



RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

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

2025



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This evaluation examines the BMZ's support for sustainable reintegration in countries of origin for those returning from Germany between 2017 and 2023. The BMZ aimed to help returnees regain economic and social stability in their countries of origin, thereby ensuring that "returning leads to sustainable reintegration." By establishing counselling 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.

The objective of the evaluation is to retrospectively assess the measures commissioned by the BMZ to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees, thereby contributing to an evidence-based approach to policymaking in this field. The evaluation questions address the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and coherence, and refer to both the individual and institutional levels. The empirical analysis draws on case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq, as well as cross-case data from online surveys, expert interviews, monitoring data, and both project-related and external studies. To answer the evaluation questions on impact and sustainability, the evaluation applies the qualitative causal analysis method of process tracing.

The overall evaluation finds that the objectives associated with return and reintegration at the individual level were only partially – or in some cases barely – fulfilled. In terms of institutional support, on the other hand, the impact, sustainability and coherence criteria were rated more positively, with objectives partially or mostly fulfilled. Against the backdrop of an area of tension between domestically driven objectives and the development policy orientation of the measures, the evaluation sets out three fundamental and six further recommendations.

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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.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHK <i>Deutsche Außenhandelskammer (German Chamber of Commerce Abroad)</i>	BICC <i>Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies</i>	CFW <i>Cash for Work</i>	EU <i>European Union</i>
AC <i>Assessment criterion</i>	BMI <i>Bundesministerium des Inneren und für Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community)</i>	CMD <i>Centres for Migration and Development</i>	Exp <i>Expert</i>
ANAPEC <i>Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Competencies in Morocco)</i>	BMZ <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)</i>	CMT <i>Case Management Tool</i>	DC <i>Development cooperation</i>
AVRR <i>Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration</i>	BP <i>Bilateral and regional programme</i>	CSO <i>Civil society organisation</i>	GCM <i>Global Compact for safe, regular and orderly Migration</i>
BAMF <i>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)</i>	CC <i>Counselling centre</i>	DAC <i>Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)</i>	GHA <i>Ghana</i>
	CC-survey <i>Counselling centre survey (Beratungszentren-Survey)</i>	EQ <i>Evaluation question</i>	GIZ <i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (German Agency for International Cooperation)</i>
		EIMA <i>Espace d'information maroco-allemand (Counselling centres in Morocco)</i>	ICMPD <i>International Centre for Migration Policy Development</i>

IDP <i>Internally displaced persons</i>	MAR <i>Morocco</i>	PC <i>Personal Correspondence</i>	
ILO <i>International Labour Organization</i>	MELR <i>Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (Ghana)</i>	PPH <i>Programm Perspektive Heimat (Returning to New Opportunities Programme)</i>	Rs <i>Returnees</i>
IOM <i>International Organisation for Migration</i>	MOLSA <i>Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Kurdistan)</i>	PMD <i>Programm Migration und Diaspora (Migration and Diaspora Programme)</i>	SR <i>Special reporting</i>
IP <i>Impact pathway</i>	MSME <i>Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises</i>	PME <i>Programm Migration für Entwicklung (Migration for Development Programme)</i>	SDGs <i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>
JCC <i>Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (Kurdistan)</i>	NGO <i>Non-governmental organisation</i>	pToC <i>Process Theory of Change</i>	SWP <i>Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs)</i>
KPI <i>Key performance indicator</i>	OECD <i>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</i>	REAG / GARP <i>Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany / Government Assisted Repatriation Programme</i>	ToC <i>Theory of Change</i>
KRI <i>Kurdistan Region of Iraq</i>	PEC <i>Public employment center (Ghana)</i>		UNDP <i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
LP <i>Local population</i>			YEA <i>Youth Employment Agency (Ghana)</i>

1.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Evaluation context

The proportion of migrants in the global population has been rising since 2005, and migration now ranks among the most prominent topics in both national and international political discourse (IOM, 2024). Driven by conflict, environmental destruction and political instability, as well as aspirations for education, employment and improved living conditions, an estimated 280 million people were classified as international migrants in 2020 – meaning they were living outside their country of habitual residence. This corresponded to approximately 3.6 percent of the global population (ibid.). During this time, 117 million people were forcibly displaced, including 71.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), meaning individuals displaced within their own countries (ibid.). In Germany, migration emerged as a central issue in political discussions from 2015 onwards. In 2015 and 2016, more than 1.2 million asylum applications were submitted in Germany (BAMF, 2024). Russia's invasion of Ukraine in spring 2022 triggered another large wave of refugees arriving in Germany, and migration has remained a highly relevant and topical issue ever since.

Return and assisted voluntary return are among the key topics in the migration debate, alongside skilled labour migration, integration, the asylum system, border security and public safety. Public debate on return assistance has gained renewed momentum in light of developments such as the regime change in Syria in December 2024 (Dincer, 2025). Nevertheless, return assistance has existed in Germany since the 1970s. In its early stages, return programmes already had a development policy dimension. For instance, people who had gained experience as industrial workers in Germany were expected to contribute to industrialisation in their countries of origin after their return (Schmidt-Fink, 2007). From the early 1980s onwards, these programmes were increasingly used to encourage labour migrants who had come to Germany through guest worker recruitment to return to their home countries (Schneider und Krienbrink, 2010).

As part of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration, Germany has committed to measures in the areas of migration and sustainable reintegration. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 of the 2030 Agenda (Reduce inequality within and among countries) 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).⁴ As a signatory to the Global Compact for Migration, the German government has also pledged to pursue a dignified return policy (United Nations, 2018).

The increased political pressure following 2015 and 2016 led to heightened attention on return assistance measures. The arrival of a very large number of asylum seekers during this period overwhelmed (municipal) reception systems and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). After an initial period characterised by a strong culture of welcome, political perceptions shifted, and voices emerged claiming that the government was no longer adequately managing and controlling migration (Amann, 2015; ZEIT Online, 2015). This fuelled political pressure to demonstrate the ability to act swiftly. In light of the debate around stronger asylum controls and the associated political tensions, the German government prioritised enforcing rejected asylum seekers' obligation to leave and ensuring their return to their countries of origin. The aim was also to encourage persons whose deportation had been suspended to return and to reach those already planning to leave. International agreements such as the Global Compact for Migration view assisted voluntary return as preferable to deportation. All relevant state stakeholders were called upon to develop measures and contribute to return assistance efforts.

⁴ Chapter 4.1 outlines how the measures to support sustainable reintegration contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

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 and Community (BMI) with development policy components implemented by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The initiative pursued two objectives: first, to create local prospects that would encourage people to stay and reduce irregular migration; and second, 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). The BMI supported departure through the Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany (REAG), the Government-Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP) and the StarthilfePlus programme. It also organised counselling services provided by state and non-state stakeholders on options for assisted return. Within the framework of the PPH initiative, the BMZ was primarily responsible for implementation in the countries of origin. The core pillar of the PPH was the global programme Migration for Development (PME), under which counselling centres were established in 13 partner countries of German development cooperation. These centres provided counselling and referrals for returnees to further reintegration support available through the global programme itself, through existing bilateral and regional programmes (BPs) of technical cooperation that received additional funding under the PPH, and through services provided by other state and non-state stakeholders. In addition, the Migration and Diaspora Programme (PMD) contributed to the PPH by raising awareness about regular migration opportunities and the risks associated with irregular migration.

As part of its development policy mandate, the BMZ addressed not only returnees but also the local population in the PPH partner countries, with the aim of creating prospects to stay for this target group. The intention here was to ease the individual challenges of return and reintegration for returnees. On arriving back in their country of origin, many face the urgent need to secure a livelihood and meet basic needs such as housing and healthcare. Some returnees have experienced trauma during migration or suffer from psychological stress due to unmet expectations or stigma from their social environment. To address these specific vulnerabilities, support was to be provided particularly to those in precarious situations, helping them re-establish themselves economically and socially and improve their prospects for sustainable reintegration (BMZ, 2019; Doc_4). At the same time, the local population was not to be placed at a disadvantage. To meet this development policy objective, the PPH also included the local population as a target group for information, counselling and training services. This approach was intended to reflect the “do no harm” principle, which states that any potential negative consequences of development cooperation should be identified, avoided and mitigated at an early stage (BMZ, 2025). At the same time, the BMZ was responding to a key concern of partner governments, which had explicitly called for the inclusion of services for the local population.

The BMZ’s efforts to link development policy measures with domestic measures to promote return were met with criticism from parts of civil society. In an internal evaluation conducted by the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), diaspora organisations accused the measures implemented under the PPH of serving as an extension of Germany’s deportation policy (Doc_18). A blog post by the Refugee Research Network argued that under the PPH, development cooperation served as a legitimising strategy

for the state's regulatory objectives (Feneberg, 2019). A discussion paper by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) reported that opposition parties criticised the approach for turning development policy into an instrument of asylum and migration policy (Biehler and Meier, 2019). In addition, it has been shown that German courts refer to the availability of assisted return options when enforcing migrants' obligation to leave the country (Feneberg, 2025). The legal reasoning given is that such support ensures their livelihood – at least for a short time – after returning to their country of origin.

By combining transnational guidance for returnees from Germany with the institutional involvement of partner countries in reintegration support, the BMZ pursued a new approach in a politically and operationally demanding area of action. In addition to providing individual support, the measures also aimed to strengthen the capacities of partner organisations (Doc_4, Doc_39). To this end, the counselling centres were intended to work closely with and be institutionally linked to national structures in the partner countries. By building on existing technical cooperation programmes and referring participants to measures by other donor organisations, the new structures and services offered by the counselling centres were designed to complement and expand on what was already in place in the countries of origin. As such, the packages of measures launched under German development cooperation have distinctive features and innovative potential in the area of return and reintegration (Exp_103).

Following the change of government in 2021, Germany's migration policy under the “traffic light” coalition placed greater emphasis on regular migration and attracting skilled labour. The coalition agreement at the time described Germany as evolving into a modern country of immigration (SPD et al., 2021, p. 110). To support this shift, new channels for regular labour migration to Germany were to be opened. Development policy measures were also expected to reflect this orientation and help improve the use of regular migration pathways in line with the “triple win” approach (benefits for countries of origin, countries of destination and migrants)

(BMZ, 2023). Development cooperation programmes in the area of migration were therefore increasingly geared towards regular migration.

Even after the broadening of objectives in German migration policy, return and reintegration continue to pose a complex and pressing challenge. This also applies to the BMZ's newly revised programmes to support sustainable reintegration launched in 2023. Given continued migration to Europe and Germany and persistently high numbers of asylum applications, immigration remains one of the most contentious political axes of conflict in public debate. Considering the large number of persons required to leave Germany, return programmes are likely to remain a key migration policy tool to increase the number of departures. The current coalition agreement signals that the present government intends to place renewed emphasis on enforcing obligations to leave, and that development cooperation is again expected to contribute to this effort (CDU et al., 2025). Developments such as those currently seen in Syria also demonstrate that opportunities for return can arise just as quickly as new crises and displacement movements. It is therefore to be expected that return and reintegration assistance will remain a relevant instrument for migration governance going forward. At the same time, international commitments continue to require migration policy to be shaped in a way that is both development-oriented and respectful of human dignity.

1.2 Objective of the evaluation

This thematic evaluation aims to retrospectively assess the measures commissioned by the BMZ to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees from Germany, thereby contributing to evidence-based policymaking in this field. The evaluation examines whether – and to what extent – development cooperation has contributed to improving the economic and social participation of returnees in their countries of origin, thus enhancing their prospects for sustainable reintegration. It also explores whether –

and to what extent – capacity-building measures have helped state partners to establish institutional structures to support the reintegration of returnees, or to strengthen those already in place. By retrospectively rating these measures, the evaluation also fulfils an accountability function. It is based on the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The evaluation findings provide insights that can inform the future implementation of measures in the field of return and reintegration. Based on these findings, conclusions and recommendations have been developed, including concrete proposals for action aimed at decision-makers at both the political and operational levels. The findings are also intended to contribute to academic discourse.

1.3 Subject and focus of the evaluation

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 at achieving the objective of “turning return into sustainable reintegration”. Most of these measures were implemented by the GIZ through the global programme Migration for Development (PME),⁵ as well as through bilateral and regional programmes in 13 partner countries. The involvement of the BMI and the activities of other donors – such as the European Union (EU) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – and of the partner countries themselves were not part of the core evaluation scope but were considered as contextual elements.

This thematic evaluation focuses on the target group of returnees from Germany and their reintegration process in their countries of origin. This process was guided by newly established counselling centres in the partner countries. The evaluation examined the counselling and referral process

for returnees between these centres and the implementing partners, which included not only local civil society stakeholders but also other state and private stakeholders, as well as bilateral and regional programmes. Despite the focus on countries of origin, elements of transnational guidance for preparing return and reintegration were also analysed. At the individual level, the evaluation considered measures aimed at strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees in support of their reintegration process. At the institutional level, it assessed cooperation with state stakeholders in the partner countries whose reintegration structures were supported through capacity-building measures.

To address the complexity of the evaluation subject and its dependence on contextual factors, we applied a mixed-methods design and focused on key components of the impact logic. A variety of methodological tools were used to capture the many facets of the field of return and reintegration. At the core was an impact analysis based on the theory-driven causal analytical method of process tracing, conducted using data from three case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq. The process tracing was embedded in a broad data portfolio, including qualitative expert interviews, in-depth qualitative interviews with returnees, an online survey on the counselling centres (CC-survey), and an analysis of programme documents, secondary data and internal GIZ studies. This combination of data sources enabled a comprehensive picture of the measures supporting return and reintegration, by incorporating a range of perspectives and levels of reach. To answer the evaluation questions, the impact analysis placed particular emphasis on the core impact pathway supporting economic participation. 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 large proportion of returnees. It examined all measures aimed at supporting the establishment of micro, small or medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The impact pathway for dependent employment relationships was also systematically examined.

⁵ 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).

1.4 Development cooperation tools for supporting sustainable reintegration

The global programme Migration for Development (PME) was divided into three areas of action: the Germany component, the country-of-origin component, and the civil society component:

- The **Germany component** comprised preparatory reintegration measures within Germany, as well as providing support, networking and training opportunities for those involved in return counselling in Germany. It also included management of the online platform “startfinder.de”, which provides information for migrants interested in returning and for counsellors on the available options before, during and after return.⁶ Reintegration scouts were placed within refugee and return counselling organisations to advise them on relevant services. The objective of this area of action was to improve the information and counselling services available in Germany for potential returnees, and to offer training measures to support reintegration in countries of origin (Doc_4). By linking the Germany component with the services on offer in countries of origin, the goal was to ensure transnational guidance for returnees – beginning in Germany and continuing through to reintegration in the country of origin.
- The core element of the **country-of-origin component** was the network of counselling centres for jobs, migration and reintegration. These centres provided what was known as referral counselling, through which clients were referred to measures suited to their needs. This included referrals to bilateral and regional programmes (BPs) in the relevant countries, which had received additional funding under the PPH initiative, as well as to services offered by local and international public and private providers. Services offered by the counselling centres and their partner organisations included vocational and skills training, preparation for employment, support for business creation, and psychosocial support. These services were aimed at supporting individuals immediately upon arrival in their country of origin and promoting their short- to

medium-term social and economic reintegration. In line with the PME programme design, these services were intended not only for returnees from Germany and non-EU countries,⁷ but also for the local population and internally displaced persons. Another key element of this area of action was strengthening the capacities of partner organisations – such as employment agencies in the countries of origin – which were intended to work closely with the counselling centres (Doc_4). These centres were to be linked to, or integrated into, the partner organisations’ existing structures. They also provided information on the risks of irregular migration and offered counselling on legal migration pathways. This component was funded through the global “Migration and Diaspora Programme” (PMD).

- The **civil society component** comprised funding for over 50 projects run by local and international civil society organisations that implemented additional reintegration measures (Doc_3). In addition to the activities already mentioned, these measures also included support in accessing medical services and housing. The aim of this support was to expand the services offered by civil society organisations in the field of sustainable reintegration and to improve inclusion for particularly disadvantaged groups (Doc_4).

Bilateral and regional programmes (BPs) accounted for a large share of the measures implemented under the PPH initiative, although they primarily targeted the local population. Around half of all measures recorded in the special reporting (SR) for PPH as a whole (key performance indicator 1) were implemented through these BPs. Building on their expertise in employment promotion for the local population, these programmes were expected to be adapted and expanded to serve the new target group of returnees. In practice, however, very few reintegration services for returnees were offered via the BPs. Only around 4 percent of the measures implemented via BPs targeted this group (see also Section 3.2).

