



RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Evaluation of the BMZ's support to promote sustainable reintegration of returnees from Germany in their countries of origin

Executive Summary

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In the context of the rising percentage of migrants in the global population since 2005, migration has become one of the most prominently discussed political topics. Continued large-scale migration to Europe and Germany and comparatively high numbers of asylum applications have in recent years contributed to the topic's ongoing prominence as a major axis of conflict in public discourse. In Germany, the large number of individuals required to leave the country has contributed to ongoing discussions about expanding return programmes as a migration policy tool.

Germany has committed to measures in the areas of migration and sustainable reintegration as part of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) of the 2030 Agenda includes Target 10.7, which aims to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies” (United Nations, 2015). As a signatory to the Global Compact for Migration, the German government has also pledged to pursue a dignified return policy (United Nations, 2018).

In 2017, an interministerial approach was established to promote the departure of people in Germany without the intention or prospect of staying, and to support returnees with reintegration in their countries of origin. The “Programm Perspektive Heimat” (Returning to New Opportunities Programme – PPH), launched in 2017, aimed to combine domestic responsibilities of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) with development policy components implemented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The initiative pursued two objectives: firstly, to create prospects for the local population in partner countries and reduce irregular migration; and secondly, to support returnees in achieving economic and social reintegration in their countries of origin – thereby “turning return into sustainable reintegration” (BMZ, 2019, unofficial translation from German). By establishing advisory centres in partner countries and providing support at both individual

and institutional levels, the BMZ broke new ground in this politically and operationally demanding field of action.

Box 1 Definition of sustainable reintegration according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)¹

“Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity” (IOM, 2019, p. 11).

Objective, subject and focus of the thematic evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to retrospectively assess the measures commissioned by the BMZ to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees from Germany, thereby contributing to an evidence-based approach to policymaking in this field. The evaluation examines whether – and to what extent – German development cooperation has contributed to improving the economic and social participation of returnees in their countries of origin, thereby enhancing their prospects for sustainable reintegration. It also explores whether – and to what extent – capacity-building interventions have helped partner governments to establish institutional structures to support the reintegration of returnees, or to strengthen those already in place. By retrospectively assessing the commissioned measures supporting the reintegration of returnees, the evaluation fulfils an accountability function. At the same time, the insights gained serve a learning function, supporting the management, adaptation, and strategic development of current and future measures in this field.

The subject of the evaluation comprises the BMZ's measures to support sustainable reintegration for those returning from Germany during the period from July 2017 to July 2023. The evaluation focused on measures under the PPH aimed

¹ This internationally recognised definition forms the basis for GIZ's implementation of measures and serves as a foundation for this evaluation.

at achieving the objective “turning return into sustainable reintegration”. Most of these measures were implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through the global programme “Programm Migration für Entwicklung” (Migration for Development Programme – PME)², as well as through bilateral and regional programmes in 13 partner countries. The involvement of the BMI, activities of other donors – such as the European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – and national strategies and activities of the partner countries were not part of the formal evaluation subject but were considered as contextual factors.

This thematic evaluation focuses on the target group of returnees from Germany and their reintegration process in their countries of origin. Responsibility for managing this process lay with the newly established counselling centres in the PPH partner countries. The evaluation examined the counselling services offered by these centres and the referral process for returnees, which involved other public and private stakeholders in addition to the advisory centres and encompassed both bilateral and regional programmes. At the individual level, the evaluation reviewed measures aimed at strengthening economic and social participation to support returnees in their reintegration process. In line with the thematic focus of the implemented measures, the evaluation analysed the area of employment promotion, particularly the impact pathway of business creation, which was relevant for a significant proportion of returnees. The impact pathway involving formal employment relationships was also systematically assessed. At the institutional level, the evaluation analysed cooperation with state stakeholders in partner countries, particularly with public employment services. Various capacity-building measures were carried out in this context. The analysis at the institutional level considered official state structures both for supporting returnees’ reintegration and those aimed at assisting the local population.

