko, 2000). However, one of the purposes of this report is to provide guidelines in order to inform the assessment of current IOM programmes and the development of new programmes.

It has not been the intention of this report independently to assess existing programmes; rather it was intended to draw on existing assessments. In most cases these have not been available, as the programmes in question are all relatively recently established. An additional method has therefore been to conduct interviews with relevant officials in each of the study countries. It is important to stress at the outset that the opinions presented in this report are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the respondents, nor of IOM.

The report has eight main sections. Section 2 contains an analysis of why the return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants is rising on political agendas, and why there is a new willingness to adopt innovative approaches. Section 3 provides a summary overview of the study programmes. Sections 4, 5 and 6 compare and contrast the experiences of each of the programmes, focusing on programme implementation, targeting assistance and programme evaluation, and each section concludes with recommendations on best practice for future programmes. Section 7 identifies priority areas for future research. Finally, Section 8 identifies a series of key policy issues that seem likely to arise in devising new programmes.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

One of the overriding themes of this report is the individuality of the policy approaches adopted by different European states, and this has significant implications for the intended harmonization of EU immigration and asylum policies, as discussed in Section 8. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a series of factors that explain firstly an increasingly common concern across the EU to return rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants, and secondly the willingness of states to adopt innovative policy approaches, especially focusing on reintegration and development.

2.1. Increasing numbers

Although care needs to be taken to guard against some of the media hysteria currently surrounding asylum, it is clear that in most Western European states the number of asylum applications has been increasing over the past few years. Table 1 shows recent trends in applications across the six countries that have been included in this report. Of them, Switzerland is the only country where asylum applications decreased between 1999 and 2000. In the other five countries, applications increased from 1999 and 2000 by between 7.4 per cent (UK) and 55.8 per cent (Denmark).

TABLE 1
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS AND PERCENTAGE INCREASE
ACROSS SIX STUDY COUNTRIES (1998-99)

Country	1998	1999	2000
Denmark	5,700	6,470	10,080
France	22,370	30,830	38,596
Netherlands	45,220	42,729	43,890
Sweden	12,840	11,230	16,370
Switzerland	41,302	46,068	17,660
UK (1)	59,830	91,390	97,860

Source: UNHCR (2001)

(1) Figures adjusted to include dependants

Data on the number of asylum seekers whose applications are rejected are less comprehensive. In the Netherlands, the number of asylum seekers whose applications have been refused have grown from 28,173 in 1998 to 41,367 in 1999 (Muus, 2000). In Switzerland, of 47,264 applications processed in 1999, 33,836 were

rejected (Chatelain, 2000). In the UK, over 165,000 asylum applications were rejected between 1989 and 1999 (Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 2000). The current number of rejected asylum seekers is increasing not only as a result of increasing arrivals combined with steady ratios of rejections, but also because of the impact of procedures across several European countries to clear asylum backlogs. What make these compounded trends particularly significant are the relatively low rates of removal or deportation of rejected asylum seekers from the study countries to date. In the UK 7,600 asylum applicants are reported to have been removed or to have departed in 1999, but this figure is mainly made up of voluntary returns of people at earlier stages in the asylum process.

Data on illegal migration are even less comprehensive, for practical as well as conceptual reasons. One of the problems, with particular pertinence for this report, is that they are often conflated with data on asylum seekers, especially those who may have been smuggled or trafficked (Salt and Hogarth, 2000). The most widely accepted and quoted figure for the scale of illegal migration is Widgren's estimate that in 1993 there were between 250,000 and 300,000 illegal entries into Western Europe (Widgren, 1994). But only a small proportion of illegal entries is apprehended, and only this proportion becomes the target of return programmes. In Switzerland, for example, 9,144 illegal migrants were interdicted upon entry in 1999 (Chatelain, 2000).

This brief analysis of some of the available data demonstrates the tasks facing return policies. One is to deal with those who have already arrived – that is to return rejected asylum seekers. Their numbers are growing, and there are concerns among some policy-makers that they are effectively “clogging up” the asylum system. A second is to manage new migration, following the logic that the successful return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants will deter further irregular migration, a third is to ensure that return is sustainable and that the cooperation of sending countries is achieved. Several of the assisted return programmes covered in this report are explicitly attempting to satisfy both these objectives, and questions are raised about the extent to which they really can be achieved in tandem.

2.2. The lack of success of previous approaches

While increasing numbers can largely explain why the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants are rising on political agendas, there are other factors which explain why several states have been willing to adopt innovative approaches such as those embodied in the programmes covered in this report. They include the lack of success of previous approaches, the changing European policy context, lessons learned from the Bosnian and Kosovar displacements, and a new willingness to link migration with development.

While it has largely been in response to recent increases in their numbers that European states have begun to pay greater attention to the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants, there were earlier efforts to develop policies for return directly to origin countries. Largely these were on an ad hoc basis (IOM, 1997). In general, these focused on either unassisted voluntary return or involuntary return, and sometimes a combination of the two. This approach has, in general, proved unsuccessful for three main reasons. First, rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants have often been unwilling voluntarily to return to their countries of origin. Second, most states have lacked the political will to enforce involuntary returns. Where such returns have taken place, they have attracted across Europe media and public attention, and active responses such as the sanctuary movement in the UK (Cohen, 1997). Third, a recurring problem has been the unwillingness of origin states to cooperate with return, for example by failing to recognizing the nationality of potential returnees and issue them with the appropriate travel documents.

These experiences have certainly informed recent policy initiatives, and a focus on reintegration and development has been presented as one way of overcoming all of these problems. First, the hallmark of all the programmes covered in this report is that they provide assistance to returnees – often at quite generous levels. The hope is that the offer of assistance will make return a more attractive and viable alternative. Second, most of the programmes exercise involuntary return only for those who do not cooperate in voluntary return programmes. This “dual approach” has subdued opposition in host societies, although critics remain. Third, several of the programmes make links – either explicitly or implicitly – between the return of rejected asylum seekers and development in their origin countries. The limited evidence suggests that this “development-oriented approach” is encouraging cooperation in certain origin countries.

2.3. The changing European policy context

There are many EU instruments related to return, although most are not legally binding and together they have certainly not created a harmonized EU approach. Nevertheless, a number of instruments have provided a context for changing approaches to the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants in member states. These are covered in far greater detail elsewhere (IOM, 1999; Laczko, 2000), but include the following. The obligation under the 1990 Dublin Convention to readmit a rejected asylum seeker who has entered the territory of another member-state provides an incentive for a consistent expulsion strategy. The Schengen *acquis* obliges member states to expel aliens who do not have permission to remain. The EC’s 1994 Communication on Immigration and Asylum Policies identified the repatriation of those found to be in an irregular situation as one of the four key elements in combat-

ing illegal immigration. Implementation of the Treaty of Amsterdam highlights the necessity to improve the possibilities for the removal of persons who have been refused the right to stay.

Beyond the imperative to remove aliens, the existing instruments also cover a range of non-binding norms for securing the cooperation of countries of origin. One is the recommendation that member states conclude bilateral readmission agreements affirming the obligation on countries of origin to readmit their own nationals. Furthermore, the creation in 1998 of the High Level Working Group (HLWG) on Asylum and Migration has focused policy on specific countries of origin (Afghanistan/Pakistan, Albania, Morocco, Somalia and Sri Lanka). Among other tasks, the HLWG is exploring measures aimed at favouring voluntary return to the named countries.