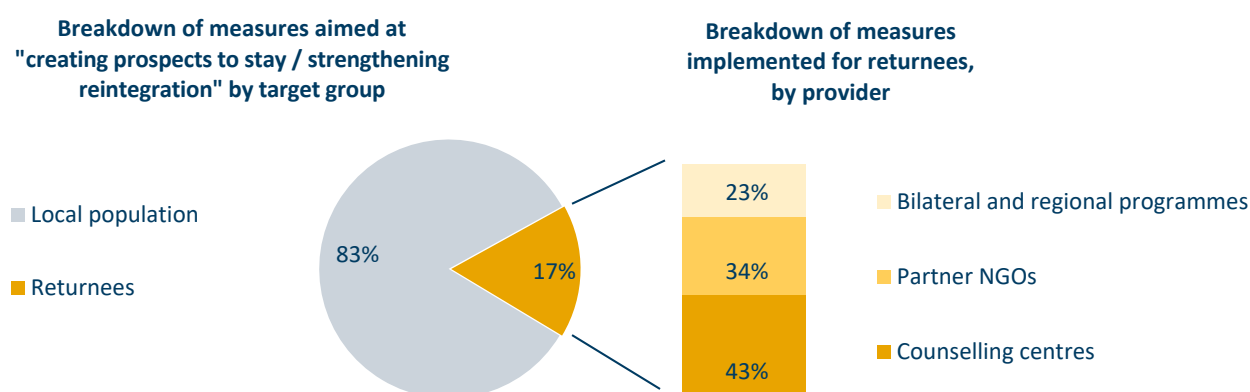
⁶ Since April 2021, the communication, monitoring and evaluation, and digitalisation component has been responsible for managing the platform.

⁷ The term “returnees” includes individuals returning from both Germany and non-EU countries.

Overall, the measures implemented specifically for returnees accounted for 17 percent of all measures carried out under the PPH initiative. As shown in Figure 1, the majority of measures were aimed at the local population. Measures for returnees

were mostly implemented through the PME, in particular via the counselling centres or their partner NGOs. In contrast, the measures to support sustainable reintegration that were implemented through BPs accounted for a smaller share.

Figure 1 Measures implemented under the PPH, by target group and provider



Source: DEval, own visualisation based on data from the special reporting

Note: This chart illustrates KPI 1: Total number of measures providing “concrete prospects to stay / reintegration support services”.

The financial share of support measures for returnees within the overall budget of the PPH initiative cannot be precisely quantified. Between 2017 and 2023, the PPH financial volume for supporting returnees and the local population amounted to a total of EUR 604.4 million. This was divided almost equally between the global programme PME and more than 50 BPs in the partner countries; however, there is no data that would allow a breakdown of funding by returnees and local population. Based on the distribution of measures by target group (see Figure 1), it can be assumed that only a small share of the overall PPH budget was used to support sustainable reintegration.

The scope, weighting of components and design of the services varied by country, reflecting differences in the target groups. All three PME components were implemented in all partner countries, but with markedly different emphases. The amount of funding allocated to each country also varied, as did the extent to which members of the local population were involved. There were even substantial differences in

how the components were weighted and in the design of the services provided. This was largely due to differences in the composition of the target group of returnees in each country. Within this group, a distinction can be made between supported, unsupported, and deported returnees. “Supported” refers to participation in return support services, such as preparatory reintegration measures in Germany or transnational guidance provided by the IOM and other state or non-state stakeholders. Unsupported returnees, on the other hand, return independently without making use of any support services. In the case of deported individuals, departure is enforced by the authorities. Due to their specific circumstances, they form a distinct group within this classification. A key difference lies in their respective levels of *return preparedness* (Cassarino, 2004; see also Section 1.5). It makes sense to differentiate between these three groups of returnees, as deported individuals and those who return without support are much harder to reach through reintegration programmes than those who return with assistance.

In light of the political realignment in the area of migration, the measures to promote sustainable reintegration were also redesigned as part of a new programme phase beginning in July 2023. The previous global programme PME ended in July 2023, and a new follow-up phase began in June 2023 under the title “Centres for Migration and Development” (ZME), in which the GIZ has continued and adapted the activities.⁸ The Germany component was discontinued, and civil society engagement was substantially reduced, while the country-of-origin component was continued. There was also a change in the list of partner countries. Jordan and Indonesia were added as new countries under the ZME programme, which pursues the following module objective: Partner structures are enabled to provide targeted and sustainable support for regular labour and education-related migration, voluntary return and sustainable reintegration, as well as regional migration (Doc_62). The programme therefore gives equal weight to strengthening both regular migration and reintegration, in keeping with the 360-degree approach to migration. Return and reintegration remain a central focus of the ZME programme (Exp_103).

1.5 Research landscape on sustainable reintegration

One of the fundamental challenges in measuring the efficacy of measures to support sustainable reintegration is the lack of a universally accepted definition of what “sustainable reintegration” actually means (Larrucea et al., 2021; Barnett et al., 2023). This also hampers the comparability of different measures and studies. The efficacy of most reintegration support measures cannot be clearly assessed or generalised. In fact, academic analyses based on case studies come to differing conclusions, pointing to a high degree of context dependency. Key contextual factors include the security situation (Majidi, 2021; Larrucea et al., 2021; Koser and Kuschminder, 2015; Kuschminder, 2017; Strand et al., 2008; Strand et al., 2016; Schmitt et al., 2019; van Houte & de Koning, 2008), the extent of corruption (Şahin-Mencütek, 2023; Paasche et al., 2016; Macková and Harmáček, 2019), and the economic situation in the countries of origin (Collyer et al., 2009; Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021; Mielke, 2023; Sacchetti, 2016).

Analytically, sustainable reintegration is usually defined in terms of three dimensions: economic, psychosocial and social. The measures under the PME initiative primarily drew on the IOM’s definition of sustainable reintegration as a guiding framework. This definition emphasises economic self-sufficiency, social stability and psychosocial well-being, and links further migration decisions to the exercise of free will. “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). However, these dimensions are not clearly separable, and there are various interactions between them (ibid.). This evaluation adopts the IOM definition of “sustainable reintegration”.

To identify existing research gaps, a rapid evidence review was carried out as part of the evaluation (Doc_40, pending publication). To date, no systematic studies have been conducted on the state of research regarding the efficacy of assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) measures. Overall, the empirical findings on reintegration are highly fragmented – particularly with regard to the efficacy of specific measures (Schneider, 2020). The rapid evidence review helped to systematically capture the existing evidence using defined criteria, while also identifying areas where further research is needed.

At the individual level, *return preparedness* (Cassarino, 2004) plays an important role in the prospects for reintegration, yet most returnees show only limited levels of preparedness (Flahaux, 2017; Şahin-Mencütek, 2023). *Return preparedness* refers to the psychological and physical readiness for return. A key factor appears to be whether the person had legal residence status in the country of destination (Flahaux, 2017). In this context, deported returnees are particularly vulnerable, as they can generally be assumed to have little to no *return preparedness*. This is all the more problematic given that *return preparedness* appears to play a greater role in reintegration outcomes than the support provided through AVRR programmes (ibid.).

⁸ As the evaluation period is limited to the duration of PME II and III, the follow-up project ZME is not included in the scope of the evaluation.

The evidence on the efficacy of economic support in promoting sustainable reintegration is inconsistent. There are indications that cash assistance is just as effective as in-kind support (Strand et al., 2016). In-kind support is most often provided to help people start a micro, small or medium-sized enterprise (MSME) or take up employment. Overall, support for MSME creation is a frequently used tool in reintegration assistance, although there is still no conclusive evidence on its efficacy (Barnett et al., 2023; Diker et al., 2021; Eager et al., 2020; van Houte and de Koning, 2008). Training and courses that provide knowledge on business management, however, can be useful in certain contexts (Barnett et al., 2023).

Psychosocial and social dimensions are less frequently addressed in AVRR programmes, yet measures in these areas appear helpful for reintegration. Experiences during the migration process – for instance, while fleeing or during deportation – can be highly stressful and, in some cases, even traumatic. As such, psychological support is thought to improve reintegration prospects (Larucea et al., 2021). Reintegration services aimed at host communities remain relatively rare, but initial approaches in this area have proven effective (Evans-Gutierrez et al., 2023). Social structures and family also play a major role in reintegration outcomes. Where returnees face rejection and stigma, reintegration becomes more difficult (Carr, 2014; Şahin-Mencütek, 2023). The same applies when society lacks the resources to reintegrate returnees in a meaningful way (Schmitz-Pranghe, 2023). Family can also be either a source of support or a burden (Flahaux, 2017), depending on how returnees are received by their relatives (Mielke, 2023; Şahin-Mencütek, 2023; Eager et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2019; Paasche and Skilbrei, 2017). Individual motivation and positive expectations regarding reintegration can also contribute to its success (Kessler et al., 2013; Schmitt et al., 2019), though this crucially depends on whether returnees have access to the necessary resources to meet those expectations (Strand et al., 2016).

Socio-demographic factors can also affect the chances of successful reintegration. Women often face more difficult conditions and additional barriers compared to men (Sacchetti, 2016; Diker et al., 2021), although not all studies identify a clear gender gap (Koser and Kuschminder, 2015; Barnett et al., 2023). The picture is similarly mixed when it comes to academic achievement. While Koser and Kuschminder (2015) and Ruben et al. (2009) found that very low levels of education reduce reintegration prospects, Schmitt et al. (2019) find that individuals with a moderate level of education have better reintegration outcomes than those with the highest qualifications. Age also plays an important role, with returnees in middle age generally having the best prospects (van Houte and de Koning, 2008; Koser and Kuschminder, 2015). Debt tends to have a negative impact on reintegration outcomes (Hall et al., 2022; Dubow and Kuschminder, 2021; Eager et al., 2020; Barnett et al., 2023).

During the PME II and PME III project phases, various (interim) evaluations, studies and reports were conducted on specific aspects of the programme, most of which were commissioned by the GIZ. These provided targeted analyses of parts of the GIZ's service portfolio, including evaluations, reports and studies on reintegration and return preparation measures (Doc_15, published 2019; Doc_16, published 2023), the civil society component (Doc_34⁹), and the reintegration scouts (Doc_17, published 2023). Some of these studies, however, only became available towards the end of the PME III programme phases, meaning their findings could be used only as a basis for adjusting follow-up projects, not PME III itself. As part of an internal evaluation of the measures (KOMPASS study) in Albania, Iraq, Nigeria and Tunisia, a total of 99 individuals were surveyed. These were people who had either worked on PME-related activities or had benefited from the measures. The aim of the evaluation was to identify success factors and obstacles. Here too, the results only became available shortly before the end of PME III (Doc_20, published 2023). In addition,

9 Reports were produced on an ongoing basis during the PME II and PME III programme phases.

tracer studies were conducted in Albania, Gambia, Ghana, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Serbia and Tunisia, focusing on surveys with programme participants (Doc_41, conducted 2023). These surveys were carried out some time after participants had received support and were intended to provide information about their subsequent situation. The findings of these studies are incorporated into the analysis chapters where relevant, offering an opportunity to contextualise the broader empirical results.

1.6 Report structure

This report begins by addressing the evaluation questions and describing the methodological approach (Chapter 2). It then presents the evaluation findings (Chapter 3), structured into five subchapters reflecting the evaluation questions. Each begins by outlining the focus of analysis, followed by a description of the relevant OECD DAC evaluation criteria using defined assessment criteria and rating scales. A dedicated section on the “programmatic perspective” then explores the logic behind the aspect under review in greater depth. This is followed by a presentation and interpretation of the empirical findings. Chapter 4 presents the conclusions and recommendations. After the overall rating of the measures to support sustainable reintegration, the report sets out three fundamental and six further recommendations addressed to both strategic political and operational levels, along with guidance on their implementation.

2.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions address five OECD DAC criteria and relate to measures at both the individual and institutional levels. The evaluation assesses measures to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees in terms of relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and coherence (see Table 1). The efficiency criterion was not assessed, as this would have required a cost–benefit comparison for individual measures using objective data, which was not available for analysis. The evaluation questions relating to relevance and effectiveness at the individual level, as well as the causal questions on impact and sustainability, focus specifically on returnees as the target group. Vulnerable groups were given particular consideration

in the evaluation. The institutional level of PME was also examined using the OECD DAC criteria of impact, sustainability and coherence, as these are key levers for institutional learning. This evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining several qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis tools. Each results chapter begins by outlining the specific focus of analysis and the data sources used for the rating. Further details on rating-related issues can be found in Section 6.1. The evaluation matrix in Section 6.2 provides an overview of the data sources and methods used for each evaluation question. The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Section 1.5 of the online annex.

Table 1 Evaluation questions (EQs) and OECD DAC criteria

	Evaluation question	OECD DAC criterion
EQ 1	To what extent are the reintegration services in countries of origin aligned with the needs of the target group?	Relevance
EQ 2	To what extent has the design of the measures improved returnees' access to reintegration services in their countries of origin?	Effectiveness
EQ 3	To what extent have unintended positive or negative direct effects occurred as a result of implementing these services in countries of origin?	Effectiveness
EQ 4	To what extent have the reintegration services contributed to strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?	Impact
EQ 5	What factors influence the efficacy of reintegration services in strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?	Impact
EQ 6	To what extent are the effects of the reintegration services long-lasting?	Sustainability
EQ 7	To what extent are the state partners institutionally able and willing to maintain the (re)integration support ¹⁰ structures over time?	Sustainability
EQ 8	To what extent are there synergies or areas of tension between BMZ-supported (re)integration services and those provided by state partners?	Coherence

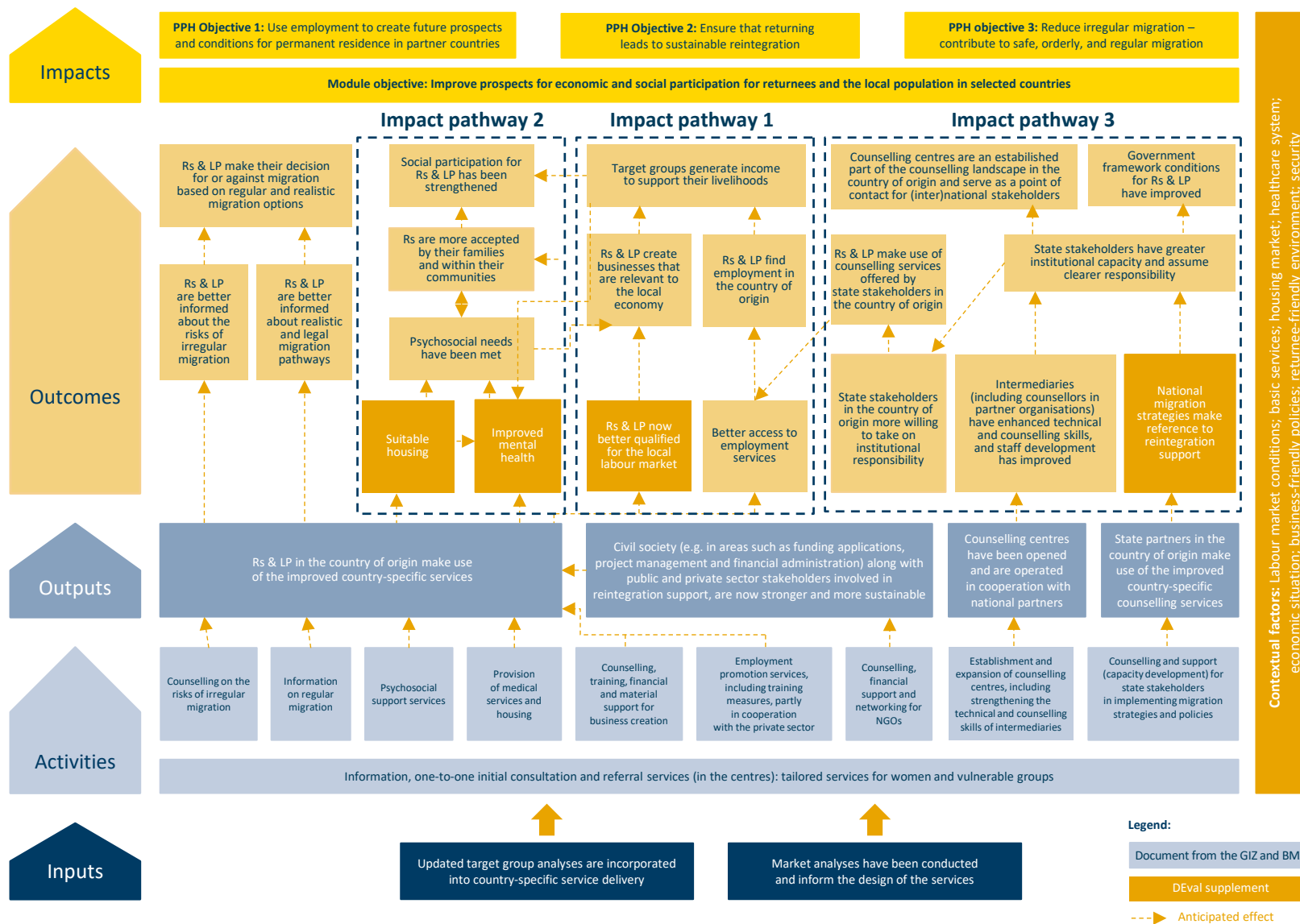
¹⁰ The use of parentheses in terms such as (re)integration reflects the fact that, in addition to the focus on returnees, the local population in the countries of origin was also partly taken into account.

2.2 Evaluation approach and theory of change

This evaluation follows a **theory-based impact evaluation approach**. Theory-based approaches make it possible to examine the efficacy of complex evaluation subjects. They are well suited to addressing a range of evaluation questions, including both descriptive questions (as applied here to relevance, effectiveness and coherence) and causal questions (as applied here to impact and sustainability). This makes it possible not only to rate the extent to which the measures studied achieved their intended – and any unintended – effects, but also to generate valuable insights into the programme's mechanisms of action. This, in turn, helps to understand how and why the programme worked, and what factors limited its efficacy. Insights such as these support the learning function of the evaluation and can help inform future programme development.