Evaluation questions

The evaluation addressed the following evaluation questions:

1. To what extent are the reintegration services in countries of origin aligned with the needs of the target group? (**Relevance**)
2. To what extent has the design of the measures improved returnees’ access to reintegration services in their countries of origin? (**Effectiveness**)
3. To what extent have unintended positive or negative direct effects occurred as a result of implementing these services in countries of origin? (**Effectiveness**)
4. To what extent have the reintegration services contributed to strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees? (**Impact**)
5. What factors influence the efficacy of reintegration services in strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees? (**Impact**)
6. To what extent are the effects of the reintegration services long-lasting? (**Sustainability**)
7. To what extent are the state partners institutionally able and willing to maintain the (re)integration³ support structures over time? (**Sustainability**)
8. To what extent are there synergies or tensions between BMZ-supported (re)integration services and those provided by state partners? (**Coherence**)

Methodical approach

The evaluation followed a theory-based impact evaluation approach and included case studies in three partner countries. An overarching Theory of Change (ToC) was developed retrospectively based on programme documents. This served as a building block for formulating the evaluation questions, which were structured around five OECD evaluation criteria. Multiple data sources and data collection methods were combined in a mixed-methods design. The country case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq

² Throughout this report, the term “programme” refers exclusively to the global programme “Programm Migration für Entwicklung” (Migration for Development Programme – PME). Where other GIZ programmes or the “Programm Perspektive Heimat” (Returning to New Opportunities Programme – PPH) are meant, these are explicitly named. The evaluation covers the support phases of PME II (2017–2020) and PME III (2020–2023).

³ The use of parentheses in terms such as (re)integration reflects the fact that, in addition to the focus on returnees, the local population in the countries of origin was also partly taken into account.

formed the central element of the evaluation. As part of these case studies, a total of 120 interviews were conducted with returnees, along with 98 expert interviews – including representatives of GIZ, state partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Findings from the country case studies were combined with cross-case data to assess the evaluation criteria. At the individual level, the assessment of relevance and effectiveness, as well as impact and sustainability, drew on results from all three case studies. The criteria of coherence, as well as impact and sustainability at the institutional level, were examined only in the case studies in Ghana and Morocco, with findings from the Northern Iraq case study included as supplementary input. The case study results were triangulated with additional cross-case primary data (e.g. from the counselling centre survey and further expert interviews conducted in Germany), as well as secondary data (e.g. monitoring data and internal studies by GIZ) and programme documents. Academic insights relating to the thematic area were systematically incorporated into the evaluation through a rapid evidence review.

To answer the evaluation questions relating to the impact and sustainability of the measures, the evaluation applied the qualitative causal analysis of process tracing. The objective of this approach is to carry out a step-by-step examination of a predefined causal mechanism based on empirical evidence in order to identify the causal link between the measures carried out and the outcomes achieved. This detailed analysis of individual cases allows to determine whether a causal connection exists and what explains that connection or the absence thereof.

Results

The evaluation of **relevance** focused on the extent to which reintegration services in the countries of origin were aligned with the needs of returnees. The findings show that the services did not correspond to the needs of returnees in individual areas and hardly took into account the needs of

vulnerable target groups. Most of the services focused on strengthening returnees' economic participation, in particular through support for business creation. This addressed a core need for income generation, which was reported by nearly all respondents. Nevertheless, it proved problematic that subsequent measures to strengthen economic participation were not able to sufficiently meet the existing support needs – for example, because the business management training sessions offered consisted only of a few hours and lacked systematic follow-up. There were also too few services in the area of social and psychosocial support, which is critical for successful reintegration. Targeted adaptation to the needs of vulnerable groups or specific support for these groups occurred only in isolated cases and was not implemented systematically. In all partner countries, standardised target group analyses were conducted during the transition from the second to the third funding phase of the global programme PME. Labour market analyses were available for Northern Iraq and Ghana. **Overall, the relevance criterion is rated as partially fulfilled.**

The evaluation of **effectiveness** focused on examining the extent to which the design of the measures improved returnees' access to reintegration services in their countries of origin. The evaluation also investigated the extent to which unintended effects occurred during implementation. The findings show that the counselling and referral process was partially implemented as intended and thus improved access to services for parts of the target group. While most of the returnees interviewed found the services they were referred to helpful, their actual usefulness in strengthening economic and social participation was limited. Many initial counselling sessions were held with returnees, but these did not form part of a holistic advisory approach that addressed economic, social, and psychosocial aspects. Referrals to measures from bilateral programmes in the case study countries played only a marginal role due to a lack of suitable or available services. The transnational guidance approach largely worked for returnees who returned under supported return schemes. **Overall, the effectiveness criterion is rated as partially fulfilled.**