2.4. Lessons learned from the Bosnian and Kosovar displacements

It is significant that the development of policies for the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants has in most of the study countries in this report either coincided with, or evolved in the wake of, the experiences of managing return following the displacement of Bosnians then Kosovars. Although it is true that in every EU state other than Germany, the majority of Bosnian displacees were eventually granted some form of permanent residence rights, return was still at a significant scale (Black et al., 1997), and the return of Kosovars later in the 1990s was even more complete. While care must be taken to draw a distinction between displacees from the conflicts in the Balkans and rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants, one similarity from a state perspective has been the imperative of return for all of these categories. In addition, some states are clearly willing to apply the lessons from the return of Bosnians and Kosovars – displacees whom they recognized as in need of protection, albeit temporarily, to the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants – categories of people who are not recognized as in need of protection. And in most states what underpinned the relative success of both Bosnians and Kosovar returns were assisted, voluntary return programmes that focused on reintegration.

2.5. Linking migration with development

A final contextual factor which appears to apply across the study countries in this report is a new, or at least revived, willingness on the part of states, to recognize the potential links between migration and development, and to underscore these with policy. There are two broad approaches to the links between migration and development. One focuses on the extent to which development in origin countries can reduce the incidence of migration, and the second on the extent to which returning

migrants can act as “development poles” in the communities to which they return. In both cases the relationships are complex, and the evidence inconclusive (Diatta and Mbow, 1998; Reyneri and Mughini, 1984; Samuels, 1998; Skeldon, 1998; Thomas-Hope, 1998). Nevertheless, at least recognition of the links has provided the context in a number of states for dialogue between ministries responsible primarily for interior affairs, and those for development and foreign affairs. Several of the return programmes covered in this report are jointly coordinated between these ministries, although, as is explained in Section 4, the fact that they often have very different priorities has at times blurred the precise goals of return policies.

3. PROGRAMME OVERVIEWS

Through reviewing existing evaluations and by interviewing relevant officials, an attempt has been made systematically to collect the same information on each of the programmes on which this report focuses. The overviews covered: the dates on which the programmes were initiated and where appropriate have ended; the target populations, countries and regions; the type and level of assistance provided; the projected and actual number of returnees; a profile of returnees, and the programme budget. For a variety of reasons, however, certain information has been unavailable for each programme, and the following overviews highlight these gaps.

3.1. Gefaciliteerde Terugkeer Afgewezen Asielzoekers (GTAA) (The Netherlands)

The Dutch Government signed agreements on Pilot Programmes for the Assisted Return of Rejected Asylum Seekers with the Government of Ethiopia on 22 August 1997 and the Government of Angola on 25 September 1997. Both programmes were subject to a mid-term review, published in November 1999, and both programmes were formally terminated on 1 January 2001. The programmes were targeted specifically on rejected asylum seekers from Angola and Ethiopia.

The GTAA programmes formed the voluntary component of a “dual track” policy approach, also containing an involuntary return component. One of their primary objectives was to offer rejected asylum seekers an alternative to involuntary return – which in any case had proved hard to achieve in the years prior to 1997. In signing the agreements, the Governments of Angola and Ethiopia committed to issuing travel documents for those rejected asylum seekers who did not opt for voluntary return, although during the later mid-term review it was established that the precise terms for readmission had not been agreed.

The GTAA programmes combined four types of assistance, in addition to travel costs. First, all returnees were entitled to vocational training in the Netherlands, lasting between one and three months depending on the course chosen. Second, all returnees were entitled to nine monthly subsistence allowances, amounting to NLG 250 per returnee per month. Third, returnees were entitled to apply for a grant for a Returnee-Oriented Reintegration Project (RRP). This entailed a non-repayable grant, to a maximum of NLG 5,000, for enterprises started by returnees. Fourth, similar grants were also made available for Community-Oriented Reintegration Projects (CRP), targeted on projects involving the local community in which returnees were reintegrating. Programme Offices were established in both Angola and Ethiopia, with the responsibility for monitoring returnees for the first nine months after arrival.

In response to growing insecurity in Angola during 1998, the GTAA programme for Angola was suspended in October 1998. No returns had taken place. In contrast, the Ethiopian programme continued (despite the outbreak of war with Eritrea in 1998). When GTAA was established, it was estimated that there was a population of between 700-900 rejected Ethiopian asylum seekers in the Netherlands. Subsequent research revised this figure for projected returnees to about only 300. From this population, only 14 people returned under GTAA assistance throughout the duration of the project – 11 in 1997 and 1998 and a further three in 1999. A detailed profile is only available on the former group, which was covered by the mid-term review. They comprised nine men and two women, all of them single and aged between 17 and 41 years (nine were between 24 and 33 years). They had been in the Netherlands for periods lasting between four and seven years. Of these 11 returnees, none took up the offer of pre-departure vocational training in the Netherlands. Eight received RRP grants for small-scale enterprises, in each case to the maximum of NLG 5,000. Their enterprises were in the following fields: taxi services (four), horticulture, secretarial services, building material distribution and stationery retail. No applications were made for CRP grants. According to the mid-term review, the overall budget spent on the GTAA programme between its inception in November 1996 and the date of the review in November 1999 was some NLG 2.25 million.

Two options for the future of assisted return for rejected asylum seekers are currently being pursued in the Netherlands. First, an informal approach has been made to several other EU member states (including Belgium, Germany, France and the UK) to discuss the potential for a multilateral approach. In general the response has been negative, and one important reason is that each country is keen to target largely different countries of origin, namely those from which significant numbers of asylum applications are either being received or are expected.

A second option is to re-launch an assisted return programme on the back of recent policy initiatives in the Netherlands (van Selm, 2000). What is thought to be significant is that they allow for the removal from rejected asylum seekers of access to social services and housing. As explained in greater detail in Section 4, one of the reasons that GTAA is thought to have attracted so few applicants was because rejected asylum seekers knew that there was an alternative other than involuntary return, namely to remain in the Netherlands and continue to receive assistance. Removing that option, it is speculated, may increase applications for assisted return.

3.2. Le Programme de réinsertion des étrangers invités à quitter le territoire (France)

In France, *Le Programme de réinsertion des étrangers invités à quitter le territoire* (IQF) has provided travel and limited financial assistance to so-called “*sans papiers*”

since 1991. The programme was established on 14 August 1991, and revised on 19 January 1998 (the revision mainly concerned appeals procedures). It has operated in parallel with occasional programmes of regularization, and has focused particularly on those who have not been regularized during these programmes. The description “*sans papiers*”, which is specific to France, encompasses a range of migrant categories, including rejected asylum seekers, illegal migrants and the victims of trafficking, and does not distinguish between them. Moroccans have comprised an important beneficiary group of the programme. The normal grant provided has been 1000 FF per returnee. It is impossible accurately to estimate the number of “*sans papiers*” in France, and there is no indication of a projected number of returnees for this programme. In 1999, the latest year for which data are available, 749 people left France under the assistance of this programme, as compared with 887 in 1998 (Mouvements, 2000). Returns under this programme are not monitored or followed up. Neither a profile of the returnees nor details of the programme budget were available.

3.3. Le Programme développement local-migration (PDLM) (France)

Operating in parallel with *Le Programme de réinsertion des étrangers invités à quitter le territoire*, three more recent assisted return programmes have been introduced in France, also focusing on “*sans papiers*”, but targeted on just three countries, and with a more explicit focus on development. Together these programmes are sometimes dubbed co-development programmes (Ghosh, 2000), although in fact they are quite distinct.

Le Programme développement local-migration (PDLM) began in 1995. It is targeted specifically on migrants from Mali and Senegal, and provides assistance both to regularized and non-regularized (“*sans papiers*”) migrants. In addition to transport costs, assistance is targeted on the creation by returnees of small enterprises. According to the rubric for the programme it is intended both to assist the reintegration of returning migrants, and to develop local economies in Mali and Senegal. In 1999, the average size of loans to returnees for their enterprises was 22,500 FF in Senegal and 23,500 FF in Mali. In 1999, 49 enterprises were granted loans in Mali, and 20 in Senegal. These enterprises were mainly concerned with transport and commerce. This programme (and all the others in this subsection) is coordinated by the *Office des Migrations Internationales* (OMI). While OMI does have delegations in both Mali and Senegal in order to monitor the progress of returnees’ enterprises, evaluation reports have not been submitted in the last two years. A detailed profile of returnees under this programme is therefore not available, and neither are details of the programme budget.