A theory of change (ToC) is central to theory-based evaluation approaches. The ToC is typically a visual representation that maps out expected processes of change in a specific context. It explains how a programme is intended to achieve its effects and sets out the underlying causal logic (Anderson, 2009; Clark, 2021; Gertler et al., 2016). Based on information from programme documents and strategies, as well as expert interviews with programme staff from the BMZ, GIZ and representatives of partner countries, the evaluation team developed a generic ToC (see Figure 2). This was supplemented with insights from academic research and previous evaluations. The generic ToC reflects all interventions designed under the PPH initiative and their anticipated effects across countries. Measures to support return and (re)integration in countries of origin operate at both the individual and institutional level and are designed to contribute to outcomes and impacts through various impact pathways (IPs).

Figure 2 Generic theory of change



Source: DEval, own visualisation

2.3 Impact evaluation using process tracing

To answer the evaluation questions on impact and sustainability, this evaluation applied the qualitative causal analysis method of process tracing. Process tracing is a theory-based approach used to explain causal links between an intervention and observed outcomes. It begins with a theory-based process mechanism, termed a process theory of change (pToC), which represents a hypothetical causal relationship between a measure and an outcome in a given case. The aim of process tracing is to examine each step of this causal mechanism using empirical evidence, thereby uncovering the causal links between steps in the process. By conducting detailed analyses of the causal pathways in different individual cases, it is possible to identify both enabling and constraining factors along these pathways (Cartwright and Hardie, 2012). Due to its high internal validity, process tracing can be used to examine whether a theory of change holds – and, crucially, why it does or does not.

Process tracing enables causal statements to be made initially at the level of individual cases – and, by situating the findings within a broader context, conclusions can also be drawn at the country and programme levels. Unlike quantitative approaches to causal analysis, which determine the impact of a measure by comparing treatment and control or comparison groups, causal attribution in process tracing is based on qualitative single-case analysis of the causal mechanism – the pToC – between the measure and the observed outcome. Similar to criminological investigations, the strength of causal claims in process tracing depends not on the number of cases analysed, but on the quality of the predefined causal mechanism and the robustness of the empirical evidence (Schmitt and Beach, 2015). This evaluation used process tracing at both the individual and institutional levels. This made it possible to investigate causal mechanisms related to the reintegration process of returnees as well as to

the capacity development of national authorities in countries of origin. To produce valid findings in the case study countries, a moderate number of cases were selected using systematic sampling (see Section 2.4). To assess the transferability of the findings to the institutional level or to other partner countries in the programme, the case study results were contextualised using an online survey of staff in the counselling centres and additional expert interviews (see Section 2.5).

Process tracing requires a focus on specific areas within the subject of investigation. Together with experts, three impact pathways were identified on the basis of the ToC: economic participation (IP 1) and social participation (IP 2) at the individual level, and capacity building (IP 3) at the institutional level (see Figure 2).¹¹ As became apparent during the early stages of data collection, the programme measures at the individual level focused primarily on economic aspects. This is reflected in the central outcome defined in the ToC: that target groups generate income to sustain their livelihoods (Doc_21, p. 6). The aim was for returnees to begin earning an income as soon as possible after arriving back in their country of origin. Although direct effects in the social sphere were also anticipated, the programme was based on the assumption that social participation would be strongly influenced by success or failure in achieving economic participation. As a result, the evaluation focused on IP 1 at the individual level. For the subsequent case studies, the two main pathways – IP 1 “business creation” (individual level) and IP 3 “knowledge transfer” (institutional level) – were further refined and operationalised as process theories of change (pToCs). In addition to findings from academic literature, the evaluation notably drew on insights from the exploratory case study in Ghana. These were used to reconstruct the steps in each impact pathway in terms of the stakeholders involved and the activities carried out.

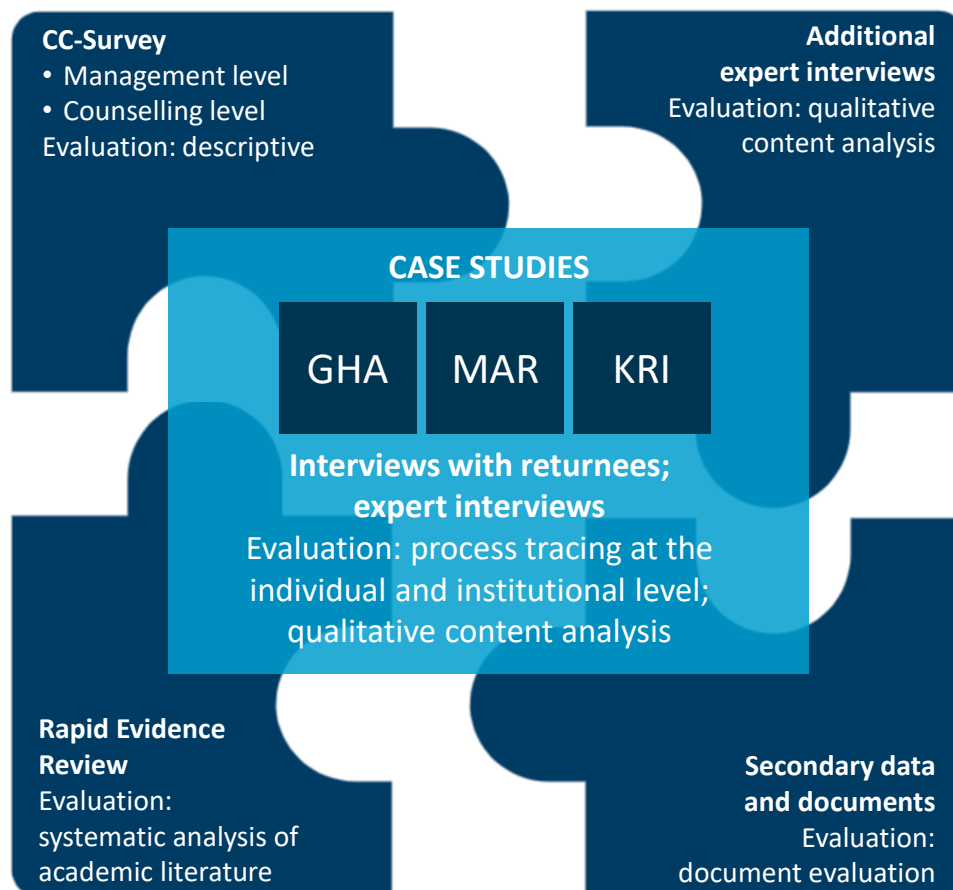
¹¹ The area of work included in the ToC relating to the reduction of irregular migration was not examined in detail in this evaluation. Measures in this area were discontinued in the third phase of the programme (PME III) (Exp_99).

The two pToCs were tested empirically as part of the case studies. The impact at individual level was rated through analysis of the “business creation” pToC (see Section 3.3), based on case studies conducted in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq. In-depth qualitative interviews with returnees were used to examine each case step by step against the pToC, in collaboration with local experts, to determine the extent to which the measures contributed to sustainable reintegration. The steps taken to collect and analyse data for the process tracing on the individual level are described in more detail in Section 3.3. The causal mechanism outlined in the pToC was empirically examined based on a total of 83 interviews with returnees. In addition, 103 interviews with experts from counselling centres, partner NGOs and related stakeholders provided contextual information that informed the pToC analysis. The impact at institutional level was rated through analysis of the “knowledge transfer” pToC (see Section 3.4), based on case studies conducted in Ghana and Morocco. This assessment drew on a total of 75 expert interviews with staff from the counselling centres, representatives of partner institutions, and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate the causal mechanism of institutional capacity building.

2.4 Case study design: selection and areas of focus

This evaluation combines multiple data sources and collection methods within a mixed-methods design, with case studies in three of the programme’s partner countries serving as a central element. These case studies involved extensive qualitative data collection, including interviews with returnees who had participated in the programme and with representatives of various stakeholder groups. These case studies are embedded in a broader set of data collection and analysis activities (see Figure 3), the instruments for which are described in Chapter 2.5. By combining different data sources and methods, the evaluation is able to triangulate the findings from the case studies with cross-case primary data (from the counselling centre survey and additional expert interviews in Germany), as well as with secondary data and documentation. A rapid evidence review was also conducted to systematically integrate existing academic findings into the evaluation. This mixed-methods design not only offsets the limitations of individual methods by drawing on the strengths of others, but also makes it possible to capture a range of perspectives on specific evaluation questions and generate findings with high validity (Palinkas et al., 2019; USAID, 2013; Kelle, 2006).

Figure 3 Data collection and analysis tools



Source: DEval, own visualisation

Note: GHA = Ghana, MAR = Morocco, KRI = Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Using a criteria-based case selection, three relevant and meaningful countries were identified from three different regions (North Africa, West Africa, and South and Western Asia) to allow conclusions to be drawn for other countries in the respective regions. The partner countries in which measures to support sustainable reintegration were implemented differ in many respects – for instance, in terms of economic strength, the number of returnees from Germany and non-EU countries, internal security and geographic location. There were also major differences in how the measures were implemented. The case studies cover three distinct regions:

North Africa, West Africa, and South and Western Asia. To enable conclusions to be drawn for other countries within the regions studied, countries were selected that reflect typical characteristics and share as many contextual features as possible with non-selected countries (Rohlfing, 2012). An initial set of two potential cases per region was identified based on the criteria outlined below (see Chapter 1.2 in the online annex). The final selection was based on pragmatic research considerations (such as logistical constraints, the political situation in the country or access to the target group). The selected case study countries meet the following criteria:

- Coverage of different PPH implementation regions
- Continued status as a partner country in the follow-up project “Centres for Migration and Development”
- Early establishment of the first counselling centre
- High number of measures implemented
- High contract value
- Ongoing development cooperation by Germany in the partner country
- Variation in return and reintegration policies across the partner countries

All five OECD DAC evaluation criteria covered in the evaluation were addressed in the case studies, albeit with different emphases. In Ghana and Morocco, all five OECD DAC criteria were examined. The evaluation questions were explored at the individual level, focusing on the target groups, and at the institutional level through additional interviews with representatives of implementing organisations on the partner side. The case study in Northern Iraq focused on the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. For impact and sustainability, the Northern Iraq case study was limited to the individual level. An exploratory case study in Ghana was conducted in advance to assess feasibility and plan the final data collection activities.

Sampling strategy and evaluation of interviews with returnees

The sampling strategy used for interviews with returnees ensured broad coverage of different characteristics while also incorporating random selection. The sample in the case study countries was drawn using the GIZ’s case management tool (see Box 2). The strategy followed a four-stage stratified random sampling approach:¹² (1) returnees, (2) who had returned from Germany, (3) to regions with the highest case numbers,¹³ (4) and had first made contact with a counselling centre prior to 2023. To ensure a gender-balanced sample and reflect various socio-demographic dimensions (such as age, divorced status and single parenthood), the returnees were grouped into subcategories. A random sample of 120 returnees was then drawn from these subcategories.

Box 2 What is the case management tool?

Staff at the counselling centres in the partner countries register all returnees and potential returnees during their first visit, creating a kind of “digital file” in the GIZ’s case management tool (CMT). Registration could also be carried out by reintegration scouts in Germany. The information recorded includes demographic data, details of the migration history, and any relevant notes such as indicators of vulnerability. If returnees participate in additional measures after the initial consultation, this is also recorded in their CMT file. The CMT was introduced at the end of 2020 and was used by staff at the counselling centres in all three case study countries. As a result, the CMT database contains information on the majority – though not all – of the returnees from Germany reached by the programme. Returnees were registered in the CMT regardless of whether their contact with centre staff was by telephone or in person. The CMT therefore provides the most comprehensive and complete overview of the services to which returnees were referred.

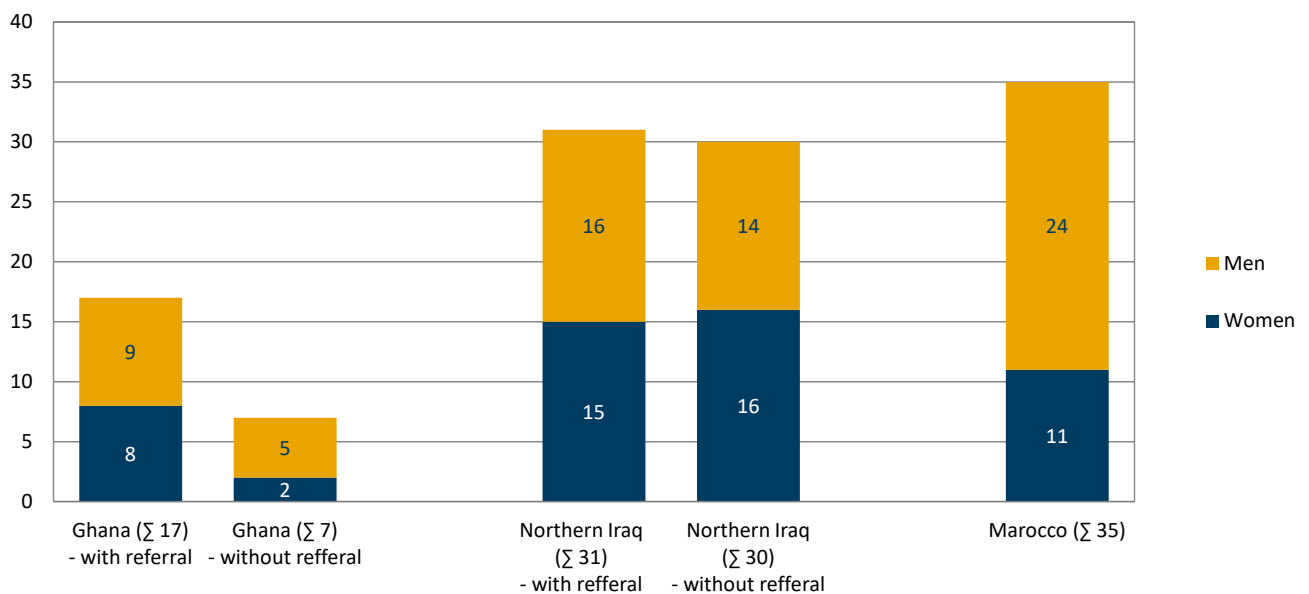
¹² The aim of a stratified random sample is to divide the population into groups that are internally as homogeneous as possible but differ from each other in terms of key characteristics relevant to the study. Random selection then takes place within each group.

¹³ Regions with the highest numbers of returnees were selected in each of the three case study countries. In Morocco, these were the regions of Casablanca-Settat, Béni Mellal-Khénifra, Tanger-Tétouan-Al Hoceïma and Rabat-Salé-Kénitra; in Ghana, Greater Accra and Ashanti; and in Northern Iraq, Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaimaniyah.

As part of the three country case studies, a total of 120 interviews were conducted with returnees in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq who had been in contact with one of the counselling centres. The structured interviews followed a guide developed during the exploratory case study and covered several thematic areas aligned with the process theory of change (pToC) (see Section 1.3 in the online annex). Local experts reviewed the guides in advance to ensure they were adapted to the cultural context, and then translated them into the locally spoken languages. The interviews were conducted in person, either in the returnees' homes or at a neutral location. These in-depth interviews lasted around 90 minutes on average. Each interview was jointly conducted by a local expert and one evaluator, who

also verified the information immediately afterwards. The local experts then summarised the interviews in English, producing eight to twelve pages per case. The evaluation team clarified any outstanding questions with the experts, coded all summaries using MaxQDA, and developed synthesis grids (see Chapter 2.2 in the online annex) as a basis for the process tracing. In addition, the local experts conducted brief telephone interviews with returnees who were registered in the CMT database but had not been referred to a partner organisation (GHA n = 7, KRI n = 30).¹⁴ These interviews helped identify barriers to programme participation and reasons for discontinuing support measures. Figure 4 shows the number of returnees interviewed, by gender and case study country, with and without referrals.

Figure 4 Gender distribution of returnees in the samples



Source: DEval, own visualisation based on sampling data, absolute figures (Σ 120)

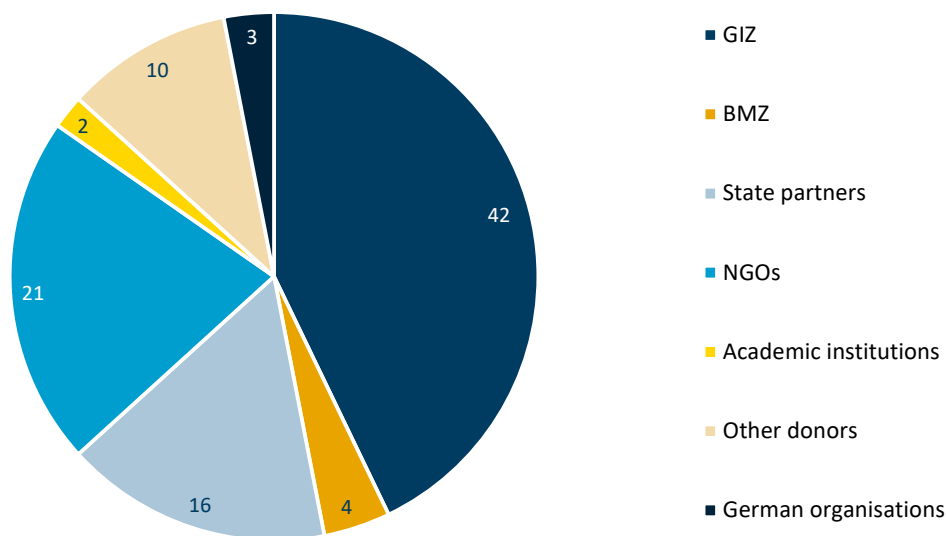
¹⁴ In the CMT for Morocco, only records of returnees who had received referral counselling were available. As a result, telephone interviews with returnees who had not been referred were only conducted in Ghana and Northern Iraq.