The evaluation of the **impact at the individual level** focused on examining the extent to which the reintegration services contributed to enhancing the economic and social participation of returnees. Economic participation was defined as returnees being employed and generating income. Social participation was understood to mean psychological stability and acceptance within their social environment. Findings from the case studies show that the measures led to improved economic participation for only a few of the returnees interviewed. The vast majority of respondents received support for business creation. However, only one in seven of those supported succeeded in establishing a profitable business. Only a third of respondents were found to be socially well integrated – meaning they had stable personal relationships and reported being in a good psychological state at the time of the interview. The causal analysis of individual cases across all three case study countries identified limited efficacy, which was attributed to over 20 individual and country-specific contextual factors, as well as to systematic and frequently occurring shortcomings in programme design and implementation across the process steps examined. In many cases, these shortcomings led to a breakdown in the process of business creation. **Overall, the criterion of impact at the individual level is rated as barely fulfilled.**

The evaluation of **sustainability at the individual level** focused on whether the support services enabled improved economic and social participation and whether there were signs of progress towards the long-term reintegration of returnees. In all three case studies, the results show that the majority of returnees lacked secure long-term income and employment prospects at the time of the interview. An average of 3.6 years had passed between the return to their country of origin and the time of the interview, in which time only a minority of returnees interviewed had succeeded in earning a subsistence-level income through their employment or newly established businesses after receiving support. In most cases, these established businesses were never profitable and often failed within the first six months.

More than two-thirds of the returnees interviewed stated that they were barely – or else not at all – able to support themselves independently. **Overall, the criterion of sustainability at the individual level is rated as barely fulfilled.**

The evaluation of the **impact at the institutional level** focused on examining the extent to which the measures contributed to institutional capacity development in the partner countries. Findings from the case studies show that institutional support – such as training for advisors from national employment agencies – made an important, albeit limited, contribution to building national institutions responsible for the reintegration of returnees. Positive examples include the integrated approach in Morocco (e.g. through the tandem programme with national employment agencies) and the job-shadowing programme linked to the counselling centre for staff from the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in Ghana. These measures helped raise awareness of the needs of traumatised returnees and encouraged greater consideration of those needs. This contributed to an improvement in the quality of advisory services offered by government institutions. Additional findings from other partner countries also point to broad-based cooperation with state stakeholders. **Overall, the criterion of impact at the institutional level is rated as mostly fulfilled.**

The evaluation of **sustainability at the institutional level** focused on the extent to which state partners were institutionally able and willing to maintain the established (re)integration support structures over time. Findings at the operational level show that in both Ghana and Morocco, the counselling centres established with BMZ funding have, to some extent, become embedded in national structures. However, international experts recognised their role as a central point of contact for returnees only in the case of Ghana. In both case studies, state stakeholders assumed partial ownership during the evaluation period, and a number of obstacles were reduced in this regard. Nevertheless, the state partners had contributed little to

the financial costs of the programme so far. This was also confirmed by findings from the case study in northern Iraq. **Overall, the criterion of sustainability at the institutional level is rated as partially fulfilled.**

The evaluation of **coherence** focused on the extent to which BMZ reintegration services were embedded in the existing structures and activities of state partners, and where synergies or tensions emerged. The findings show that some level of integration was generally achieved, although the extent of collaboration with partner institutions varied. In Ghana and Morocco, only limited synergies were identified at the operational level. Parallel structures emerged in some cases – for example, newly established migration advisory centres assumed similar responsibilities to those already performed by existing state advisory services. The case study in northern Iraq highlighted missed opportunities to create synergies between parallel reintegration services. All case studies revealed that political differences between Germany and the partner countries represented a key area of tension. While such tensions persisted in Morocco throughout the period under review, they were partially resolved in Ghana through the close involvement of state partners. **Overall, the coherence criterion is rated as partially fulfilled.**

The **overall evaluation** shows that the individual-level objectives associated with the return and reintegration efforts – namely turning return into sustainable reintegration and addressing the needs of particularly vulnerable groups – were only achieved barely, or at best partially. In terms of institutional support, on the other hand, the impact, sustainability and coherence criteria were assessed more positively, with objectives partially or mostly met.

Conclusions and recommendations

The overall findings should be viewed in the context of an area of tension between the domestic policy objective of increasing the return of individuals without the intention or prospect of staying on the one hand and, on the other hand, the development policy objective, as pursued by the BMZ and its measures, of supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees. From a domestic policy perspective, the interministerial approach under the PPH was primarily aimed at increasing the number of people leaving Germany without prospects or intention to remain. This policy objective framed return primarily through a short-term lens of return support. The development policy perspective on sustainable reintegration, on the other hand, was oriented towards the medium to long term and notably took into account the vulnerability of the target groups. This gave rise to two distinct axes of conflict. The first centred on differing timelines: on the one hand, there was a domestic policy expectation that the results of return support would be visible as quickly as possible; on the other hand, the development policy's medium- to long-term focus made it more difficult to adequately reflect and respond to the short-term needs of returnees in programme design and implementation. These conflicting timelines limited the reintegration success of the measures (see Recommendation 1). The second axis of conflict within this wider area of tension primarily concerned the treatment of deported returnees. From a development policy perspective, targeted support for deported returnees is particularly relevant due to their large numbers and heightened vulnerability. From a domestic policy perspective, however, it seems more appropriate to offer return and reintegration support only to those not facing deportation. These conflicting perspectives constrained both the design and efficacy of measures