3.4. Le Contrat de réinsertion dans le pays d'origine (CRPO) (France)

Le Contrat de réinsertion dans le pays d'origine (CRPO) was signed in 1999. It provides for the possibility of “*sans papiers*” to remain temporarily (normally for three months) in France, in order to receive training to prepare them for return. The programme is coordinated by OMI but operates through community associations based in Paris, which are involved in the training programmes. In 1999 18 Malians and 11 Senegalese were included in the programme. The programme is still in its pilot phase, and has not yet been subject to an evaluation.

3.5. Le Programme co-développement migration (PCDM) (France)

In contrast, far more detailed information is available concerning the third “co-development” programme, *Le Programme co-développement migration* (PCDM). This programme has been operational since 1998, and is targeted specifically on migrants from Romania (although Romanians were also assisted to return on an ad hoc basis before 1998). As with the PDLM, PCDM has provided assistance both to regularized and non-regularized Romanian migrants in France. Three forms of assistance are combined in the programme: the cost of travel, loans for small enterprises, and grants for vocational training in Romania. In 1999 the average loans for micro-enterprises in Romania was 23,600 FF, although according to an evaluation report¹ on these enterprises, in only a few cases did this sum meet the total start-up costs for the enterprises. In most cases returnees invested significant amounts of their own savings too. In 2000, 330 families comprising 907 individuals returned under the assistance of PCDM, loans for 35 enterprises were approved, and 22 vocational training sessions were run in Romania. Table 2 provides a profile, by age and sex, of returnees during 2000. It shows that the majority of returnees – some 62 per cent – were male, and that the majority of returnees – some 71 per cent – were aged 21-40. The total budget for PCDM during 2000 was 1,246,585 FF.

TABLE 2
PROFILE OF RETURNEES UNDER PCDM DURING 2000, BY AGE AND SEX

Age	Male	Female	Total
<15	16	7	23
15-20	18	9	27
21-30	233	160	393
31-40	157	98	255
41-50	112	54	166
>50	30	13	43
Total	566	341	907

Source: Evaluation Report on PCDM (2000)

3.6. Assisted Return Programmes to Sri Lanka, Turkey, Pakistan, Northern Iraq and Horn of Africa (Switzerland)

As in the Netherlands and France, Switzerland has introduced assisted return programmes for rejected asylum seekers. Some of these programmes are currently being planned by an inter-departmental steering group (ILR); others are already being implemented. These country/regional specific return programmes are in general open for persons under the Swiss asylum regime (rejected asylum seekers, provisionally admitted persons, etc.).

The proposed new programmes build upon the overwhelming success of Switzerland's assisted return programme to Kosovo (in close cooperation with IOM) and previously to Bosnia. Also a specific return programme for rejected asylum seekers and other people under the Swiss asylum regime to Turkey was evaluated as a success. Briefly, the Kosovo return took place in three main phases, the first two voluntary, and the third partly unassisted and partly involuntary (under Phase 3 voluntary returns also took place, with considerably less assistance than in Phases 1 and 2). For the first phase of return, between August and December 1999, travel costs were paid, as well as a one-off payment of 2,000 Swiss francs per adult, 1,000 SF per child and construction materials costing 1,800 SF per family unit upon arrival. In addition, reception and secondary transportation assistance/transit assistance was secured by IOM. For the second phase, between January and August 2000, assistance was halved. 32,797 returns took place from Switzerland and Liechtenstein under phases 1 and 2 of this programme which is generally judged a great success.

New target countries or regions of origin have been targeted, and each is attracting different policy proposals. For return to Turkey, renewed assistance is planned, possibly also foreseeing the form of a small-scale credit schemes. In the Horn of Africa, assistance is intended to target local development, with returnees being invited to apply for grants to undertake enterprises of benefit to the local community. The are varying schemes of assistance for returns to Sri Lanka, Northern Iraq, as each case raises particular operational and political problems and needs. The ongoing voluntary returns to Iraq require the co-operation of the Turkish government.

4. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The preceding section presented an overview of six programmes that are providing assistance as a means for facilitating the return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants. The following three sections draw on the experiences of these programmes in order to inform policy development in the future. They focus on three areas, namely: programme implementation, targeting assistance and evaluation.

First, through a review of existing assessments and interviews, attention was paid to those elements in the implementation of each of the programmes that were deemed particular successes or failures. They can be categorized under five headings: cooperation in countries of origin, coordination between government ministries and other agencies, including migrant communities and local NGOs, monitoring return and alternatives to programme participation.

4.1. Cooperation in countries of origin

Ensuring the cooperation of governments in countries of origin was identified as an essential prerequisite for implementing assisted return programmes. While the details of the means by which efforts to ensure cooperation varied between the programmes, and were often not divulged they all shared three common characteristics. First, consistently one of the criteria for selecting countries of origin was existing trade or aid links with that country. At the same time, and secondly, an explicit link was avoided between trade or aid and return programmes – although it seems clear that this link existed at least implicitly. Finally, the most important condition required of countries of origin besides the readmission of those assisted to return, was the readmission of those who had opted not to participate in the assisted return programme, and were thus being returned involuntarily.

The experiences of the different programmes in ensuring cooperation varied widely. It was reported that the governments of Mali, Senegal and Romania cooperated fairly well under the various French programmes, including on the readmission of involuntary returns. In contrast, one of the principal conclusions of the mid-term review of GTAA in the Netherlands was that the Ethiopian government had been largely uncooperative, and particularly had failed to issue travel documents for involuntary returns. A tempting line of analysis is to suggest that the means for securing cooperation in the French case were more successful than those in the Dutch case, but a focus on the Swiss experience suggests that it is the specific circumstances of return, rather than programme details, which may be an overriding factor. While proposed Swiss programmes have been accepted in principle by the Turkish government, for

example, the Pakistani government has appeared unwilling to recognize the nationality of rejected asylum seekers claiming to be Pakistani, on the basis that many of them are claimed actually to be Afghans. In order to overcome this obstacle, there is a proposal on the table that Switzerland will agree to readmit rejected asylum seekers returned to Pakistan if it can be established after their return that they are not Pakistani nationals.

4.2. Coordination between government ministries and other agencies

The experiences of the various return programmes in this report suggest that at least two levels of coordination are essential. The first is between different government departments. A particular hallmark of the Swiss assisted return programmes has been the successful establishment of an inter-departmental steering group, combining representatives from the interior ministry with those from the development agency. For example, through this coordination a budget increase for the development agency has been secured. In contrast, the lack of coordination between the interior and foreign ministries in the Netherlands was identified as one weakness in the GTAA programme. In particular, it became clear during the programme's mid-term evaluation that each had different priorities, which increasingly clashed as return proceeded at such a slow rate. The mid-term evaluation also pointed up lack of coordination between relevant Dutch ministries in the Netherlands and their representatives in both Angola and Ethiopia. Critics assert that staff in Angola might reasonably have predicted that security was only precarious and likely to be short-term, and that staff in Ethiopia should have objected more vociferously to continuing return even after the resumption of hostilities with Eritrea.

The mid-term evaluation of GTAA also identified as a weakness the lack of coordination at a second level, between government and non-governmental organizations. For example, one of the main reasons that GTAA overestimated the number of potential returnees was because of a lack of proper consultation between the agencies variously charged with housing refugees and coordinating their return.