Sampling strategy and evaluation of expert interviews conducted in the case study countries

A total of 98 expert interviews were carried out in the case study countries, ensuring broad coverage of the programme's stakeholder landscape. These interviews served two purposes: to provide operational insights into how the measures were implemented, and to contextualise the interviews conducted with returnees. Using a purposeful sampling approach, specific individuals and organisations were selected. 42 interviews were

conducted with GIZ staff based in the case study countries (see Figure 5). The next largest group comprised staff from civil society partner organisations working with PME, followed by representatives of state partners – both at the political level (such as the Ministry of Labour) and the operational level (such as local employment agencies).¹⁵ Depending on their length, interviews were either fully transcribed or summarised and analysed systematically using MaxQDA.

Figure 5 Number of interviewed experts in the case study countries by organisation



Source: DEval, own illustration, absolute figures (Σ 98)

¹⁵ In Ghana and Morocco, interviews were conducted with counsellors at multiple branches of local employment agencies. In Ghana, these were the Public Employment Centres (PECs) in Accra, Tema and Kumasi. In Morocco, interviews took place at the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Competencies (ANAPEC) in Béni Mellal-Khénifra, Casablanca and Tangier.

2.5 Data collection and analysis tools



In all of the programme's partner countries, a standardised online survey was conducted with staff from the counselling centres (CC-survey). One person from each of eight partner countries (responsible for managing the centres) took part at management level,¹⁶ along with 53 counsellors from 12 partner countries at operational level.¹⁷ The survey focused on the work of the counselling centres, including questions on how returnees were selected for participation in programme activities and how referral processes were carried out. The results from this online survey of PME stakeholders across all partner countries helped contextualise the case study findings and increase external validity. The survey was conducted using the online tool SoSci Survey in English, French and Arabic. The GIZ informed its staff in advance and invited them to participate.



In Germany, five additional expert interviews were conducted with senior staff from the BMZ and GIZ. These interviews were held online after the data collection in the case study countries. They served to contextualise the findings from the case studies and relate them to the already launched global programme "Centres for Migration and Development" (ZME).



Secondary data and programme documents provided by the BMZ and GIZ formed part of the evaluation's data base. The secondary data used included monitoring data collected by the GIZ as part of the special reporting (SR), as well as data from tracer studies. A comprehensive monitoring system was developed for PPH under the SR. Ten key performance indicators (KPIs) were reported to the BMZ on a monthly basis for external political communication purposes. These KPIs were disaggregated by country, gender and target group (local population, returnees from Germany and returnees from non-EU countries). Tracer studies were commissioned by the GIZ and conducted in the second quarter of 2023. Using a quantitative survey design, they gathered participants' views on the PME measures as well as their situation and development after returning. The sampling was weighted, with returnees and beneficiaries of measures oversampled in line with the analytical objectives of the studies. The final sample was selected through a random process. The resulting data was made available to the evaluation and used to contextualise the empirical findings from the case studies; however, use of the data was limited due to methodological constraints and a lack of transparency in the study design and implementation (see Box 3).

Box 3 Tracer studies

The tracer studies consisted of telephone surveys with participants of PME measures. The surveys were conducted in nine countries: Ghana, Gambia, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Serbia, Albania and Tunisia. The aim was to gather information on participation in – and perceptions of – support services with a view to informing the follow-up project (Doc_48). A total of 4,539 individuals took part. Just over half (51.9%) of respondents were from the local population, while 25.5% were returnees from Germany and 22.5% were returnees from other countries (Doc_48).

¹⁶ All counselling centres in the partner countries were contacted, with the exception of Afghanistan. Questionnaires were completed at management level in Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Kosovo, Morocco, Senegal, Serbia and Tunisia. An overview of the questionnaire content is provided in Chapter 1.4 of the online annex.

¹⁷ That is, from all partner countries except Afghanistan.

From the evaluation team's perspective, the tracer studies are of limited informational value due to a lack of transparency in the methodological approach and concerns about data quality. The available data cannot be considered representative, as the sampling frame and randomisation process were not made sufficiently transparent. The documentation provided and additional interviews did not make it possible to determine the data basis on which the sampling and random selection were carried out. As a result, the underlying population from which the sample was drawn remains unclear. The evaluation team also noted data quality concerns related to social desirability bias. Some respondents were still in contact with the counselling centres at the time of the survey and remained dependent on support services. Telephone surveys also carry a higher risk of social desirability bias, as there is limited time and few tools available to build trust between interviewers and respondents. Other factors that may have affected data quality include vague descriptions of the support services covered by the survey and a lack of clarity in how the measures were distinguished from one another. The response patterns suggest that respondents were sometimes unclear about which specific measures they had taken part in. For example, members of the local population reported participating in reintegration support measures.

Strategy and programme documents were also used to develop the ToC and pToCs, helping to clarify the logic behind the measures to support sustainable reintegration and present it in the introductory sections of the results chapters. In addition, the BMZ's briefing notes, which include key figures on migration and return, were systematically analysed.



As part of this evaluation, a rapid evidence review was conducted to gather scientific findings on the efficacy of AVRR programmes, which served as a basis for theory development (Dok_40,

pending publication). A rapid evidence review enables a systematic, criteria-based synthesis of existing evidence while also helping to identify areas where further research is needed. The review carried out here was based on the guidelines of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) for conducting systematic reviews (Waddington et al., 2012). It involved a systematic analysis of academic publications and grey literature published in English between 2000 and 2022. A total of 47 relevant sources from academic and grey literature were identified, focusing on the efficacy of return and reintegration support programmes with regard to sustainable reintegration. The review focused on answering the core research question: To what extent do AVRR programmes effectively support the sustainable reintegration of returnees?

The sources were also analysed in relation to three sub-questions: (1) What impacts do different programme specifications (e.g. cash transfers, training courses) have? (2) What context-specific success factors contribute to sustainable reintegration (e.g. the local community)? (3) What individual and group-specific factors (e.g. migrant groups, children, victims of human trafficking families, reasons for migration) influence sustainable reintegration?

2.6 Challenges and limitations of the methodological approach

Data collection in fragile contexts involving vulnerable and potentially traumatised individuals requires specific precautions in line with a human rights-based approach to evaluation. In addition to the high standards of theory-based impact evaluation, the principle of avoiding harm (do-no-harm principle) had to be taken into account when selecting and, in particular, designing the methods used in this evaluation. Interviewing returnees notably requires an empathetic and situationally responsive approach due to their vulnerable circumstances. In line with standards in empirical migration research (Mangold, 2017), interviews were not given a fixed duration in advance, breaks were planned, and deviations from the structured guide were permitted. Care was also taken

to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a protected setting. The evaluation team received training in trauma-sensitive interviewing and interview guidelines were developed. Additional information was gathered on site about the interview setting, and efforts were made during the course of the interviews to adapt the approach to suit the specific situation.

Bias due to social desirability was a particular challenge during data collection at target group level, and several countermeasures were taken to address it. In empirical social research, social desirability refers to the tendency of interview participants to respond in a way that aligns with prevailing social norms or with what they believe the interviewer expects. This risk of bias applied to several data collection tools (interviews with returnees, expert interviews, and the CC-survey). It was especially apparent in face-to-face interviews with target groups – for example, in assessments of the usefulness of services received, which were generally rated very positively. Several countermeasures were taken to address this challenge. First, the statements of returnees were verified directly during the interviews through active follow-up questions and by cross-checking with certificates and documents provided. Second, immediately after the interviews, the statements of returnees were validated together with the local experts involved. Third, the interview findings were subsequently triangulated with other data sources.

The diversity of country contexts raises the question of how transferable the case study findings are. The evaluation placed particular importance on the heterogeneity of national contexts, with country case studies forming a key component of the methodological design. Extensive data was collected and analysed in the three case studies. Appropriate sampling methods were used to account for variation within countries, both at individual level (stratified random sampling) and at institutional level (selection of multiple locations). This approach made it possible to generate valid findings at country level. The evaluation also took several steps to ensure the validity of the findings beyond the countries studied. First, the criteria-based case selection allows for at least partial transferability of results to countries in the same region. Second, the country-specific findings were triangulated using cross-case data collection methods (CC-survey, further expert interviews, secondary data and documents). While external validity is limited – as is typical in case study designs – the findings still allow for some implications to be drawn for countries not included in the study.

3.

RESULTS

3.1 Relevance of the measures

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are the reintegration services in countries of origin aligned with the needs of the target group?

This chapter addresses the relevance of the BMZ's measures to support sustainable reintegration. It explores the extent to which these measures meet the needs of returnees. The following sections describe the target groups and the specific needs of returnees in the three case study countries. This is followed by a comparison between identified needs and

available support. The analysis draws on the views of experts and the responses of interviewed returnees. Particular attention is paid to those needs expressed by returnees that were also identified by experts as basic priorities. These include covering the cost of living (economic dimension), psychological support following sometimes traumatic (migration) experiences, and social connectedness (psychosocial dimension), as well as access to healthcare and housing – especially immediately upon return (social dimension). The relevance of the measures is assessed based on findings from the case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq, the CC-survey, and an analysis of programme documents, (internal) studies and evaluations.

Box 4 Relevance rating¹⁸

AC 1: The services in the countries of origin are geared to the needs of different target groups and include particularly disadvantaged groups.

Overall rating: Partially fulfilled

Indicator 1.1: Labour market and target group analyses and evidence of their use in shaping the global programme PME => *mostly fulfilled*. Labour market and target group analyses were carried out at the start of the PME and were partly used to develop the support services. When transitioning from PME II to PME III, standardised target group analyses were conducted in all partner countries. There is no evidence of any further data collection on target groups. Labour market analyses were available for Northern Iraq and Ghana, although these were not developed specifically under the framework of the PME. In addition, the GIZ has its own data sources, such as databases, for labour market analysis. For Northern Iraq, it was also reported that there had been regular exchanges with the Chamber of Commerce regarding the labour market situation.

Indicator 1.2: Alignment between reintegration support in countries of origin and the needs of target groups, including disadvantaged groups => *partially fulfilled*. In some areas, the support provided did not match the needs of the target group and paid little attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. Most support focused on economic participation – an area in which nearly all respondents reported having needs. Economic participation was often promoted through support for business creation; however, to ensure these succeed, further support and training measures are typically required. While training courses were offered to build the necessary skills, these generally lasted only a few hours and were therefore only partly adequate to support successful business creation. There was no systematic follow-up or adjustment of support measures after the creation phase. Social and psychosocial needs of returnees were addressed only to a very limited extent. Targeted adaptation to the needs of vulnerable groups or prioritised support for these groups occurred only in isolated cases and was not implemented systematically.

¹⁸ The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex. The case-specific ratings of the indicators can be found in Chapter 2.1 of the online annex.

3.1.1 Programmatic perspective

The target group of the global programme is broadly defined, but its political starting point was the support of returnees. People at various stages of the migration cycle, as well as their personal and/or professional environment made up the PME target group (Doc_1). This included returnees, internally displaced persons, and the local population (BMZ, 2019). In light of the political aim to turn return into sustainable reintegration (Doc_4, p. 3), the measures primarily targeted migrants living in Germany without a right or intention to stay. This includes persons whose deportation has been suspended,¹⁹ as well as those with a pending or enforceable obligation to leave the country. “The TC module is primarily aimed at voluntary returnees; however, the support is also available to individuals who are returned involuntarily” (Doc_4, p. 13, own translation).

In the 13 partner countries of the PPH initiative, the composition of the returnee group (supported, unsupported and deported returnees) varied considerably. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of individuals deported from Germany to PPH partner countries far exceeded the number supported through the Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) and the Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP).²⁰ In most of the 13 countries, the number of deported returnees was many times higher than the number of supported returnees. The only exception was Iraq, where the number of supported returnees was far higher than the number of deportations (Doc_49 to Doc_60). No reliable data is available on returnees who neither received reintegration support nor were deported, but instead returned independently to their countries of origin.

To reflect the interests of partner countries and comply with the do-no-harm principle, the PME was designed with a deliberately broad target group. The programme design anticipated possible tensions between groups if returnees from Germany were seen to be given preferential treatment (Doc_4). To avoid jeopardising social cohesion and in line with the do-no-harm principle, the local population was also defined as a target group – though the extent of their inclusion varied across partner countries (Doc_43). The shift in the support phase from PME II to PME III brought a stronger conceptual focus on including the local population as a target group. This group primarily includes potential migrants, with the aim of offering them alternatives to irregular migration (Doc_4, p. 4). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) were also counted as part of the local population. Another group included returnees from non-EU countries.

The returnee and local population target groups were highly diverse, each facing different forms of vulnerability and, as a result, had distinct needs. Human rights, including vulnerability in the sense of intersectionality, played a far greater role in the PME III concept than in that of PME II. The target group for PME III was described as highly heterogeneous, and returnees in particular were considered vulnerable. Women, children and young people were frequently named as vulnerable groups. Psychosocial health and care for returnees also featured in the PME's objectives. At the same time, the often precarious living conditions and vulnerabilities of the local population were addressed. PME III aimed to align its measures as far as possible with the specific needs of participants (including vulnerable people, women and men) as well as with the requirements and/or potential of the respective labour markets in the countries of origin (Doc_4, p. 18).

¹⁹ The status of “person whose deportation has been suspended” does not constitute a residence permit; it merely (temporarily) suspends the criminal liability associated with (unlawful) residence in Germany. As of 31 December 2021, there were 242,029 such persons in Germany, 136,605 of whom had held this status for more than five years (BMI, 2022). These individuals are formally still required to leave the country, but in practice, many remain in Germany for years.

²⁰ The BMI is responsible for the REAG and GARP programmes.

The full range of services addressed the various economic, psychosocial and social aspects of reintegration. These included measures in the following areas:

- a. immaterial support for setting up a business, e.g. training or coaching sessions
- b. financial / material support for setting up a business
- c. educational and qualification measures
- d. job placement
- e. financial support for living expenses
- f. material support for daily needs
- g. access to finance / loans
- h. psychosocial support from counsellors / NGO staff
- i. psychological / psychotherapeutic treatment
- j. health services
- k. support regarding accommodation
- l. childcare
- m. legal advice²¹

Support services in the partner countries were to be developed based on analyses of the target group and labour market. The IOM's 2019 reintegration handbook explicitly recommends conducting such labour market analyses in advance. The module proposal for PME III defines the following as a key milestone: country-specific target group analyses in the cooperation countries have been further developed (Doc_4, p. 18). It also states that the labour market relevance of individual support measures is to be ensured by developing new or using existing target group and labour market analyses (Doc_4, p. 17). These analyses therefore form the basis for aligning support with the needs of the target group and ensuring that the services are effective within the specific social and economic contexts of the partner countries. The analyses were not centrally coordinated but organised locally. They were taken into account during the implementation of the PME. The GIZ also referenced a range of information sources in its Practitioners' Guide for Employment Promotion, including its own tool, the Employment and Labour Market Analysis (ELMA) (Doc_29, p. 3).

3.1.2 Findings from the Ghana case

Target group and vulnerability

Four target groups can be identified in Ghana, including both returnees and members of the local population. The counselling centre's target groups included returnees who had returned with or without support, as well as deportees, potential migrants (local population), and students planning to go abroad (Exp_17). During the observation period, the vast majority of the counselling centre's clients came from the local population, while only just over five percent were returnees (based on SR data). This was due in part to the fact that the number of returnees from Germany in Ghana was relatively small overall. The majority of returnees (65%) had been deported (PC_1). People's needs and vulnerabilities varied across these groups. The group of potential migrants from the local population was particularly diverse in terms of age, education level, work experience, mobility and health status.

Vulnerability was particularly evident among deported returnees, though it was also present within the local population. Deportees, and most supported returnees, often returned to Ghana empty-handed and frequently faced difficulties reintegrating into their social environment due to the strong stigma attached to returnees in this country (Exp_21, Exp_26). As a result, returnees – especially deportees – often experienced psychological distress after their return as a result of their migration experiences. Many returnees also had health problems. Vulnerabilities were also found among the highly diverse local population, such as low levels of education, health issues or difficult family circumstances. According to one expert, the proportion of vulnerable individuals among the counselling centre's clients increased during the evaluation period (Exp_23).

²¹ These measures were also included in the CC-survey. They represent the full range of services potentially offered by the counselling centres.