(see Recommendation 2). With regard to short-, medium- and long-term perspectives and the inclusion of deported returnees, this area of tension prevented the development of a holistic approach to the reintegration of returnees and could not be resolved during the evaluation period.

While the evaluation did not focus on the efficacy of measures for the local population, it became clear that addressing returnees and the local population within a single, insufficiently differentiated programme is problematic. In addition to the reintegration of returnees, the objective of the PPH initiative area also included creating prospects for the local population encouraging them to remain in the countries of origin. The majority of measures were implemented for this group, which contributed substantially to the high overall output of the PPH. The objective of creating local prospects to stay and improving the participation of the local population did not form part of this evaluation. However, it became apparent that the broad definition of the target group led to problems in monitoring and, consequently, in managing the measures. Given the complexity of sustainable reintegration, it should not be pursued within a programme that also targets other groups – or, if it is, then it should be supplemented by a separate system for impact and process monitoring (see Recommendation 3).

Against the backdrop of the overall critical findings of this evaluation and the continued relevance of the topic in terms of domestic and development policy, the BMZ's engagement in supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees should be fundamentally reconsidered. Future engagement by the BMZ in the area of return and reintegration should be contingent upon the ability to productively resolve the identified area of tension between domestic and development policy objectives. Short-, medium- and long-term measures all serve the development policy objective of sustainable reintegration of returnees. The BMZ is therefore mandated to coordinate support across the full reintegration process. The evaluation leads to three fundamental recommendations that the BMZ should implement to enhance the future efficacy of its development policy engagement in the field of return and reintegration. Six further recommendations address the design of specific measures and the work of the established advisory centres in the partner countries, with a view to offering integrated services to returnees and bundling national and international stakeholders for reintegration support in a coherent approach. Measures for the local population, by contrast, can be negotiated separately as part of broader bilateral negotiations such as government consultations or migration agreements.

Recommendation 1: The BMZ should align its development policy engagement in the field of return and reintegration with the overall reintegration process. To that end, the BMZ should ensure that short-, medium- and long-term measures are conceptually aligned and operationally coordinated to improve the chances of sustainable reintegration for returnees.

Recommendation 2: The BMZ should ensure that future measures provide equal attention to supported, unsupported and deported returnees. To improve outreach to deported returnees, this group should be explicitly addressed as part of new measures.

Recommendation 3: When commissioning return and reintegration measures, the BMZ should ensure that these include integrated impact and process monitoring in order to enable impact-oriented management and minimise implementation shortcomings.

The six further recommendations are intended to provide concrete guidance for shaping current and future reintegration support measures. Their implementation takes place within the framework of commissioning by the BMZ and subsequent implementation by GIZ or other implementing organisations. Recommendations are addressed to the BMZ where conceptual changes to commissioning are required. Where recommendations can be implemented at the project level, they are addressed to GIZ in line with its responsibility for ongoing programmes.

Recommendation 4: In coordination with the BMI and other cooperation partners, the BMZ should establish or expand contact points to reach all returnees and strengthen the transnational referral process.

Recommendation 5: To achieve sustainable reintegration, the BMZ should commission long-term, case-based support for returnees. GIZ should assign caseworkers to accompany returnees throughout their reintegration process for a minimum of twelve months.

Recommendation 6: When designing reintegration programmes, the BMZ should define the promotion of economic and social participation as equally important objectives and commission corresponding measures to support sustainable reintegration.

Recommendation 7: GIZ should further develop and adapt the portfolio of psychological and social support measures to the respective country contexts to directly strengthen the social participation of returnees.

Recommendation 8: GIZ should expand the portfolio of economic support measures to strengthen economic participation among returnees with diverse personal circumstances.

Recommendation 9: GIZ should continue to pursue an integrated approach to cooperation with institutional partners and ensure the expansion of training and other measures to raise awareness among national institutions and authorities in partner countries for the specific needs of returnees.