4.3. Including migrant communities and local NGOs

In explaining the relative success of the French programmes, particular emphasis was placed on the principle of including migrants in their planning and implementation. In France, for example, efforts were made to include representatives from relevant migrant organizations. This was identified as one reason that information about the assisted return programmes spread so widely among potential returnees. In contrast, the failure to disseminate information was identified as one of the reasons why GTAA in the Netherlands attracted so few applications. It is interesting that other

Dutch programmes targeted on return to Kosovo have operated through community organizations, and have been far more widely publicized as a result.

Another hallmark of the French programmes was their effort to include local organizations within the country of origin. In particular, assistance and loans that were delivered in the country of origin were coordinated and monitored where possible with the assistance of local NGOs. At the same time, GTAA provided grants for Community-Oriented Reintegration Projects, intended to include local communities directly in the benefits of return, and not a single application was received.

4.4. Monitoring return

The French programmes – particularly PDCM for Romania – and GTAA in Ethiopia, were both characterized by an impressive level of post-return monitoring. In both cases, this monitoring was suggested as one reason why, by and large, return had proved durable and successful for the individuals involved. Both programmes established local offices in the countries of origin, which were staffed in part by expatriates, but also by local staff especially trained for their tasks. Both programmes coordinated vocational training courses in the countries of origin, included regular advice and counselling sessions for returnees, and visited their enterprises.

4.5. Limiting alternatives to programme participation

During interviews in France, Switzerland, and especially the Netherlands, another implementation issue that arose was the degree to which the targets of assisted return programmes have alternatives other than to participate. The underlying rationale for most of the programmes covered in this report is a “dual track” policy, whereby those migrants who do not participate in assisted return programmes face involuntary and basically unassisted return. In the Netherlands in particular, however, it has been reported that rejected Ethiopian asylum seekers quickly realized that in reality involuntary return was unlikely should they choose not to participate. In part this realization was based on perception – that a relatively liberal Dutch government would find it hard to enforce involuntary return. In part it was based on reality – namely the reluctance of the Ethiopian government to issue travel documents for involuntary returns.

4.6. Towards best practice in programme implementation

Table 3 contains a summary of the preceding analysis. On the basis of the experiences of the study programmes, it identifies five essential prerequisites for successful programme implementation, and indicates alternative strategies for achieving them.

TABLE 3
BEST PRACTICE IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Prerequisites	Alternative strategies
Cooperation in the country of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking return with trade and aid agreements • Providing for the readmission in the country of asylum of returned migrants found not to be nationals
Coordination between government ministries and other agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending re-existing relations • Initiating dialogue • Establishing common priorities
Including migrant communities and local NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extending re-existing relations • Initiating dialogue • Establishing common priorities
Monitoring return	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing offices in the country of origin • Training local staff as monitors and advisers
Limiting alternatives to programme participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricting social and economic support for rejected asylum seekers

5. TARGETING ASSISTANCE

What the study programmes in this report have in common is the provision of assistance in an attempt to facilitate the return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants. Of particular interest for this report is the way that this assistance has been targeted, and it is clear from the overview in Section 3 that the programmes often have adopted different approaches. This section compares and contrasts the way each programme has targeted assistance by focusing on five key issues: programme aims and objectives, target populations, target countries/regions of origin, types and level of assistance, and interaction with other return programmes.

5.1. Programme aims and objectives

Although the precise aims and objectives of the study programmes are not always stated, or at least not stated beyond fairly general terms, perhaps to differing degrees they each have at least four objectives. One is to return rejected asylum seekers and other illegal migrants. A second is to encourage the reintegration of these returnees, in order to prevent their re-migration. A third is to deter further migration more generally from the country of origin. The final objective is to encourage local development in the country of origin.

Two issues arise from this attempt – either implicitly or explicitly – to combine objectives. First, there are reasonable grounds to suggest that these objectives are not as closely related as they might appear at first sight, and that in some cases they may even be incompatible. For example, there is no clear evidence that return migration prevents either the returnees themselves or others in their community from migrating – indeed some literature suggests just the opposite effect. Neither is it clear that return is necessarily the only way to link migrants with development in their home countries – a growing literature on “transnational communities” and “diasporas” reinforces the conclusion that migrants can make contributions without returning permanently (Al-Ali et al., 2000). Indeed, harmonizing the two approaches within a coordinated framework now represents a new policy approach.

Plainly the lack of clearly stated objectives make it difficult to evaluate any programme – against which objective should success be measured? However, closer scrutiny of the genealogy of the study programmes provides some insight into which of the above objectives is a real priority, and which is perhaps no more than rhetoric. All of the programmes have been either conceived or coordinated collaboratively by national ministries for internal affairs and national ministries for development or foreign affairs. In each case, it is reported that it is the ministry of internal affairs that

has been instrumental in making the final choice of target countries. Without characterizing the agendas of each ministry in too general a sense, the implication is that managing migration and protection national borders are more important priorities than development. The concern must be that through collaboration, the development agenda – focusing on countries in most need of assistance and facilitating development in the optimum manner – is being subsumed by a migration management agenda. At the same time, where there arguably is common ground is over agreement that individual return should be sustainable, to prevent re-migration, and that in some circumstances sustainable return can act as a growth pole for local development.

5.2. Target populations

Precisely which migrant categories the above programmes target varies considerably (Table 4). GTAA focused exclusively on rejected asylum seekers, but in its proposed reincarnation there are plans also to include asylum seekers earlier in the asylum procedure, who have not yet received a response to their claims or appeals. All four of the French programmes described are targeted on so-called “*sans papiers*”. This is a wide category that includes rejected asylum seekers, but also illegal migrants (including both illegal entrants and overstayers) and those who have not benefited from regularization programmes. Finally, while the proposed Swiss programmes specify who is excluded from assistance, as explained below, they do not specify who is included, and again cover a range of migrant categories.

TABLE 4
TARGET POPULATIONS

Programme	Target Population
GTAA	Rejected asylum seekers
“IQF”, PDLM, CRPO, PCDM	“Sans papiers”
Swiss Assisted Return Programmes	Rejected asylum seekers, illegal migrants (excluding certain categories)

A focus on the lack of clarity of migrant categories targeted by these programmes is not simply a conceptual preoccupation; there are significant policy implications too. For the main part these relate to the notion that different migrant categories may both “deserve” and “require” different forms of protection and levels of assistance. Unlike returning overstayers, for example, returning rejected asylum seekers may face political obstacles and even persecution in their countries of origin. While migrants who have worked illegally in host countries may return relatively well off,

those who have been smuggled or trafficked may often have significant debts. From a human rights perspective, there are concerns that lumping together an increasing range of migrants within a single category of “illegal migrant” may be masking real differences between “victims” and “criminals”. From a state-oriented perspective, this broad approach also undermines any effort to manage migration more creatively, for example by asking to what extent certain categories of “illegal migrant” might contribute in the short term to filling skills gaps.

5.3. Target countries/regions

All the programmes covered in this report target assistance on specific countries or regions of origin (Table 5) and consistently across the study countries three main criteria have been reported as the basis for these choices. One criterion has been numerical – countries of origin have been chosen from which there are significant numbers of asylum seekers, for whom there is a significant refusal rate. A second, associated criterion relates to migration potentials – each programme has targeted countries or regions from which significant new migrations have been projected. Finally, in most cases countries of origin have been chosen with which relations – usually in the form of pre-existing trade and aid agreements – already exist.