Returnee needs

There was a strong demand among returnees for support with economic participation. In the sample of returnees surveyed, all but one respondent stated that they needed financial support to start a business. When asked about the main challenges following their return, the majority (10 out of 17) explicitly mentioned economic concerns, particularly the desire to generate their own income as quickly as possible. Most returnees surveyed (13 out of 17) already had a business idea before returning and therefore presented with a concrete need for financing. The fact that only five of the 17 returnees surveyed had access to financial resources – mostly from extended family – highlights the relevance of the services in this area. There was also strong demand for expert guidance and support in starting and managing a business, as most respondents had no prior experience. The returnee group was highly diverse in terms of educational background, with levels ranging from no formal schooling (2) to primary education (3), lower secondary education (7), higher-level qualifications (4), and one respondent with a bachelor's degree in marketing.

There was a strong need for psychosocial support, particularly among deported returnees. The majority of returnees surveyed (8 out of 17) reported needing psychosocial support after arriving in their country of origin. A closer look reveals differences between deported and supported returnees, in that all five deported returnees surveyed reported needing psychosocial support, while only three of the twelve supported returnees indicated such a need.

Additional social needs arose from the individual situations of returnees, particularly in the areas of healthcare and housing. It was mainly the supported returnees who reported health problems after returning. Six of the twelve respondents in this group said they had needed support in this area. A total of seven returnees described various health-related needs and issues. Five returnees needed help finding housing or covering rental costs. The findings of the tracer study in Ghana also highlight housing as one of the main challenges facing returnees (Doc_31).

Aligning needs with available services

A target group analysis was carried out in Ghana in 2020, and a separate labour market analysis was available from an earlier project in 2013. The target group analysis focused on returnees from Germany, returnees from non-EU countries, and the local population, examining their respective needs. It considered aspects such as socio-demographic characteristics, employment prospects, mental health and social situation. The analysis identified key areas of potential need, including employment, psychosocial support, health services, education – including for returnees' children – and housing. It emphasised the importance of medical and psychosocial well-being for the reintegration process and recommended involving returnees' families in the counselling process (Doc_22). A broader analysis of labour market requirements was available from a 2013 feasibility study on reintegration support at the EU level (Doc_32). According to expert interviews, business ideas discussed during counselling sessions were assessed based on the expertise of the counsellors or trainers involved (Exp_10, Exp_33). In some cases, this professional expertise effectively substituted for a formal labour market analysis.

Although a wide range of support measures was available to the target groups in Ghana, a comparison between the services offered and the actual needs of clients paints a mixed picture. According to the implementing staff surveyed as part of the CC-survey, the counselling centre offered a broad range of services covering all measures from the overall portfolio – except for material support and legal counselling (see Section 3.1.1). Based on their statements, all returnee needs in Ghana were addressed (CC-survey, Exp_18, Exp_17); however, interviews with returnees suggest that not all individual needs were equally met. This was likely due to certain services not being fully available in practice – or not available at all – due to limited capacity, even though they were officially part of the counselling centre's portfolio.

In the area of economic support for new business creation, the services largely matched the needs of returnees, although systematic follow-up support for these start-ups was often lacking. In our sample, 16 out of 17 returnees received financial assistance for setting up a business, indicating that this offering broadly corresponded to their needs. The training sessions on business creation and management, attended by 10 of the 17 returnees, were also relevant; however, the remaining seven had a similar need that was not met by the available services, meaning the training provisions only partially addressed returnees' needs. No one received support with job placement, despite a clear need. Ongoing guidance and advice during the business creation phase were often insufficient. Even in cases where follow-up took place, there was no scope to make adjustments or provide additional support, as no funding had been allocated for this purpose. Vulnerable groups were not specifically targeted.

Overall, the need for measures to support mental health was insufficiently addressed among the returnees surveyed. A clear gap emerged between the supply of – and demand for – psychological support. Although services were available through the counselling centres' cooperation partners, they were not sufficient to meet the existing needs. Of the ten returnees in our sample who reported a concrete need for psychological support, only one actually received it; the others were not offered any such service. Seven of the twelve supported returnees surveyed stated that they had no need for psychological support.

Other needs related to the social dimension, such as access to health services, were rarely addressed. One of the five deported returnees and half of the twelve supported returnees reported health problems such as high blood pressure, vision issues and chronic pain, which had emerged shortly after their return. Some stated that these health issues delayed the creation of their business or negatively affected their self-employment success (see Section 3.3). Although returnees disclosed these needs, healthcare costs were not covered by the programme and had to be paid out of pocket. In some cases,

they used business funds – including start-up capital – to pay for treatment, which in turn led to the sale of equipment or production goods (see Section 3.2.8). Beyond the needs directly addressed by the programme, respondents also reported a lack of support with tuition fees, follow-up support for rent, and legal counselling.²²

3.1.3 Findings from the Morocco case

Target group and vulnerability

In Morocco, four target groups can be identified, with deported returnees making up the largest share of the counselling centre's clients. The centre's target groups included returnees with and without support, deportees, and seasonal workers. These groups differed in terms of both needs and vulnerabilities. Some respondents also reported having been born in Germany and/or deported from there, or having returned to Morocco due to family matters. According to the counselling centre, returnees accounted for the vast majority of counselling cases (80%) (Exp_84, Exp_78). According to civil society stakeholders, around 98 percent of these returnees had been deported (Exp_87, Exp_90). Only about 20 percent of clients came from the local population – primarily potential migrants planning to move to Germany. From the perspective of the Moroccan government, this group is considered the main target group. It is generally well educated and interested in regular migration pathways (Exp_18, Exp_84).

Vulnerability was particularly evident among deported returnees (Exp_10, Exp_81). This group often included individuals with low levels of education who were, on average, somewhat older (aged over 35, or estimated between 28 and 40) and predominantly male (Exp_5, Exp_78, Exp_11, Exp_82, Exp_12, Exp_87, Exp_3, Exp_88). Deportation was often described as a traumatic experience, and these returnees rarely had access to financial resources. NGO staff interviewed described returnees from Germany as universally vulnerable.

²² Services that went beyond what was included in the module proposal were not taken into account in the rating.

Returnee needs

Returnees had a substantial need for support to promote economic participation. Nearly all returnees, regardless of type, required financial assistance to create a business (34 out of 35). Only one returnee had already established several successful businesses at the time of return. The vast majority of returnees surveyed in Morocco had no savings or assets with which to supplement the financial support provided for business creation. They were therefore entirely reliant on the programme's financial assistance. There was also high demand for targeted knowledge transfer and support with creating and managing a business. Most returnees surveyed in Morocco had neither experience nor knowledge in business management, and had not completed vocational training. As a result, they would have needed (1) target group-specific business training prior to creating a business and (2) close guidance during the start-up phase. While 15 of the 35 returnees surveyed had previous work experience, only a small number had worked in business management. This means that for the majority of returnees from Morocco, training in business management would have been useful. In addition, the vast majority (29) stated that they would have needed support during the business start-up process.

There was a strong need for psychosocial support, particularly among deported returnees. Around one third of all respondents reported this need. Of the 15 deported returnees, 14 stated that they had experienced psychological difficulties after their return and needed professional support. Among the returnees who had returned independently without support, four out of eight also reported psychological strain and the need for professional help. In addition to the type of return, other contextual factors influenced mental well-being – including the time between returning to Morocco and contacting the counselling centre. Returnees who had already been back in the country for some time before receiving counselling had in some cases taken steps to stabilise their mental health on their own and had begun reconnecting with their former social environments. At the same time, there were also individuals in this group whose migration histories were associated with traumatic experiences. Of the five returnees who had received reintegration support, only one reported

a need for psychosocial assistance. The same was true for the group of seasonal workers, who likely had little or no need for psychological or social support due to their shorter absences. The group of deported returnees appeared particularly vulnerable in terms of psychosocial needs. Only one person in this group returned to a stable family environment that could offer social and emotional support. All other deported returnees experienced periods of depression, and some struggled with severe trauma and suicidal thoughts. This group was also most affected by stigmatisation and exclusion from their families and social environments.

Additional needs arose from the individual situations of returnees and primarily related to the social dimension, including access to health services and housing, childcare, and legal advice. In the early phase of reintegration, the main priority is to ensure basic daily needs are met. Beyond that, other individual needs were identified, such as health services and housing. Legal counselling and childcare were also mentioned.

Aligning needs with available services

A target group analysis for PME II was carried out in Morocco 2020, but no dedicated labour market analysis was conducted. The analysis focused on the target groups of returnees from Germany, returnees from non-EU countries, and the local population, as well as their needs. It examined their socio-demographic characteristics, employment prospects, mental health and social situation, and derived potential needs accordingly. The analysis identified key areas of potential need, including employment, psychosocial support, health services, education – including for returnees' children), legal counselling, social support, living expenses and housing. The analysis highlighted the important role played by returnees' families in the reintegration process (Doc_63). No further labour market analysis was conducted as part of the programme, meaning, for instance, that the prospects of success for the supported business start-ups in their respective sectors were not systematically assessed in advance.

Although a wide range of support measures was available to the target groups in Morocco, a comparison between the services offered and the actual needs of clients paints a mixed picture. According to the implementing staff surveyed as part of the CC-survey, the counselling centre offered a broad range of services covering all measures from the overall portfolio – except for financial support for living expenses. Based on their statements, all relevant returnee needs in Morocco were addressed (CC-survey). Interviews with returnees, on the other hand, suggest that the services addressed individual needs to varying degrees.

In the area of economic support for new business creation, the services largely matched the needs of returnees, although systematic follow-up support for these start-ups was often lacking. Overall, 31 out of 35 returnees in our sample received financial support for setting up a business. This support generally contributed to independent livelihoods and addressed a key need among returnees. Twenty of the 35 respondents had completed the available business training courses to gain knowledge about creating and running a business; however, none of the returnees surveyed had used the employment services. There was no systematic follow-up or ongoing support for new business creation. In the post start-up phase, there was no scope to make adjustments or provide additional support, as no funding had been allocated for this purpose.

The need for psychological support was only partially addressed. A clear gap emerged between the supply of – and demand for – psychological support. A third of the returnees surveyed stated that they had required psychological support, yet only three of these were offered any services. The initial contact was made by phone without prior notice, which respondents perceived as inappropriate and, as a result, declined the offer – despite having previously reported a need for support. It is particularly noteworthy that none of the 15 deported returnees in our Morocco sample received psychological support, even though 14 of them explicitly reported needing it.

Other needs related to the social dimension, such as access to health services and housing, were rarely addressed. With the exception of one person who received help furnishing their home, the returnees in our sample did not receive any concrete support with healthcare or housing. Staff at partner NGOs reported that such services had been offered in some cases, such as help finding accommodation or furnishing support. Beyond the needs addressed by the programme, respondents also reported a lack of support with childcare and legal advice.²³

3.1.4 Findings from the Northern Iraq case

Target group and vulnerability

The main target group of the counselling centre in Erbil comprised supported returnees, although counselling services were available to all returnees and members of the local population. Support was provided to those who could submit the required documents and had returned in a year that entitled them to receive benefits. One exception applied to individuals over the age of 60, who were not eligible for support. The local population (including internally displaced persons (IDPs)) was not actively targeted due to limited resources, and thus accounted for only a small proportion of those receiving support. According to experts, this was less than one percent (Exp_68, Exp_63, Exp_69). Selection within the local population was based on the criterion of vulnerability. Some services, such as job fairs or mobile counselling, were used by a larger number of people from the local population (Exp_73).

Various characteristics shaped the vulnerabilities of individuals and groups included in the programme – such as deportation, low levels of education and professional qualifications, illness or rejection by family members. Single parents, especially mothers, represent a particularly vulnerable group in Northern Iraq, as (unmarried) women face greater challenges than men when reintegrating into a patriarchal society after returning from abroad. Women made up 24 percent of the counselling centre's clients.

²³ Services that went beyond what was included in the module proposal were not taken into account in the rating.

Returnee needs

There was a strong demand among the returnees surveyed for support with economic participation. Of the 31 returnees surveyed, 28 said they needed financial support to launch a business or secure employment. This was generally true across all subgroups, regardless of the type of return; however, the need for financial support was higher among vulnerable individuals – not only for business creation costs, but also for housing and health services. Vulnerable individuals (particularly single women and deportees) often had little or no financial support from their social environments. There was also strong demand for targeted skills training and support with creating and running a business. The vast majority of returnees surveyed in Northern Iraq had no experience in these areas, and many had not completed any (vocational) training. Some 18 of the 31 returnees surveyed had previous work experience, ranging from informal, hands-on jobs to positions requiring a university degree. Most of the returnees surveyed in Northern Iraq (22 out of 31) were interested in target group-specific training on business management. Three participants said they would have liked preparatory training for entering employment, and 22 wanted close support throughout the business creation phase – including some who had not received any formal assistance.

Around half of the returnees surveyed (14 out of 31) reported having needed psychological support. All five single women interviewed said they required support in this area, as did two of the seven single men. Four women (one of whom returned without support) stated that they had needed professional help due to depression and psychological difficulties following their return. One of these women was still in a highly distressing marriage and felt socially isolated. Four male returnees from the sample said they had felt overwhelmed by the challenge of reintegrating into their former social environment after a long stay in Germany. Two of them also reported psychological problems linked to financial debt, in some cases extending to suicidal thoughts.

Additional social needs arose from the individual situations of the returnees, with slightly more than half of those surveyed (17 out of 31) stating that they had needed social support. A key factor in this context was the family's willingness to welcome them back. Across all groups, where returnees were able to reintegrate into their family unit, relatives proved to be an important resource for reintegration. They helped to mitigate psychosocial issues after return and often provided accommodation. In some cases, there was also a need for medical services.

Aligning needs with available services

In Iraq, a target group analysis for PME II was carried out in 2020. According to the counselling centre, the labour market analysis was conducted in coordination with the Chamber of Commerce and various companies. No distinction was made between Iraq and the Kurdish autonomous region in the north. The analysis of the target groups – returnees from Germany, returnees from non-EU countries, and the local population – and their needs was likewise conducted at national level. It considered aspects such as socio-demographic characteristics, employment prospects, mental health and social situation. The analysis identified key areas of potential need, including employment, psychosocial support, health service costs and affordable housing (Doc_23). The target group analysis does not include any concrete proposals for specific support services. In addition, there is a country-specific labour market analysis from 2020 in which GIZ was not involved (Doc_33). The study examined entry opportunities for young Iraqis and identified qualification gaps in English language skills, computer literacy, social skills and management abilities. A broader analysis of national labour market requirements was conducted through ongoing monitoring of job vacancies and through contacts and communication with the Chamber of Commerce and various companies (Exp_73); however, there were no written labour market analyses available from the GIZ.

The expert interviews²⁴ revealed that the range of services available in Northern Iraq included not only support for business creation, job placement, skills training and financial assistance, but also psychological and medical support and legal advice; however, it was noted that there were no measures relating to housing or childcare, nor any financial support for living expenses or other types of support, such as help accessing credit.

In the area of economic support for new business creation, the services largely matched the needs of returnees, although there was once again a lack of sufficient follow-up support for these start-ups. Business creation funding was frequently used (19 out of 31 cases), covering expenses such as rent for business premises for a limited period or the cost of equipment and furnishings. Three- to five-day business training courses were also offered, which 17 of the 31 returnees surveyed had attended. Two respondents had used a job placement service without receiving any additional support. There were also virtual job fairs and exchanges with companies about job vacancies (Exp_73). Most respondents had no prior experience in creating or running a business. Follow-up support during the start-up phase was described as important but was reportedly very brief. In the post-start-up phase, there was no scope to make adjustments or provide additional support, as no funding had been allocated for this purpose. Eight of the 31 returnees surveyed had received no support at all from the counselling centre (see Section 3.2.6 for details).

Overall, the need for measures to support mental health was insufficiently addressed. There was a clear mismatch between the psychological support on offer and what was actually needed. Although psychosocial services were available, they were limited to returnees and lacked the capacity to meet the real level of demand. Around half of those surveyed (14 out of 31) reported needing psychological support. There was no clear link between the type of return and the need for psychological support. Only four of the returnees surveyed said psychological issues had been discussed in counselling sessions at the counselling centre or with NGOs. None of the participants in the sample actually received psychological support.

Other needs related to the social dimension, such as access to health services and housing, were rarely addressed. Although the counselling centre offered psychological, housing and medical support, most respondents said they had needed help in these areas but had not received it. Beyond the needs addressed by the programme, respondents also highlighted a lack of support with fears of persecution, reintegration into the community, school fees and childcare.²⁵

²⁴ Unfortunately, the online questionnaire for the CC-survey was not completed at management level in Northern Iraq.

²⁵ Services that went beyond what was included in the module proposal were not taken into account in the rating.

Box 5 Gender-specific vulnerability in Northern Iraq

Gender-specific vulnerability played a particularly important role in Northern Iraq, but this was rarely taken into account. Single women (with or without children) are generally among the most vulnerable groups. Due to gender-based restrictions in Northern Iraq, single women have far fewer opportunities to engage in employment, for example. Despite their high level of vulnerability, the counselling centre offered the same services to single women as to returning men or women in family units. The single women surveyed often had multiple needs that were not specifically addressed by the available services. For instance, they had very limited access to the labour market, had in some cases broken ties with their families, or had only minimal financial resources. The situation was especially critical for women facing the threat of persecution (mainly from their own families or those of ex-husbands). These women said they had asked the counselling centre and partner NGOs to take protective measures to ensure they remained anonymous (for example, by not taking photographs). Although two of the five single mothers surveyed had raised the issue of persecution during the counselling process, they were not offered any support specifically tailored to their situation.

3.1.5 Case study findings in context

The findings from the three case studies show that the needs of the respondents varied depending on the country context and their level of vulnerability. By focusing on economic participation, the programme addressed a pressing need among the returnees surveyed, while psychosocial and social needs were largely left unaddressed. In line with the respective country contexts, the support services were selected based on labour market and target group analyses; however, despite the objectives set out in the programme documents, there was no in-depth analysis of vulnerabilities, nor were there defined vulnerability criteria (Doc_20). In all three case studies, deported returnees emerged as a particularly vulnerable group. Although they had access to all available services, they were not offered any support tailored to their psychosocial needs. The case studies indicate that a lack of financial resources emerged as the primary issue for returnees, making employment support an appropriate response; however, key psychosocial and social needs were not sufficiently taken into account by the support provided. Mental health was one of the most overlooked areas, with general healthcare and housing also receiving limited attention. While psychosocial support was formally part of the counselling centres' service offering in the countries examined,

it rarely reached the returnees surveyed. This was mainly due to the fact that mental health was not – or else not sufficiently – discussed during counselling sessions, and because there were too few partnerships between the counselling centres and local providers of psychological or therapeutic services.

Beyond the case studies, both the CC-survey and the tracer studies showed a clear emphasis on economic support, while psychosocial and social needs were not sufficiently addressed in other partner countries either. The CC-survey revealed that economic support was a strong focus across all countries. Although measures addressing the psychosocial dimension formally existed, referrals to these services were rare. According to counselling centre staff, the median estimated referral rate for business creation support was 70 percent, while the median for referrals to professional psychological services was just 20 percent (own calculations based on data from the CC-survey). The tracer studies support these findings. Around two-thirds of respondents in the full dataset reported having received support for new business creation (3,011 out of 4,539). In contrast, only about 16 percent had taken part in psychosocial measures (741 out of 4,539). At the same time, there was substantial demand for psychological support,

with three-quarters of respondents saying they had not been in a stable mental state following their return. Among the subgroup of returnees, the figure was also around 75 percent (1.261 out of 1.693). Participation in measures to support social reintegration was also low, with 184 out of 2.181 respondents receiving health-related services, and 256 out of 2.181 receiving support related to housing. From this perspective, the PME did not do enough to address the psychosocial and social dimensions within a comprehensive reintegration approach. The tracer studies also highlight that the intention to address all three dimensions of reintegration through support services was not fully implemented in practice. The internal KOMPASS study reinforces the recommendation that greater attention should be paid to the psychosocial and social dimensions (Doc_20). A BAMF study similarly argues that reintegration cannot be reduced to economic participation alone (Kothe et al., 2023). The shortcomings identified in this evaluation with regard to support for returnee reintegration are particularly concerning given that the most vulnerable target groups are especially in need of psychosocial and social support.

According to the CC-survey of counsellors, the services offered often failed to meet the needs of certain target groups – particularly people with chronic illnesses, physical disabilities, or those over the age of 60. In Northern Iraq, people over 60 were systematically excluded, as they were not eligible for support. This applied to both returnees and, to an even greater extent, the local population. As a result, some vulnerable groups were systematically excluded from the services rather than being specifically targeted.

3.2 Effectiveness of the measures

Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the design of the measures improved returnees' access to reintegration services in their countries of origin?

Evaluation Question 3: To what extent have unintended positive or negative direct effects occurred as a result of implementing these services in countries of origin?

This chapter addresses the effectiveness of the BMZ's measures to support sustainable reintegration. It focuses on examining the extent to which the design of the interventions improved returnees' access to reintegration services. The monitoring data from the special reporting (SR) is first used to present the measures implemented for the target group of returnees. Indicator 2.1 assesses how many measures were carried out and how many individuals from the target group – differentiated by returnee type – were reached. This is followed by an overview and assessment of the counselling and referral process (Indicator 2.2). Indicator 2.3 then evaluates the usefulness of the services and support provided. The effectiveness of the measures is assessed using findings from the case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq, the CC-survey, secondary data collected by the GIZ, and (internal GIZ) studies. Unintended effects (EQ 3) are discussed in Section 3.2.8. While the chapter does not claim to be exhaustive, it highlights the most frequently mentioned unintended effects and those considered most relevant to efficacy. No assessment criterion was defined for EQ 3, and the findings do not feed into the effectiveness rating. Rather, the purpose of EQ 3 is to provide insights into possible unintended effects that could inform future programme development.

Box 6 Effectiveness rating²⁶

AC 2: The way the measures are designed gives different target groups better access to reintegration services.

Overall rating: Partially fulfilled

Indicator 2.1: Number of measures implemented and people reached from the returnee target group by type of service => *not applicable*. Overall, the counselling centres and NGO partners implemented numerous measures for returnees. These were supplemented by services provided under bilateral programmes. As a result, access to support for returnees was generally improved; however, with regard to the data basis for the special reporting, it should be noted that a wide range of different measures were counted under a single KPI, and multiple counting was also possible. For this reason, the KPI data does not allow direct conclusions to be drawn about the number of individual measures carried out or the number of people reached.

Indicator 2.2: Rating of the counselling and referral process in the counselling centres => *partially fulfilled*. The counselling and referral process was implemented as intended in some cases and improved access to interventions for parts of the target group of returnees. The ratings in the individual case studies vary on this point (see Chapter 2.1 in the online annex). Many initial consultations were held, but these did not form part of a holistic counselling approach that addressed economic, social, and psychosocial aspects. Vulnerable individuals in particular were often not referred to suitable services. There were only a few cases in which a needs assessment was carried out that reflected the target group's situation, or where trust was established between counsellors and returnees. Referrals to BPs played only a marginal role in most cases due to a lack of suitable or available services. The transnational guidance approach largely worked for those who returned to their country of origin with support.

Indicator 2.3: Rating of the usefulness of services by type of support => *partially fulfilled*. The assessment of usefulness was based on both the direct feedback provided by returnees and the evaluation team's own judgement. The majority of respondents from the target group rated the different services as helpful, with the evaluation team also partly confirming the usefulness of the support and measures provided. On the whole, the majority of returnees described the services offered by the counselling centre as helpful. They felt these had made it easier to cope after returning to their country of origin and expressed gratitude for the support and the opportunity for a fresh start; however, the evaluation team found only limited concrete added value from the measures. The returnees' positive feedback was not directly linked to the success of their business ventures (more on this in Section 3.3 Only those returnees who met certain preconditions were able to apply the knowledge gained from training sessions and courses directly. Psychological support services could only be assessed to a limited extent due to the small number of observed cases, unlike measures addressing social needs – such as housing – which were consistently seen as helpful and relevant.

3.2.1 Programmatic perspective

The counselling centres in countries of origin form the core of the counselling and referral process, operated by the GIZ in cooperation with various state and non-state partners and stakeholders. These centres served as contact points for both target groups of the global programme PME (returnees and the local population), and acted as a bridge between return counselling in Germany and reintegration support

in the countries of origin (Doc_21). The centres are embedded in national structures in the partner countries, usually linked to local employment agencies, and vary in terms of their resources and facilities. Their roll-out in PPH partner countries began gradually from 2017. While Ghana has a single counselling centre in Accra and Iraq has two centres in Baghdad and Erbil,²⁷ other partner countries set up multiple smaller centres. In Morocco, centres were established at seven locations: Casablanca, Oujda, Tangier, Fès, Béni Mellal-Khénifra, Agadir and Rabat (Doc_27).

²⁶ The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex. The case-specific ratings of the indicators can be found in Chapter 2.1 of the online annex.

²⁷ This division in Iraq was primarily due to the administrative split between the Republic of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

The counselling centres adopted a holistic approach that addressed all three dimensions of reintegration – economic, social and psychosocial – and was structured around three phases. Counselling was intended to be tailored to the individual, open-ended, holistic, and guided by individual needs and available resources. The guiding principle of psychosocial counselling aimed to ensure that the specific needs of people with traumatic experiences were considered throughout the support process. A key element of the approach, which focused on both resources and strengths, was to empower clients (Doc_21). In addition to identifying opportunities in the country of origin, the role of the counselling centre staff included raising awareness about safe, regular migration routes to Germany and the risks associated with irregular migration. Ideally, the counselling process in the country of origin followed three phases: (1) orientation and clarification of the request, (2) empowerment through potential analysis and skills assessment, and (3) conclusion and evaluation of the counselling process (Doc_21).

The counselling centres were part of a transnational guidance approach, providing assistance to returnees throughout the entire return and reintegration process – from Germany to their country of origin. Under this approach, returnees were informed about available support in their countries of origin while still in Germany through return counselling centres and with the involvement of reintegration scouts. They could also access low-threshold preparatory reintegration measures before departure. Reintegration scouts acted as a link between the counselling centres in the countries of origin and the return counselling centres in Germany by providing information about returnees' individual reintegration prospects in their respective countries of origin (Doc_28). In a second step, the reintegration scouts forwarded the returnees' profiles to the counselling centres in the country of origin. This was followed by an online counselling session involving the returnees as well as counsellors from both Germany and the country of origin, who discussed potential reintegration prospects. Once the returnees had arrived back in their country of origin, they received individual counselling at the local counselling centre

(Doc_5). Finally, they were referred to suitable reintegration measures offered by the implementation partners of the counselling centres, by other BPs of German development cooperation, or by other stakeholders in the field. The aim of these referrals was to create synergies and connect returnees with existing local structures.

The services provided under the PME were designed to be gender-sensitive and were available to both returnees and the local population. They aimed to address the specific needs of women and contribute to their empowerment, thereby promoting gender equality. The services were also designed to be accessible, with a focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable groups and respecting fundamental human rights (Doc_4). In line with the do-no-harm principle and to help reduce social tensions, members of the local population were also able to take part in the measures.

3.2.2 People reached and measures implemented

Between 2017 and 2023, monitoring data was collected at target group level in twelve PPH partner countries as part of a special reporting. Commissioned by the BMZ, this monthly special reporting (SR) gathered information from counsellors in the counselling centres, NGO staff and participating BPs on returnees from Germany and non-EU countries, as well as on supported members of the local population (disaggregated by gender) and covered all activities carried out (Doc_26). The data collected was consolidated into ten key performance indicators (KPIs): total number of activities implemented (KPI 1), broken down by counselling centre (KPI 2), BP (KPI 3) and partner NGO (KPI 4); number of counselling sessions held in counselling centres (KPI 5); number of people who entered employment (KPI 6); number of start-up support measures (KPI 7); number of MSME support measures (KPI 8); number of educational and qualification measures (KPI 9); and number of psychosocial support and social (re)integration measures (KPI 10). The following section provides more detail on the KPIs most relevant to the evaluation.

Table 2 Number of measures implemented as part of the BMZ's support for sustainable reintegration (2017–2023)

Key performance indicator (KPI)	All	Returnees
KPI 1: Concrete prospects to stay / reintegration support services (all measures)	1,358,146	225,957
KPI 5: Counselling sessions held in the counselling centre (counselling only, excludes start-up opportunities)	218,557	57,571
KPI 6: Entered employment	266,333	35,305
KPI 7: Individual business start-up supported	172,368	33,303
KPI 9: Received education and/or training	527,404	38,400
KPI 10: Received psychosocial support	199,233	61,401

Source: DEval, own visualisation based on data from the SR

Table 2 shows the number of support measures carried out across countries in relation to relevant KPIs, offered directly by the counselling centres, partner NGOs and BPs for the target group of returnees.

- KPI 1:** Between 2017 and 2023, a total of around 1.4 million measures were implemented under the PPH. Around 17 percent of these benefited returnees. The majority of the measures were aimed at the local population. All measures implemented by counselling centres, partner NGOs and BPs were included. The BPs reported all implemented measures, regardless of whether they were financed through PPH top-ups or from existing project funds.
- KPI 5:** A total of 218,557 counselling sessions were recorded, conducted by staff at the counselling centres, a quarter of which were held with returnees. Counselling sessions included in-person and telephone conversations as well as online counselling (via messenger, chat or email) provided in the country of origin and in Germany. Counselling provided at job or career fairs was also counted (Doc_26).
- KPI 6:** A total of 266,333 individuals were reported to have taken up employment or self-employment, around an eighth of whom were returnees. This is the only indicator that provides insight into the actual number of people reached. It covers various forms of employment, including self-employment, permanent and temporary jobs, cash-for-work schemes (CfW), and seasonal work. It also covers individuals who were previously unemployed and found work through the PPH, as well as those who were able to increase their income or improve working conditions thanks to the support (Doc_26). The BPs reported all implemented measures, regardless of whether they were financed through PPH top-ups or from existing project funds.
- KPI 7:** A total of 172,368 measures were implemented to support individuals with starting a business. Around a fifth of these measures benefited returnees. The figures include counselling and coaching, training for entrepreneurs, as well as financial and material support. If a person took part in several training sessions, each one was counted as a separate measure. Additional financial or material support that was not linked to a specific training course was also recorded as a separate measure.

- **KPI 9:** A total of 527.404 measures were implemented to improve the employment prospects of returnees and the local population. Around 7 percent of these measures involved returnees. These included short-term training courses (ranging from two days to several weeks), long-term training (several months), and initial vocational training. The figures include measures carried out by BPs, partner NGOs and the counselling centres themselves.
- **KPI 10:** A total of 199.233 measures aimed at providing psychosocial support were implemented, with approximately a third of these directed at returnees. This is a broad indicator that combines psychosocial support measures and social (re)integration support. The former includes psychological and health-related counselling in the form of group sessions or individual therapy, as well as counselling by NGO staff. Measures supporting social (re)integration include coaching, language courses aimed at social integration, legal support, assistance with administrative procedures, and material or financial support for housing, childcare or children's schooling. All household members who directly benefited from the measures were counted as beneficiaries. If a measure benefited multiple people in a household, it was counted accordingly more than once.
- **The KPIs reflect a very high number of implemented activities but provide little insight into the number of individual measures or the number of people reached.** The relevant KPIs show that a large volume of activities was carried out; however, there is no data available on how many people returned from Germany and non-EU countries to the PPH partner countries during the evaluation period, nor on the total number of returnees reached through the PPH. For these reasons, the KPIs do not allow for an assessment of returnees' access to reintegration support. It should also be noted that a wide range of different measures were counted under a single KPI, and multiple counting was also possible. For this reason, the KPI data does not allow direct conclusions

to be drawn about the actual number of individual measures carried out or the number of people reached. The only exception is KPI 6, which captures the number of people who entered employment. A study commissioned by the GIZ in 2023 criticised the very low-threshold method of counting and noted, with regard to KPI 6, that individuals were recorded as having entered employment even when this consisted merely of short-term work lasting a few days (as is common in seasonal harvesting; Doc_20). The nature of the data collection instead highlights the actual aim of the special reporting: to publicly and promptly showcase short-term successes – a purpose also acknowledged by programme implementers and the commissioning body (Exp_99, Exp_100, Exp_101, Exp_103).

3.2.3 Findings from the Ghana case

Counselling and referral process

Transnational guidance

The majority of returnees in the sample (12 out of 17) returned with financial support from an AVRR programme. Most of these returnees had already been informed about the counselling centre in Ghana by a return counselling office in Germany (9 out of 17). In contrast to the situation in Morocco and Northern Iraq, the counsellors at the centre in Accra reported that returnees had been well informed about the return process and the relevant contact points in their country of origin. Prior to their return, however, the centre had only been in contact with a few returnees. This was also due to the fact that most of the returnees had been deported (see Section 3.1.2), and had therefore not been in touch with a return counselling office or reintegration scout in Germany (Exp_23).

Compared to the case studies in Morocco and Northern Iraq, some of the returnees surveyed in Ghana had participated in pre-return measures in Germany. Three of the twelve returnees who returned with support had taken part in preparatory business training while in Germany. A further three returnees had already received information about the available services

in Ghana through online counselling provided by the counselling centre while still in Germany. Experts viewed this transnational guidance and preparation of returnees before departure positively. According to both counsellors and NGO staff, these preparatory measures helped to give returnees a more realistic view of the services available and lower their expectations. In their view, returnees who receive information about their prospects in Ghana in advance are better able to plan, develop more concrete business ideas and build trust more easily with the counselling centre staff (Exp_23, Exp_13, Exp_26).

Initial contact and counselling at the counselling centre

Contact with the counselling centre varied depending on the target group and the type of return. The local population often came into contact with the centre through personal networks, radio broadcasts or by chance (i.e. walk-ins; Exp_18). Returnees who received support were generally referred to the counselling centre by the IOM, return counselling centres or reintegration scouts in Germany (Exp_23). Returnees also learned about the centre through their social networks. In addition, there was a cooperation agreement with national authorities,²⁸ who were supposed to provide psychological first aid to deported returnees arriving at Accra airport and inform them about the counselling centre's services (Exp_3, Exp_18, Exp_19). The centre is now notified in advance of return flights from Germany (Exp_17). Interviews with returnees suggest that contact at Accra airport did not always take place as intended. Some respondents said they had received information and some money there,²⁹ while others reported not being approached at all. None of the returnees mentioned receiving psychological first aid. According to the counsellors, most returnees (around 60%) first contacted the counselling centre after their return (Exp_13). According to the case management tool, this occurred on average 13 days after return.