TABLE 5
TARGET COUNTRIES/REGIONS OF ORIGIN

Programme	Target Country/Region of Origin
GTAA	Angola, Ethiopia
IQF	Not specified
PDLM	Mali, Senegal
CRPO	Mali, Senegal
PCDM	Romania
Swiss Assisted Return Programmes	Horn of Africa, Northern Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey

A series of issues arise from the use of these criteria. First, as was illustrated particularly well in the Netherlands where an estimated population of 700-900 rejected Ethiopian asylum seekers was subsequently revised to 300, a numerical criterion is hard to operationalize where there are no accurate data on rejected asylum seekers. A clear policy implication is that assisted return programmes should be preceded by a census. Furthermore, it is not just numbers which are important to know, but also a more accurate profile of rejected asylum seekers including gender, age and

education and skills level. These characteristics are particularly important where reintegration really is an objective of return.

Using migration potential as another criterion for targeting countries of origin reveals an important assumption implicit in the design of each of these programmes, namely that the return of existing migrants can deter further migration. Examining the extent to which this really is true is identified in Section 8 as a priority for future research – the conclusion from existing literature and research is at best ambivalent.

A third issue concerns the extent to which it is appropriate to target assistance on rejected asylum seekers from some countries but not those from others. Clearly there are political and practical considerations that probably make this inevitable, but it does mean that certain rejected asylum seekers are effectively being advantaged over others.

Two concerns recur among officials. The first is that the offer of assistance may in effect attract asylum seekers from targeted countries or regions, who effectively know that even their applications are rejected, they can apply for assistance and sometimes loans. The second is that asylum seekers from countries of origin not targeted for assisted return may try to falsify their nationalities and identities. A final, wider concern is that conditions in the country of origin do not appear to be a primary criterion in their choice. For example, while it is true that the Netherlands quickly suspended the GTAA programme for Angola, it continued in Ethiopia even when that country was at war. A similar criticism has been levelled at Switzerland in the past for its efforts to return rejected asylum seekers to Sri Lanka, while that country was still in conflict, (McDowell, 1998), and these still hold. Furthermore it can arguably be extended to return to Northern Iraq, although UNHCR in its 1999 Action Plan on Iraq for HLWG agreed to returns to Northern Iraq.

5.4. Type and level of assistance

Between them, the programmes covered in this report target assistance in six main ways (Table 6).

Every programme covers the cost of travel to the locality of settlement in the country of origin, for which the level of assistance obviously varied. Only PCDM allowed for returnees to take back with them goods, such as a car. Despite the fact that several of these programmes had their roots in return programmes for Bosnians and later Kosovars, none of them have extended to rejected asylum seekers the right to “look and see”, a provision for temporary returns which proved largely successful in the Balkans.

TABLE 6
TYPES AND LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE ACROSS THE STUDY PROGRAMMES

Assistance Type	Location	Cash Amount	Programmes
Travel		Variable	All
Grant	Country of origin	NLG 250 per month	GTAA
Start-up loans	Country of origin	22,500 – 23,500 (average) 23,600 FF (average) NLG 5,000 (maximum)	PDLM PCDM GTAA
Vocational training	Country of asylum		CRPO GTAA
Vocational training	Country of origin		PCDM
Community grants	Country of origin	NLG 5,000 (maximum)	GTAA

A second assistance type is in the form of grants. In each case these were payable to every individual who returned, and not just to a head of household, and in each case payment was made after arrival in the country of origin. The rates varied from a one-off payment of 1,000 FF per person, to NLG 250 per month for nine months per person.

Three programmes – PDLM, PCDM and GTAA – provided start-up grants for enterprises. In each case grants are only paid after submission and review of a project proposal by returnees. An important distinction is that NLG 5,000 under GTAA was a non-repayable grant, while in the French programmes grants are in the form of loans, averaging about 23,000 FF in each of the three target origin countries. Evaluation of the impact of loans under PCDM in Romania suggests that they comprised only about 50 per cent of the total start-up costs, and that private investment by the returnees themselves has been crucial.

A fourth assistance type is in the form of vocational training. Table 7 distinguishes those programmes that provide training before return, and those after return. Two important points are worth making here – and together they lead to a contradictory conclusion. GTAA and CRPO both provided vocational training in the country of asylum – the Netherlands and France in these cases. In both cases, this was identified as an advantage, as it gave participants sufficient time to prepare for return. For example, as highlighted in the last paragraph, many of those who established enterprises upon return invested their own savings to supplement loans or grants made by return programmes, and they were able to mobilize these additional resources during the time spent in the asylum country planning for return. In contrast, PCDM provided vocational training in the country of origin – Romania. It was argued that this

was preferable as it allowed the training courses more easily to be geared towards local employment demands and conditions.

Varied experiences of refugee repatriation in the past have highlighted that a problem with assisted return is that it can benefit returnees themselves while excluding the communities within which they are attempting to reintegrate. The programmes have attempted to avoid this problem in one of two ways – either explicitly or implicitly. GTAA was the only programme explicitly to address the issue, by offering grants for Community-oriented Reintegration Projects (CRP). In this way part of the GTAA budget was designated for funding projects that were devised and coordinated by returnees in association with members of the local community to which they were returning. However, no applications for these grants were made duration of the GTAA programme. In contrast, the problem has been addressed implicitly by several other programmes, through providing loans for returnees to establish small businesses within their local community. The expectation is that these businesses will both employ members of the local community, and benefit local consumers.

5.5. Interaction with other return programmes

A final way to understand how the study programmes have targeted assistance is to analyse their interaction with other national return programmes. Each of the study programmes co-exists with other national programmes targeted on similar migrant categories, but often offering different levels of protection and assistance. In the Netherlands, for example there exists a range of small-scale, tailor-made assisted return programmes for illegal migrants from the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Similarly, in France there is a programme of assisted humanitarian return that also covers certain migrants “*sans papiers*”. The overall impression is of a lack of integration between return programmes even for similar migrant categories. Besides arguments based on efficiency and effectiveness, there is some concern that policy runs the risk of differentiating between different migrants in exactly the same circumstances.

Equally, in each of the study countries, assisted return programmes for rejected asylum seekers co-exist with programmes for their unassisted (and sometime involuntary) return. The interaction between these programme types takes place in three main ways. First, by targeting assisted return on nationals only of selected countries of origin, involuntary return is effectively the only option for nationals of other countries. Thus in the Netherlands, for example, it is only rejected asylum seekers from Angola and Ethiopia whose return has been assisted. Second, in both France and the Netherlands, assisted return forms part of a “dual track” policy, whereby migrants from the target countries of origin who do not take up this option are subject to involuntary return. Finally, in each study country there are certain categories of

people who are not eligible for assisted return, even if they are nationals of target countries of origin. In Switzerland, for example, this includes those with a criminal record.

5.6. Alternative strategies for targeting assistance

Table 7 summarizes the preceding analysis. It identifies the main ways of targeting assistance, and alternative strategies that have been applied in the study programmes.

TABLE 7
ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES FOR TARGETING ASSISTANCE

Ways of targeting assistance	Alternative strategies
Delimiting the aims and objectives of programmes	A single focus or multiple foci, from priorities including: return, reintegration, deterrence, development
Targeting specific populations	A single focus or multiple foci, on migrant categories including rejected asylum seekers, illegal migrants, victims of trafficking
Targeting specific countries/regions of origin	Selection according to one or more of the following criteria: numerical, migration potential, existing relations
Delimiting types and levels of assistance	A combination of the following types of assistance: travel, resettlement grants, start-up loans, vocational training, community grants
Interacting with existing programmes	Avoiding overlap with existing programmes, complementing existing programmes including programmes for involuntary return

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

A final way that the experiences of the study programmes can be used to inform policy development is to develop from them a more generic framework for evaluating return, on the basis of which to evaluate other assisted return programmes, such as those coordinated by IOM. Only two of the six programmes that form the main focus of this report have been subject to formal assessments – PCDM in France and GTAA in the Netherlands. Only the assessment of the latter programme was freely available. It is therefore not possible systematically to report on the criteria used in evaluating any of the programmes other than GTAA. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish those criteria identified in interview by policy-makers as important in evaluating their programmes. In this section, the success criteria identified in each programme are analysed. In the following section they are combined to develop a framework for the evaluation of assisted return.