Decisions to refer individuals to further support services were made by counsellors based on several criteria, with aspects of vulnerability playing the decisive role.

Not all returnees who contacted the counselling centre in Accra were eligible for support. In cases of limited resources, counsellors – after internal consultation if necessary – had to prioritise, placing returnees with lower levels of vulnerability on a waiting list (Exp_18). The main selection criteria cited were vulnerability factors (such as age, income and family situation³⁰), but business ideas and personal motivation were also taken into account (Exp_17, Exp_18, Exp_13, Exp_23). Returnees facing multiple disadvantages and urgent needs (e.g. a single mother without income) were prioritised. Returnees with unrealistic business ideas were rejected or referred to a training programme (Exp_13). Managing expectations among the target group was reported as a particular challenge for the counsellors in Ghana (see Section 3.2.8). For the local population, vulnerability was again a key factor, but another consideration was whether the person was seen as a potential migrant. Young men aged 18 to 35 from the Bono Region – a common point of departure for migration to Europe – were typically given direct counselling and, where appropriate, additional support (Exp_13).

Counselling sessions for clients of the counselling centre were predominantly held in person and covered different topics depending on the target group.

Unlike the case studies in Morocco and Northern Iraq, counselling in Ghana was centralised through the counselling centre in Accra rather than provided by NGOs. According to the counsellors, the initial meeting was used to assess skills and identify needs and was documented in the CMT (Exp_23). The counsellors then referred clients to suitable measures based on the needs assessment (Exp_23). Counselling sessions with members of the local population tended to focus on strengthening economic participation (vocational training, technical skills development, business creation support, etc.; Exp_16). In the case of returnees,

²⁸ The counselling centre works with the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO) and the Ghana Immigration Services (GIS), which provide informational material for deportees at the airport (Exp_13).

²⁹ Three returnees reported receiving a mid-range double-digit amount in euros.

³⁰ A key aspect of the needs assessment is identifying the returnees' family background. Where contact details are available, the counsellors at the centre also involve the returnees' family members in the process (Exp_16).

social issues such as housing problems and family relationships were also addressed. Discussions with deported returnees often included their experiences of forced return (Exp_16). Statements from the returnees surveyed on this topic were inconsistent. Some reported that business creation was the main focus of the counselling sessions, with little attention paid to (mental) well-being. Most returnees said they had not brought up mental health issues themselves, nor had they been asked about them. According to the counselling centre survey, sessions typically lasted between 15 and 30 minutes, with discussions with returnees generally taking somewhat longer. The length and number of sessions also varied depending on the counsellor. According to staff, they also depended on how developed the business idea was and how ready the individual was to be referred to implementation partners offering more extensive measures (Exp_13).

Overall, the quality of counselling at the centre depended on the professionalism and empathy of the counsellors. The duration and structure of the counselling sessions varied depending on who led them. Some staff members were clearly better able than others to build a positive rapport with returnees and offer meaningful support. This is echoed in the returnees' feedback, with relationships described as ranging from very close to distant.

Referral process to implementing partners

Referrals were made to NGOs, two BPs and other partners. Based on the needs assessment carried out during the initial meeting, the counsellors determined which support measures were most appropriate and passed the returnees' contact details on to the relevant implementing partners. These partners would then reach out to the returnees directly (Exp_31). According to the CMT, the average time between initial contact at the counselling centre and referral to an implementing partner was 14 days. In addition to the partner NGOs and BPs, the counselling centre in Accra also referred returnees to other institutions and stakeholders (e.g. IOM), for example to access short-term vocational training. The counselling centre also concluded contracts with a clinical facility to provide psychological support.

Throughout the duration of PME II and III, funding agreements were in place with three partner NGOs in Ghana, which supported a total of 446 returnees from Germany and third countries (Doc_37, Doc_34). One NGO supported returnees across five regions of Ghana, while the other two operated regionally – one in the north of the country and the other in the Greater Accra Region. While all three NGOs focused on support for new business creation, two of them also adopted an integrated approach that included social and psychological support services. In these cases, the NGOs were also responsible for accommodation and psychological care. The benefit of this “one-stop” approach is that NGO staff are able to accompany returnees throughout the reintegration process and better coordinate economic, social and psychological support measures.

Two BPs in Ghana received additional funding of EUR 6 million under the special initiative. In relation to the BPs' overall budget, this increase – amounting to around 10 percent – was relatively minor. Almost all returnees who participated in BP measures had been referred by the counselling centre (Exp_11, Exp_10). The BP counsellors were provided with detailed information about the returnees, including contact details, migration history, support already received and still required, as well as their business ideas (Exp_10). Neither counsellors nor trainers conducted a formal labour market analysis; instead, business ideas were assessed based on their own expertise (Exp_33). If in doubt, BP counsellors rejected returnees' business ideas (Exp_11, Exp_10). According to SR data, a total of around 1,100 returnees from Germany and non-EU countries were referred to BPs in Ghana over the entire PME period and received support for economic reintegration (own calculation based on SR data). Overall, around six percent of all BP reintegration services in Ghana were aimed at returnees.

There were no referrals between the counselling centre and the public employment centres (PECs), which were intended to decentralise counselling and referral processes, for any of the returnees surveyed. In an effort to establish access points for those seeking advice outside the Ghanaian capital, selected branches of the local employment agencies (PECs)

were supported by the programme (Exp_44); however, none of the returnees surveyed had been referred to a PEC, even though some lived nearby (e.g. in Kumasi) or had expressed a desire for job counselling and placement.³¹ The analysis of impact and sustainability at the institutional level points to inconsistent referral practices by the counselling centre in Ghana. At the time of data collection, referrals to the local PECs were neither systematic nor widespread (see Section 3.4).

Measures rating

In general, most of the returnees surveyed considered the counselling centre's services to be relevant and felt these had helped them better navigate their return to their country of origin; however, their assessments varied. Returnees had differing views on the counselling and measures they were referred to by the counsellors. Their views depended on whether they had received support and how they perceived the counselling provided by centre staff. Twelve of the 17 returnees surveyed rated the support provided by the counselling centre as very good and helpful, while five considered it poor or unhelpful. These assessments were not linked to the type of return. Counselling provided by partner NGOs was rated more positively than that delivered by the counselling centre, with the explanation that NGO staff often had more time available and were therefore better able to respond to returnees' needs. The counselling and support services provided by the BPs was rated negatively, as the procurement processes were described as complex and overwhelming – similar to the situation in Morocco (see Section 3.3.4). Whether or not returnees viewed the measures they had participated in as positive was unrelated to the success of their employment or business creation plans. From the perspective of some returnees, the support provided during the early stages of the reintegration process was important, even if their business or other plans ultimately failed.

Returnees were able to acquire new knowledge in business creation training, but these sessions were of only limited use for actually setting up a business. Eleven of the 17 returnees in the sample reported that they had participated in one or more training sessions. These covered topics related to

business creation and growth (business training, business plan development, bookkeeping, etc.) and were delivered by various implementing partners. Most of the returnees who had taken part in such training (7 out of 11) described it as generally useful and easy to access, as travel and meal costs were covered. Some of the returnees surveyed (6 out of 11) reported having gained practical takeaways from the sessions; however, the sessions were often less effective due to the very different levels of prior knowledge among participants. Some respondents said they were already familiar with the content, especially that of the introductory business training. More specialised courses – such as the financial literacy training provided by the German savings bank foundation “Sparkassenstiftung” – were rated more positively. The interviews also suggest that returnees would have made better use of what they had learned if the training had been more closely aligned with the timing of their business launch.

Psychological counselling was offered, but these services could only be assessed to a limited extent due to insufficient data. As outlined in Section 3.1.2, only one returnee took part in both group and individual counselling sessions (a service provided by the IOM). She stated that she had found it difficult to share her experiences in the group setting but had more positive feedback on the one-to-one sessions, even though her problems had not been resolved. Two of those interviewed mentioned having been invited to the counselling centre for a networking event intended to help returnees connect and support one another; however, they said that the event had not led to any meaningful connections. One innovative measure developed by counselling centre staff was the hand-holding sessions, which aimed to address the high demand for psychological support during the reintegration process. These group sessions, led by counsellors and mental health professionals, were intended to help participants process negative experiences related to their migration. Several experts described the sessions as helpful (Exp_13, Exp_18, Exp_17), and feedback from returnees was also reportedly very positive (Exp_16). In addition, during the PME implementation period, cooperation was established with one institution³² and several individual practitioners offering services to promote mental health. No figures are available on the number of referrals made to these providers.

³¹ An on-site interview highlighted that the PEC in Kumasi was not sufficiently equipped to operate as a functional support centre for returnees.

³² The cooperation was established with the TUCEE Institute of Counselling and Technology (TICT), a registered institution under the Ghana Psychology Council.

3.2.4 Findings from the Morocco case

Counselling and referral process

Transnational guidance

Transnational guidance was largely ineffective for returnees from Morocco. The majority of respondents in this group (15 out of 28)³³ had been deported. Five returnees had returned with support from Germany. None of the returnees in the sample had been in contact with a reintegration scout prior to departure, nor had they been informed about the counselling centres in Morocco before returning. In addition, none of them had participated in any preparatory reintegration measures in Germany. Staff at the counselling centres confirmed that reintegration scouts played only a marginal role in their work (Exp_5, Exp_88), although they were aware of individual cases in which returnees had made contact with a counselling centre prior to returning (Exp_82, Exp_84). In these cases, the returnees appeared better prepared for their return (Exp_84). None of the Moroccan returnees surveyed had received transnational guidance, which had a negative impact on their access to returnee support measures.

Initial contact and counselling at the counselling centres

The lack of awareness about the counselling centres meant that many returnees only accessed them long after returning – or not at all. In Morocco, the seven counselling centres³⁴ – known as *Espaces d'information maroco-allemand* (EIMA) – are located within the offices of the national employment agency. Local staff assess whether individuals seeking support belong to the returnee group or to the local population. Returnees are referred to an EIMA counsellor after registering with the employment agency. While EIMA staff identified four main ways for returnees to get in touch – through reintegration scouts, word of mouth, social media and referrals from other institutions (Exp_81, Exp_84, Exp_83, Exp_82) – almost all returnees in the sample had heard about the counselling centres through friends or acquaintances. Since many returnees were unaware of these centres, staff faced the challenge of reaching this group (Exp_86, Exp_78, Exp_84, Exp_83, Exp_77, Exp_90, Exp_95). On average,

returnees only made contact with the centres 3.4 years after their return (CMT). EIMA staff were also expected to counsel members of the local population on legal migration pathways (funded through the PMD); however, as few such options were available to the majority of the local population during the review period and counsellors reported lacking relevant information, this counselling could not be delivered as intended (Exp_95).

In Morocco, the main challenge was not identifying eligible and suitable returnees, but rather recruiting returnees who were willing to participate in the programme. As in Ghana and Northern Iraq, returnees in Morocco were selected based on specific eligibility criteria. One criterion used by NGOs was the returnee's level of vulnerability. Priority was given, for example, to (single) women and individuals in need of care (Exp_78). Support was also contingent on the availability of certain migration documents, the structure of the business idea, and the returnee's ability to start a business (Exp_82). In cases where there was uncertainty about whether a person was eligible for support, the NGO would consult with the counselling centre (Exp_82); however, almost all stakeholder interviews in Morocco highlighted that recruiting returnees was one of the programme's biggest challenges (Exp_86, Exp_78, Exp_84, Exp_83, Exp_77, Exp_90, Exp_95). As NGOs in Morocco provided support to returnees in grouped funding phases, there were cases in which returnees who approached an NGO during an ongoing phase were turned away and placed on a waiting list (Exp_78). No data is available on whether – and how many – individuals were rejected due to limited capacity (Exp_78).

The returnees surveyed often described the initial counselling session at the counselling centres as (too) short and focused primarily on business creation, with little attention paid to their psychosocial situation. The initial counselling sessions, which generally took place in person, focused on the topic of starting a business. Many returnees said they had felt overwhelmed during the initial meeting, as they had not yet developed a concrete business idea and would have preferred more guidance at that stage. Other reasons cited for considering the session unhelpful included not feeling sufficiently informed afterwards, not understanding the counselling and

³³ Of the 35 returnees surveyed in Morocco, seven were seasonal workers and are therefore not included in the analysis of transnational guidance.

³⁴ The EIMA in Rabat did not open until 2024 and therefore falls outside the evaluation period; however, it is included here for completeness.

referral process, and finding the meeting too short overall. Psychosocial needs, as well as educational background and professional experience, were not recorded systematically.³⁵ Most of the returnees surveyed said they had not raised the subject of mental health issues themselves, but they had not been asked about them either. According to the counsellors, however, returnees' migration history and individual needs were addressed in the session (Exp_84, Exp_81). They also cited building trust as a key function of the initial consultation, the length of which ranged from 30 minutes to one hour, with an average duration of 45 minutes (CC-survey).

The second counselling session, which was held with NGO staff, was described as more in-depth by both the returnees and the counsellors (Exp_78, Exp_82). This session usually involved an explanation of the available support services and the level of financial assistance for economic and social reintegration (Exp_87). Its aim was to refine the business ideas and assess their feasibility (Exp_84, Exp_81). At one NGO, this feasibility assessment was carried out by an external expert, who evaluated whether a given person was likely to be able to start a business and whether business training was necessary. Based on this assessment, returnees were either referred to a training course or encouraged to proceed directly with their business start-up (Exp_87). Some returnees (7 out of 35) reported a positive and close relationship with the NGO staff. They said staff were always available and regularly visited them; however, a larger number (10 out of 35) reported having had conflicts with NGO staff. These conflicts were partly due to communication issues, but also to a lack of transparency regarding how the funds were used.

Referral process to implementing partners

The referral process largely followed a fixed procedure: from the employment agency to one of the counselling centres, and then on to an NGO (Exp_78, Exp_82, Exp_87). In almost all sampled cases, returnees were referred to one of the three partner NGOs, depending on their place of residence.

Two of the returnees surveyed were referred to a different partner (AHK), while no referrals were made to a BP. The partner NGOs contacted the returnees by telephone to arrange a counselling appointment. According to the CMT, the average time between initial contact at the counselling centre and referral to a partner was seven months. In a few cases, respondents had contacted a partner NGO directly – for example, if the NGO was known in the region for supporting returnees independently of the PME (Exp_82). According to the evaluation of the civil society component, a total of 554 returnees from Germany and non-EU countries participated in services provided by six NGOs over the entire duration of PME II and III (Doc_34); however, the number of returnees referred by the counselling centres was very low, meaning that NGOs actively recruited returnees themselves (Exp_90).

Referrals to the BPs hardly took place due to the low number of returnees. In total, three BPs in Morocco received additional funding of EUR 16 million under the PPH. This accounted for nearly 50 percent of the BPs' total budget, which amounted to EUR 34 million. It remains unclear whether – and to what extent – this funding contributed to supporting returnees with new business creation, as expert statements on this point were contradictory. According to the SR, a total of 177 returnees from Germany and non-EU countries received business creation support from the BPs over the entire PME implementation period; however, this figure contradicts expert assessments, which indicated that the referral process to the BPs was largely ineffective for two main reasons. First, the BPs were unable to adapt their services to the specific needs of returnees, as partners refused to prioritise this target group (Exp_86; see Section 3.4.3). Second, the BPs also faced challenges in reaching returnees. Counselling centres had reportedly informed the BPs that they were responsible for independently recruiting returnees to take part in their measures. In practice, however, this meant that there were virtually no referrals from the counselling centres to the BPs during the BPs' implementation periods (Exp_86). Overall, around one percent of all BP reintegration services in Morocco were aimed at returnees (based on SR data).

³⁵ Addressing the issue of mental health proved challenging in working with returnees, yet information on returnees' mental well-being is relevant to properly assess the needs of particularly vulnerable target groups. Various tools – such as interview guides – were developed to support sensitive and professional communication (see IOM, 2019).

Measures rating

Most of the returnees surveyed rated the measures they had participated in as helpful overall; however, their actual usefulness in terms of strengthening economic and social participation was limited. This assessment was not based on a sense of entitlement, but rather on gratitude. Even where the measures had not led to immediate improvements in economic or social participation, returnees did not view them negatively. Unlike the assessment of counselling services provided by the counselling centres, returnees' perceptions of the support provided by NGOs were heavily influenced by the individual staff members involved. Here too, there were both positive and negative assessments. It is worth noting that support for the business creation process, which often involved greater potential for conflict, was primarily provided by partner NGOs. Returnees who considered the measures as generally unhelpful (9 out of 35) reported negative experiences, including conflicts with counsellors or NGO staff and falling into debt (see Section 3.2.8).