6.1. Numerical criteria

There are at least three numerical criteria that can be identified as important elements in evaluating return. One is absolute numbers. Most strikingly, GTAA in the Netherlands assisted a total of only 14 Ethiopians to return, and no Angolans. Similarly low numbers (18 Malians and 11 Senegalese) were assisted in 1999 under the French CRPO Programme. Two points are, however, worth emphasizing. First, both programmes form just one component of several national return programmes. Second, both programmes were largely presented during interviews as successes, and it was stressed that absolute numbers is just one of a range of criteria for evaluating success.

A second numerical criterion is relative numbers. The population against which absolute returns might most obviously be measured is the total population from which the returnees are drawn. For example, in the Netherlands it was estimated that there were between 700-900 rejected Ethiopian asylum seekers – an estimate that was later revised downwards to about 300. Even in relative terms, however, this means that GTAA returned only about one per cent of the total target population. The problem of establishing total populations of rejected asylum seekers or illegal migrants is highlighted in the case of the Netherlands, and reinforced in France, where there are no accurate estimates or profiles of “*sans papiers*”.

A third numerical criterion that appears in the mid-term evaluation of GTAA relates to applications. Particular attention is paid to poor application rates, especially for the returnee-oriented (RRP) and community-oriented grants (CRP). Through three

years, not a single application for CRPs was received. A related criterion concerns acceptance rates for applications. Although precise data were unavailable, it was estimated that about 50 per cent of applications for loans under the PCDM programme in Romania were granted.

6.2. Cost-related criteria

In evaluating the cost-effectiveness of return programmes, it is appropriate to distinguish direct and indirect costs. Neither is straightforward. For example, direct costs do not simply equate to the amount of money spent per returnee (for example in the case of GTAA travel costs, NLG 2250 over nine months as a subsidy, and for some returnees NLG 5,000 as an enterprise allowance). Programme budgets also include significant amounts for the management and administration of return. The GTAA budget, for example, including substantial elements for programme coordinators in the country of origin and for information campaigns in the Netherlands. As indicative measures only, while each of the 14 returnees to Ethiopia cost the Netherlands perhaps NLG 10,000 in terms of direct payment, their return accounted for an overall budget of some NLG 2.25 million, averaging a striking NLG 160,000 per returnee. Further complications in evaluating cost-effectiveness arise where subsidies are paid in the form of loans (for example under the PCDM programme), part of which need to be written-off in case of non-repayment. Finally, it is important to recognize that the full direct costs of return may not always be borne by the country of asylum. Although not the case in any of the study programmes, there are return programmes that are jointly subsidized by the state in the country of origin. In addition, in several instances travel within the study programmes has been coordinated by IOM.

There is in addition a range of indirect measurements of the cost-effectiveness of return, most requiring information that has not systematically been collected and is hard to establish. For example, returning rejected asylum seekers clearly offsets the cost of their upkeep in host countries, although this calculation would require a nominal estimate of the time during which their upkeep would have continued to be paid. Policy proposals to withdraw assistance from rejected asylum seekers, such as in the Netherlands, would clearly change the balance of this equation, ironically making return less cost-effective. The calculation is further complicated by the fact that even rejected asylum seekers are often granted limited legal access to the labour market according to criteria that vary across EU countries (in the UK and the Netherlands the criterion is time-related). In this way they may benefit or at least not “cost” host countries on balance. Equally intangible measures relate to the assumptions that often underlie return programmes, for example that return can contribute towards development in a country of origin, and thereby reduce further migration.

6.3. Returnee-related criteria

Criteria for success relating to the individual experiences of returnees were rated just as highly as numerical and cost-related return. First, emphasis was placed particularly in the Netherlands upon the importance of migrants returning in dignity and safety. It was seen as a “moral” success that an option other than involuntary return was being made available to rejected asylum seekers, and even though the GTAA programme has been terminated, the principle of assisted return is one that seems likely to continue in the Netherlands. Although the conditions surrounding physical return were not distinguished as evaluation criteria in the other programmes, dignity and safety were clearly secured, often through the assistance of IOM.

All of the programmes also placed a very high premium upon the sustainability of return. GTAA, PDLM and PCDM all have a monitoring procedure, whereby returnees are tracked for between nine months (GTAA) and one year (PCDM) after return. Although the details varied, both programmes established local offices in their various target countries of origin, provided vocational training sessions for returnees, and also provided counselling and more general assistance. According to GTAA staff in Addis Ababa, all but one of the total of 14 returnees to Ethiopia had reintegrated successfully – the whereabouts of the remaining returnee was unknown. While an up-to-date assessment was not available on the situations of returnees under PDLM in Mali and Senegal, a recent assessment of returnees to Romania under PCDM was largely positive.

Whereas as every return under GTAA was of single people, a significant number of returns under PDLM and PCDM were of families. Particular emphasis in discussion was placed upon the reintegration experiences of family members, normally wives and children. There is some concern that a focus on the “primary” returnee – in other words usually the male “head of household” – can mask different experiences in the family. For example, apparently successful businesses can be based on the exploitation of family members. Women may face particular obstacles in finding employment and children in continuing their education. The reintegration of family members is an area that deserves further research, and should figure as a criterion in evaluating the success of any return programme.

A final and related issue concerns the re-migration of returnees. There are suspicions within in GTAA in Addis Ababa, for example, that one returnee may already have re-migrated, although not necessarily back to the Netherlands. Arguably, it is re-migration back to the original country of asylum that is of greatest concern for programmes based in that country of asylum, but in a more general sense any re-migration may be an indication that reintegration has been unsuccessful, and there-

fore should be relevant. Furthermore, while re-migration may be relatively easy to establish (in terms of prolonged absence from the locale of resettlement), the destination for re-migration is virtually impossible to establish.

6.4. Community of origin-related criteria

Critical analysis of the aims and objectives of assisted return programmes in Section 5 suggested that development could often be their lowest priority. Nevertheless, assessments particularly of those programmes that provided subsidies (GTAA) or loans (PDLM, PCDM) for enterprises placed emphasis on the success of these enterprises, and their potential for stimulating local development. For all of these programmes, one of the criteria for approving applications was that they should be either for employment-generating activities, or activities which directly can benefit local communities. Thus, for example, GTAA grants in Ethiopia were paid to help establish four taxi services, and PCDM loans restaurants.

There are two reservations, and the implication of each is that further research is required. First, several businesses in Romania employed family members who had returned with the returnee, and thus did not directly benefit the local community in terms of employment. Second, both GTAA and PCDM currently support and monitor returnees' enterprises for arbitrary periods of time (nine months and twelve months respectively), and it is generally unclear how returnees have fared once subsidies and ready access to advice and training have ended. On a more positive note, it is likely that the contribution of returnees to local communities can be greater simply than providing employment or services. Further research is required, for example, on the extent to which they return with money to spend and invest, as well as on possible non-economic contributions.

6.5. A framework for evaluating assisted return

Table 8 (next page) provides a schematic representation of a framework for evaluating return. The schema draws upon criteria identified in the previous section.

The framework is structured to distinguish between country of asylum-, country of origin- and returnee-related evaluation criteria. Plainly these are artificial categories – for example, that migrants should return in safety and dignity should be an equally important criterion in all three categories. At the same time, categorizing the criteria in this way has one important purpose. It is a reminder that there are a range of stakeholders in ensuring that return succeeds. As described in Section 4, one of the obstacles that most of the study programmes have faced has been the inability to persuade either migrants or countries or communities of origin to subscribe to return.

TABLE 8
A FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING ASSISTED RETURN

Stake Holder	Evaluation Criteria	Information Base
Country of asylum	Numerical	Absolute returns, total target population, application rates
	Cost-related	Direct costs (programme costs), indirect costs (costs of non-return, contribution of potential returnees to the labour market)
Returnee	Conditions of return	Monitoring of safety and dignity during return
	Sustainability	Individual and family reintegration in the short- and medium/long-term, re-migration rates
Community or country of origin	Employment-generation	Employment of members of local community by returnees' enterprises
	Service-provision	Provision of services to local community by returnees' enterprises
	Investment and expenditure	Investment and expenditure in local areas by returnees, their families and their employees

Assisted return programmes have the potential to benefit each of these three stakeholders. For all of the reasons provided in Section 2 of this report, the return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants is perceived as a benefit for countries of asylum and their societies. Equally, for the migrants themselves, assisted and voluntary return is clearly preferable to an alternative of unassisted, involuntary return. Finally, communities and countries of origin should have a vested interest in assisting reintegration, not only because of basic obligations to citizens, but also because of the potential for local development based on returnees and the subsidies they attract.

As well as flagging benefits, the categories also point up responsibilities. The implication is countries of asylum, communities and countries of origin and returnees themselves have responsibilities in ensuring that return is successful. Following through this notion, the categories might also suggest a division of responsibility for evaluating return. It might reasonably be suggested that countries of asylum should evaluate country of asylum-related criteria, migrant communities should evaluate returnee-related criteria, and the local state community-related criteria.

Finally, the schema is structured to identify the types of information that would be required in order to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. Even for the study pro-

grammes the full range of information is not available, and an immediate implication is that their information base needs to be improved. For future programmes, the schema provides a draft template for establishing from the outset a comprehensive information base.

7. PRIORITY AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is possible to conceive of a number of important areas for further research that arise from the observations in this report. In this section an attempt is made to narrow the focus to just nine priority areas (Table 9). These have been identified both through discussion with respondents and through the author's own analysis and reflections. Four criteria have determined the choice of research areas. The first has been feasibility. Each of the research objectives identified in Table 9 could be achieved relatively straightforwardly and at relatively low cost. Each is considered to be methodologically feasible, and the Table suggests some appropriate methods. While some objectives would probably require stand-alone projects, it is easy to see how others could comprise multiple objectives for a single project. Furthermore, by dividing the research objectives somewhat arbitrarily between those focused on countries of asylum, returnees and countries of origin, the implication is that different objectives might attract funding from sources with different agendas and priorities.

The second criterion for choosing these objectives is that together they provide a balanced perspective on the range of goals of assisted return programmes – return, reintegration and sustainability, the deterrence of future migration and local development. Analysis in Section 5 suggested that for political reasons the first three goals may have taken priority over the last, however it is the job of research to ask to what extent these goals genuinely could be combined. The third criterion has been to try to provide a research agenda of interest and relevance to all of the stakeholders in the return process, as identified in Section 6 (countries of asylum, returnees and migrant communities, and countries of origin). The final criterion is that these research objectives are largely operational, and should contribute to strengthening current programmes and informing future ones. Importantly, these research objectives are not limited only to assisted return programmes for rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants.

7.1. A profile of rejected asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations

There are a number of reasons why it seems important to profile the populations upon which assisted return programmes are targeted. The GTAA experience provides one reason – this programme was developed and budgeted to cope with a projected return population that proved to be an enormous overestimation. A second reason relates to targeting. If, as seems likely, return proceeds over a period of time, then a profile focusing particularly on age and gender could point up those migrants who are either most willing, or at least most able, to return at earlier and later stages. For example, the elderly might be most willing to return early, families with children

TABLE 9
PRIORITY AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Research Focus	Research Objective	Research Methods
Country of asylum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To profile rejected asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations 2. To assess the impact of assisted return programmes on asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations in host societies 3. To evaluate methods for disseminating information about assisted return programmes within asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations 	<p>Extensive survey of populations with high numbers of rejected asylum seekers, including age, gender, education and skills</p> <p>In-depth interviews with representatives from local migrant communities and asylum seekers and illegal migrants</p> <p>In-depth interviews with representatives from local migrant communities and asylum seekers and illegal migrant population</p>
Returnees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assess the particular problems faced by family-members (especially women and children) during reintegration 2. To identify the most appropriate method for assisting long-term sustainability of return 3. To assess the value for returnees of preparation time 	<p>In-depth interviews with women and children pre-departure and post-arrival</p> <p>Comparative research among returnees assisted in different ways</p> <p>In-depth interviews with migrants either prior to or soon after return</p>
Country of origin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To assess the economic, social and political impacts of returnees on local communities 2. To investigate the extent to which return deters re-migration and migration with the local community 3. To examine the dissemination of information about countries of asylum in origin countries 	<p>Combined research methods within local communities in return locations, focusing both on returnees and non-returnees</p> <p>In-depth interviews with returnees and members of local communities in return locations</p> <p>In-depth interviews with returnees and members of local communities in return locations</p>

in school might appropriately return at later stages, it might be easier to return single people than families, and so on. Third, particularly where assistance is in the form of vocational training and grants or loans for enterprises, a profile focusing on skills and education level could inform the appropriate targeting of the assistance. As suggested in Table 9, an extensive survey of appropriate populations might be one way to establish a profile. Crucially, the research would require the cooperation of local migrant communities.

7.2. An assessment of the impact of assisted return programmes on asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations in host societies

In his assessment of an earlier programme for the involuntary return of rejected Sri Lankan asylum seekers from Switzerland, McDowell (1998) draws specific attention to the divisive impact of the return programme on the Tamil community in Switzerland. These circumstances are not directly applicable to the programmes under consideration here, mainly because they are voluntary, and thus unlikely to cause resentment. However, extensions may be appropriate. For example, to what extent do rejected asylum seekers from countries that have not been targeted for assisted return resent those from target countries? To what extent do asylum seekers from target countries who are exempt from assistance, for example as a result of a criminal record, resent their co-nationals who do receive assistance? To what extent might some asylum seekers be tempted to falsify their nationality in order to “qualify” for assistance should their claims be rejected. A small-scale study, comprising in-depth interviews with representatives from local migrant communities and where possible asylum seekers and illegal migrants themselves might usefully explore such issues.

7.3. An evaluation of methods for disseminating information about assisted return programmes within asylum seeker and illegal migrant populations

One of the most disappointing aspects of several of the programmes covered in this research has been their low take-up rate. This refers not just to low numbers of returns, but also to low rates of applications for example for loans and grants. At least one reason that has repeatedly been identified relates to the dissemination of information about the programmes and their options. In some cases there is a sense that information is simply not being disseminated widely enough within target populations, in other cases that the information is not understood or trusted. In this respect a worthwhile project might be to evaluate existing methods for disseminating information about assisted return programmes. Insights are likely to be gained through interviews with representatives from local migrant communities and where possible asylum seekers and illegal migrants too.

7.4. An assessment of the particular problems faced by family-members (especially women and children) during reintegration

In general research on reintegration experiences is thin (Koser and Black, 1998), and on the evidence of the programmes covered in this report it is largely a research gap as far as rejected asylum seekers are concerned. While certain programmes have monitored returnees, doubts have been expressed in particular about the extent to

which the experiences of women and children have largely been ignored where return is at a family-level. Salient research questions might, for example, consider obstacles to female participation in the labour market, and problems for children joining a new school system. In-depth interviews might usefully be conducted with women and children before departure, in order to assess how they might be assisted to prepare for return, as well as after return. An extension of this research might consider the requirements of “special groups” of illegal migrants, such as trafficked women and unaccompanied minors.

7.5. Identification of the most effective method for assisting long-term sustainability of return

This is arguably the most ambitious research objective listed – its terms of reference could easily be wide enough to incorporate several other objectives listed in Table 9. As Section 5 demonstrated, even the relatively few programmes covered in this report have targeted assistance in very different ways. They have different aims and objectives, have adopted different criteria for targeting populations and countries or regions of origin, they have offered different types and levels of assistance and they have interacted differently with other national return programmes. The question that arises is which approach has been most effective in achieving long-term, sustainable return? In this report it has not been possible to answer this question, primarily because there is insufficiently detailed information on the experiences of returnees under each programme. What is needed is comparative research, focusing on the experiences of returnees who have been assisted in different ways.

7.6. An assessment of the value for returnees of preparation time

As detailed in Section 5, two programmes in this research – GTAA and CRPO – offered vocational training to rejected asylum seekers in the country of asylum, for a period of between one and three months before their return. There is no research to substantiate these claims, but there are at least three reasons why preparation time might contribute to more sustainable return. First, as described in Section 3, where returnees are establishing enterprises, they often need to supplement grants or loans with their own money – which can be earned, borrowed or otherwise mobilized before return. Second, it is important not to underestimate the social obligations under which returnees may find themselves, particularly in terms of taking home money or gifts for family and friends. Finally, particularly for those who have been smuggled, it is possible that returnees will have significant debts to pay at home. These and other issues might usefully be explored through in-depth research with rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants for whom return is pending, or with interviews with those who have recently returned.

7.7. An assessment of the economic, social and political impacts of returnees on local communities

Where the programmes covered in this report have monitored enterprises established by returnees, they have analysed their impact on local communities through focusing either on the generation of employment or on the provision of services. It is likely that this represents too narrow a focus. First, it is not necessarily the case that returnees' enterprises will benefit the local community – they may employ and provide services to family members and people from elsewhere. Second, it may well be that the contribution of returnees and their families to local communities may be greater simply than employment-generation or service-provision, including both additional economic contributions (investment, spending power) and non-economic contributions. Appropriate research might help to facilitate the relationship between return migration and local development. Its methods might combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, covering both returnees and non-returnees in return locations.

7.8. An investigation into the extent to which return deters re-migration and migration within the local community

One of the underlying assumptions of many return programmes, not least those for rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants, is that return deters both the returnees themselves, and others from the country of origin, from migrating. Superficially this seems sensible, however contradictory messages emerge from the literature. It is not clear, for example, to what extent the experience of lack of success in migration can undermine the migration momentum based on social networks, or more, crudely, economic push and pull factors. There are some indications that migrants have a sanguine attitude towards deportation, and are willing to “try again” – the same may apply for potential migrants who witness their return. Clearly the flight of people who genuinely perceive themselves to be under threat will not be deterred by the return of others, although their choice of destination may change. Finally, there is growing evidence that some migrants are “recruited” by traffickers, for whom a business motive easily outweighs the risk of failure for their “clients” or “victims”. In-depth interviews with returnees and members of local communities in return locations might elaborate such reservations, and suggest appropriate policy interventions.

7.9. An examination of the dissemination of information about countries of asylum in origin countries

A related, but wider issue concerns the dissemination of information about countries of asylum and their policies in origin countries. Returnees can be expected to

play an important role in this process. There are two, contradictory indications. Put simply, one is that returnees will bear witness to the difficulty of staying in the country of asylum without a genuine claim. The other is that the assistance targeted on returnees will attract even “bogus” asylum seekers to a particular country of origin, where they can expect assistance even if they are unsuccessful. Widening out the project, very little is known about how potential asylum seekers receive, evaluate and use information about potential destinations in reaching a decision to migrate there. In-depth interviews with returnees and members of local communities in return locations might be an appropriate methodology.

8. FUTURE POLICY ISSUES

Most of this report has focused on the operational details of programme implementation, assistance and evaluation. By way of a conclusion, this final section broadens the scope briefly to discuss three issues of wider strategic policy relevance. They are issues that seem likely to influence return policy-making in Europe over the next few years. They operate at three different scales – national, European and finally international.

8.1. “Joined-up government”

Most of the programmes covered in this report have involved cooperation, with varying levels of success, between national interior and foreign affairs ministries and development agencies. The return of rejected asylum seekers and illegal migrants provides a good context for such cooperation in the future, however there are both opportunities and threats associated with so-called “joined-up government”. The opportunities are for a well-funded, creative approach to migration management. The overview in this report suggests that where they are properly implemented, and their assistance appropriately targeted, return programmes can satisfy multiple objectives. They can successfully and sustainably return rejected asylum seekers and other illegal migrants, and at the same time they can target these returns on local development. In other words such programmes can satisfy the priorities of different government departments, and can benefit from joint funding and support.

The threat is that the agenda of one government department subsumes that of the other. Indications from this report are that the balance of power lies with interior ministries. For example, interior ministries have normally led the choice of target countries, and an important criterion has been migration potential. Similarly, interior ministries have normally held sway in evaluations – it is clear that the small number of returns under GTAA were not counter-balanced for the interior ministry by the successful reintegration of these returnees. In other words, the threat is that the development agenda becomes “hijacked” by the migration management agenda.

For future programme planning, this has important implications. An overwhelming message from this report is that the most successful return programmes are those that operate on a small-scale, and are tailor-made for the particular circumstances of particular returnees and countries of origin. These programmes are likely to be labour intensive and demand a high per capita outlay of initial investment. They do not promise to deliver high numbers of returns, but they do promise to deliver sustainable and beneficial return. Their impact on individuals is significant, arguably their

impact on wider migration management is not. There is a sense that the resolution of different agendas within national governments will determine what sort of return programme is favoured.

8.2. European harmonization

The backdrop for national policy-making in this area over the next few years in Europe will inevitably be harmonization, and the drive towards a common asylum and immigration policy. There are indications that harmonization in this particular area may be hard to achieve. As detailed in Section 3 of this report, for example, the Dutch government was unable to attract support for a multilateral programme for the return of rejected asylum seekers among other EU member states. One reason is that different states clearly have a different immigration and asylum geography. Their concerns are to target programmes on those populations that are numerically significant, and those countries from which there is a perceived migration potential. A related second reason is that most states can in practice only expect to be able to sign agreements with countries of origin with which reasonable relations already exist.

Besides geographical differences, the overview in this report of just a few programmes has highlighted the wide variety of approaches that have been adopted to returning rejected asylum seekers. The differences are not just in detail, but also at times reflect more fundamental divisions over the issue. First, only a few European countries have yet been willing to offer assistance to people who have, after all, been found not to be deserving of international protection and assistance. Second, where states have been willing to adopt innovative approaches, the types and levels of assistance have varied widely. There is certainly a point at which politicians and the public will draw a line between practical assistance and unwarranted generosity, and this point is likely to vary across countries, and over time.

8.3. International cooperation

Successful return cannot be achieved without the full cooperation of countries of origin, and it needs to be recognized from the outset that these countries may have different priorities from countries of asylum over return. As recent research has shown, asylum seekers and even rejected asylum seekers can send home significant remittances (Al-Ali et al., 2000). On the other hand, there are certain countries where it is reported that returning asylum seekers face persecution simply by virtue of having sought asylum in the first place. These are convincing positive and negative reasons for countries of origin to be unwilling to cooperate in the return of rejected asylum seekers.

The implication of rising numbers of rejected asylum seekers, and their rising significance on political agendas, is that European and other Developed World nations will have to engage in positive and mutually beneficial dialogue with countries of origin. Some might see this as countries of origin effectively holding countries of asylum to ransom, and balk at the notion of “paying” these countries to take back their citizens. However, others might view rejected asylum seekers as opening up a new opportunity for international cooperation.

NOTE

1. The evaluation report contained detailed interviews with returnees. However, in order to ensure their anonymity, it was not made available.

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