Some of the interviewed returnees described the training courses as satisfactory and interesting, but of limited use for setting up a business. Most returnees had taken part in at least one short course, primarily focused on business creation. Seasonal workers were able to attend a literacy course. The training sessions usually lasted between four and seven days, occasionally just three. One exception was a 60-day training course offered by the AHK. Even though counsellors recommended longer-term vocational training programmes, returnees often declined to participate. They explained this decision by stating that they were in immediate need of financial support and could not earn an income while taking part in a longer-term programme (Exp_87, Exp_88). Eight of the 21 returnees who had participated in training described it as unhelpful or not useful, either because it had been too easy or too difficult. Returnees who were satisfied with the training because accommodation and travel costs were covered (6 of 21) said in interviews that they had not been able to apply what they had learned to the business start-up process. In some cases, they could no longer remember the content due to the amount of time that had passed. Only four of the 21 interviewed returnees who had taken part in a training course described it as (very) helpful – these individuals had a higher level of education. Poor or limited language skills (in French)

meant that some returnees were unable to follow parts of the courses. Geographic distance to the training venues or counselling centres, as well as the long travel times and high costs involved, also made it difficult or impossible for returnees living in rural areas to take part in programmes. The counselling centres responded by organising transport, and in some cases participants were picked up directly from their homes.

None of the returnees in the sample took part in a psychosocial support measure, even though around a third of those interviewed had explicitly expressed a desire for this type of support. Three returnees had received a corresponding offer but declined it due to a lack of trust. These returnees had been contacted by psychologists by phone without any prior notice. This form of contact was perceived as inappropriate and resulted in a lack of trust, ultimately resulting in their non-participation in the measures offered.

3.2.5 Findings from the Northern Iraq case

Counselling and referral process

Transnational guidance

In Northern Iraq, reintegration scouts were involved in the return and reintegration process and maintained contact with the counselling centre. Most returnees in the sample had already approached return counselling centres in Germany before leaving the country. The reintegration scouts at these centres acted as intermediaries between the returnees and the staff at the counselling centre in Northern Iraq. They only referred returnees who were genuinely interested in returning. Each month, around 10 to 20 returnees who had not yet departed were referred to the counselling centre via the CMT by reintegration scouts. A contact person at the counselling centre then got in touch with the returnees and arranged an online consultation to provide information on the services offered (Exp_62, Exp_63). Three returnees in the sample had been in contact with the counselling centre prior to departure and described the experience as positive. The counsellors and returnees resumed contact after their return. Almost all returnees surveyed (27 out of 31) had made use of the services provided by return counselling centres in Germany.

Some 18 of the 31 had already received information in Germany about the counselling centre's services. These centres therefore played a key role for the returnees in the sample, with many learning about the possibility of transnational guidance through them.

Initial contact and counselling at the counselling centre

The majority of returnees contacted the counselling centre in Erbil directly, mostly by telephone via a hotline or by email.

The counselling centre's services were promoted by return counselling centres in Germany, as well as via social media (Facebook, Instagram, Startfinder website) and other channels (TV, radio). Some returnees said they had first heard about the counselling centre via their social networks. Partner NGOs also conducted outreach measures themselves and passed returnees' contact details on to the centre (Exp_63, Exp_61, Exp_62). One partner NGO noted that returnees who lived further away from the centre, or who had returned some years earlier, were often unaware of its existence and instead contacted a nearby NGO office they already knew (Exp_68). Because of the different ways returnees accessed the services, the time between their return and first contact with the counselling centre varied. On average, this time was 1.4 years (CMT).

Returnees were selected based on multiple criteria, with the focus placed more on the likelihood of success than on vulnerability. Vulnerability criteria were assessed by the counsellors. In many cases, a second assessment was carried out by the implementing partners, usually using the same criteria. One partner NGO reported that it had rejected many of the returnees referred to it due to a lack of motivation, experience or skills (Exp_72). It was also possible for family members to receive support instead of the returnee (Exp_65, Exp_62). Returnees who could not be supported due to limited resources were placed on a waiting list and contacted again at a later point (Exp_63, Exp_64).

Returnees, counsellors and experts provided different accounts of the sessions at the counselling centres. According to the counsellors, everyone who contacted the centre received individual counselling. These sessions were somewhat shorter

for members of the local population than for returnees (approximately 30 to 40 minutes). The former group was not offered further follow-up after the counselling session or any subsequent referral (Exp_65). The vast majority of counselling sessions were conducted by phone, and most returnees had two or more sessions (Exp_63). In contrast, the returnees surveyed stated that the counselling centre's telephone sessions were usually one-off and very short. At the time of the interviews, the GIZ was working on a draft of written guidelines for the counselling and referral process; however, no binding document had been made available to the counsellors during the evaluation period. One expert described the counselling process, which followed a standardised set of questions, as overly technical and not sufficiently tailored to individual client needs (Exp_59). According to the returnees, the sessions focused mainly on services related to economic participation (job placement, support for business creation), with less attention paid to personal concerns.

The counsellors at the centre were mostly described by the returnees as respectful and polite in their interactions.

Nevertheless, many returnees did not feel that they had been properly counselled, but rather that they had only received information about the services offered by the implementing partners – and in some cases, not in sufficient detail. Some interviewees reported that they were still unclear about the services even after the session. According to the returnees' accounts, no trusting relationships developed between counsellors and returnees in Northern Iraq, unlike in Ghana, where this was observed in some cases.

Referral process to implementing partners

Counsellors and partner NGOs described the referral process as very complex and time-consuming. According to the evaluation of the civil society component, a total of 1,904 returnees from Germany and non-EU countries participated in services offered by six NGOs over the full course of PME II and III (Doc_34, Doc_37). After the initial meeting, the eligibility of the returnees was reviewed in consultation with the counsellors before the referral to partner NGOs took place. The NGOs then contacted the returnees and conducted further consultations,

often involving several NGO staff members (Exp_70, Exp_72). This parallel structure was known to all those involved (Exp_59). The reason given was that individual needs could not be adequately identified through phone consultations, making a second consultation by the NGOs necessary – sometimes including on-site assessments of the feasibility of the proposed business idea (Exp_62, Exp_65, Exp_72). Staff at the counselling centre reported that they had not shared detailed information from the initial needs assessment with NGO staff (Exp_63). One NGO staff member stated that counselling for women always included a discussion of their need for psychological support. This would be addressed by the NGO staff during the counselling session, as material assistance alone was not sufficient, especially for women (Exp_68). In contrast, the vast majority of male and female returnees surveyed reported that psychosocial difficulties had not been addressed in their consultations. If the returnee's planned business idea was approved by both the counselling centre and the NGO, the next step was usually a compulsory three-day training course before the business creation process could continue (Exp_62).

Referral counselling to BPs in Northern Iraq was largely ineffective. The two main reasons were that the measures were not well suited to returnees and that there was a lack of individual counselling about the measures (Exp_53, Exp_57). A total of six BPs in Iraq received additional funding of nearly EUR 72 million under the PPH. The share of this additional funding relative to the total budget of each BP varied considerably. The BP that received the highest proportion of additional funding – amounting to a third of its overall budget – implemented cash-for-work measures; however, these were found to be unsuitable for the returnee target group (Exp_63). According to SR data, a total of around 3,300 returnees and non-EU countries were referred to BPs in Iraq over the entire PME period and received support for economic reintegration (own calculation based on SR data). Overall, around 2 percent of all BP measures implemented in Iraq were aimed at returnees (based on SR data).

Measures rating

In Northern Iraq, most returnees surveyed described the support services they received as generally helpful, although access was more limited for women. The majority (20 out of 31) expressed gratitude for the support and described the behaviour of the counsellors and NGO staff as polite and respectful. Returnees' assessment of the NGO counselling services was closely tied to the support they had actually received. Many of those interviewed found the programme support, in combination with the assistance from the IOM immediately after their return, to be helpful. Returnees who had not received any support and had been rejected generally considered the counselling to be unhelpful. According to NGO and counselling centre staff, women faced greater challenges in accessing the programme due to family and social restrictions and prevailing gender roles. In some cases, relatives reportedly did not allow them to attend training sessions, or only permitted them to take up work in the home. Some men were said to have prevented their wives from engaging with the counselling centre staff. In response, the programme adapted its services – for example, by offering women-only training and identifying income-generating activities that were supported by families or could be carried out from home (Exp_53, Exp_69, Exp_65).

The usefulness of the training sessions was heavily dependent on the returnees' level of education. The vast majority of returnees surveyed took part in a three-day business training course. This covered basic principles of business creation and management, such as marketing strategies, customer service and bookkeeping, and typically lasted three to four hours per day. Returnees' prior knowledge and qualifications influenced how they assessed the training. For many, the content was new. They reported having learned something and said they were able to apply what they had learned in their business; however, returnees with no prior experience in business management stated that the training did not give them a solid enough foundation. Some services provided by partner NGOs or BPs assumed knowledge of Arabic and prior experience, which the returnees surveyed often lacked. These services were therefore increasingly opened up to the local population, although they had initially

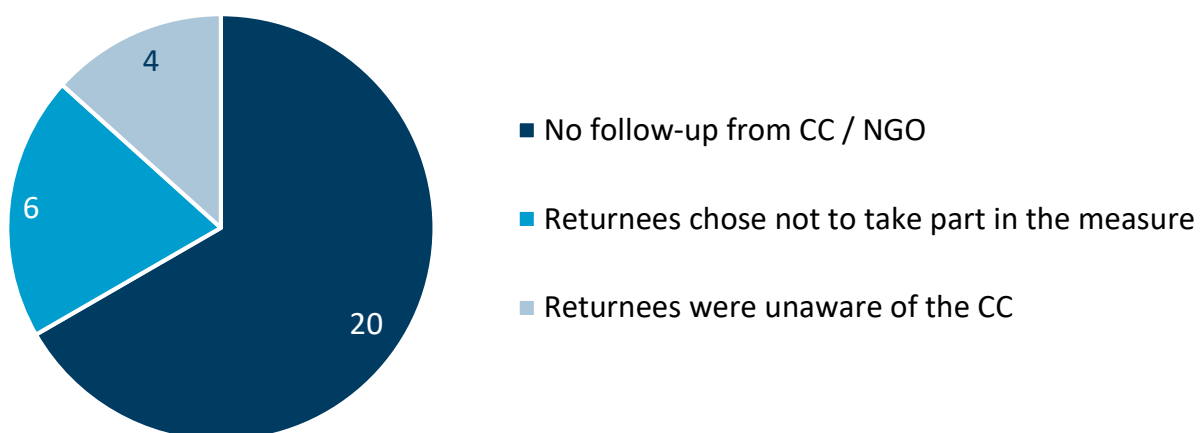
been intended exclusively for returnees in the case of the partner NGOs (Exp_85, Exp_53, Exp_63). Returnees with higher levels of education also tended to find the training less helpful.

Psychological counselling was offered, but these services could only be assessed to a limited extent due to insufficient data. Only 4 of the 31 returnees surveyed in Northern Iraq stated that their mental health had been addressed during counselling sessions. None of them had received psychological support after returning. According to NGO staff, a challenge in this regard was that returnees often focused on earning an income and tended to prioritise employment-related support over therapy or psychological services (Doc_35, p. 2). Mental health issues were also reported to carry a strong social stigma, with returnees often choosing not to disclose them. This was said to be especially true for women, who often feared disclosing the use of psychological support services to their husbands or family members. Most were financially dependent on their husbands and found it difficult to justify spending money on transport for such services (Exp_70). Some of the returnees surveyed in Northern Iraq received support for furnishing their homes and covering rental costs. According to the NGO final reports for PME II and III, a total of 412 returnees – 84 of them from Germany – received psychosocial support and assistance with social reintegration.

3.2.6 Reasons for not participating in the programme

Returnees surveyed in Ghana and Northern Iraq cited the lack of follow-up from the counselling centres as the main reason for not making use of available support services. In both countries, alongside the main sample of referred returnees, an additional sample was selected consisting of returnees for whom no referral was recorded in the CMT. This sample included 30 returnees, each of whom was contacted by phone as part of the data collection for this evaluation. Figure 6 shows that most of these returnees had not been referred by staff from the counselling centres or partner NGOs. The most commonly cited reason was that the counselling centres had not followed up as agreed. In some cases, returnees said they had followed up multiple times, were told to wait, and then never heard back from the counselling centres or NGOs. Four returnees in this sample were excluded from participation in the measures based on the eligibility criteria (being over the age of 60 or having returned before 2018). Six returnees said they had refused the referral because they felt the measures were inadequately resourced (e.g. insufficient budgets for business creation support) or because no childcare was offered alongside participation.

Figure 6 Reasons why returnees did not receive support services



Source: DEval, own visualisation (Σ 30)

3.2.7 Case study findings in context

Taken as a whole, the results from the three case studies differ substantially, yet most returnees described the measures offered as useful. In Ghana, a functioning referral process was largely successfully established, giving both supported and unsupported – including deported – returnees access to support services. This was only partially achieved in Northern Iraq and rarely in Morocco. Transnational guidance helped to improve access to services for supported returnees. In all three cases, counselling sessions were generally brief and focused on business creation, while social and psychological aspects were rarely addressed. Experts described the referral process as complex, particularly in Northern Iraq and Morocco, while returnees felt it was not always transparent. Referrals to BPs were largely ineffective on the whole. In Ghana, BPs developed suitable services and the referral process worked well, whereas in Morocco and Northern Iraq, referrals to BPs rarely or never took place due to a lack of appropriate services. In all three case studies, returnees mostly rated the support they received as useful or partly useful in helping them reintegrate in their country of origin, with the evaluation team partially confirming the usefulness of the services offered

The findings of the tracer studies painted a positive picture of returnees' satisfaction with the programme. In line with the results from the three case studies, participants in the tracer studies generally rated the measures positively. For almost all types of support they were asked about, the responses were clearly positive. For example, around 80 percent of returnees who received career guidance rated it positively overall, with around 30 percent selecting the highest possible rating on the scale – “excellent”.³⁶ Psychosocial services were also rated positively. Of the 511 returnees who received psychosocial support, around 75 percent gave a positive response.

Consistent with the findings of the case studies, an internal GIZ evaluation and further expert interviews highlighted the importance of partner NGOs as key stakeholders in the counselling and referral process. The role of civil society

stakeholders was largely evaluated positively in the three case studies and in additional expert interviews. Beyond the case studies, the final report on the CSO component of PME III presented a positive picture of this component (Doc_34) and provided several arguments supporting the positive role and potential of NGOs in the counselling and referral process. An advantage of the NGOs was seen in the diversity of thematic focus areas and services, their more detailed knowledge of the target group, and their ability to reach beneficiaries more effectively. They were able to respond to regional specificities and were considered more credible regarding their stance on regular migration (Doc_34). In addition, some already had an existing infrastructure and networks with stakeholders who were already active in the field of return and reintegration. Other experts noted that NGOs had been able to establish trust with returnees, especially where confidence in state institutions was low. The NGOs' decentralised structures also made it easier to provide support in rural areas (Exp_101).

3.2.8 Unintended effects

This subchapter examines the extent to which PME led to unintended positive or negative direct effects in the countries of origin (EQ 3). Unintended effects were explicitly explored in both the CC-survey and the case studies. The following section describes commonly occurring and particularly problematic unintended effects.³⁷

Staff at the counselling centres were at times confronted with aggressive behaviour from clients. Across the data sources, it was observed that many returnees and members of the local population came to the counselling centres with high, and in some cases exaggerated, expectations (KOMPASS study, CC-survey, expert interviews). Some of these misconceptions about the available support were based on statements by reintegration scouts in Germany (Exp_61, Exp_59). In addition, the absence of support opportunities for the local population, or differences in the level of support provided to returnees and the local population, triggered frustration,

³⁶ The question following the statement on participation was: “If yes, how do you rate the service?” Responses could range from “1 – not good at all” to “6 – excellent”.

³⁷ This presentation does not claim to be exhaustive. As shown systematically in Section 3.3 on the impact criterion, additional problems arose during the implementation of support measures, which negatively affected their efficacy.

feelings of unfairness, or aggression (Exp_38, Exp_61). On site, this created conflict situations for the counsellors, as they were faced with expectations they could not meet. Incidents such as these were reported in all three case study countries as well as in other partner countries (CC-survey). Four out of eight implementing staff reported that overly high expectations among the target groups combined with limited support options had caused problems. Among the counsellors surveyed, 14 out of 27 mentioned difficulties with expectation management in the open-ended questions. Five out of 27 reported aggressive behaviour towards counsellors due to unmet expectations. In extreme cases, counsellors faced threats, prompting an increase in security measures. In Morocco, one counsellor's office was moved so that visitors to the employment agency no longer had direct access (Exp_82). Staff from both NGOs and BPs reported similar issues (Exp_90, Exp_11). In Northern Iraq, efforts were made to address such reactions by gathering and providing information on other freely accessible training and courses (Exp_61). In Ghana, measures from a BP that had originally been intended only for returnees were also opened up to the local population (Exp_7).

A lack of personal financial resources meant some returnees went into debt when starting a business. There were instances in all three case study countries where returnees needed additional funding beyond the programme support to establish their planned businesses. Lacking their own financial means, they often borrowed money, including from their social environments, which they generally could not repay if the business venture failed. In some cases, returnees had to sell the newly created business after only a few months to meet repayment obligations. In other cases, returnees were still in debt at the time of the survey, which made it difficult for them to cover their living expenses.

Some returnees used the support intended for new business creation to meet other pressing needs (Exp_17, Exp_31). This mainly concerned social issues that were not addressed by PME measures or BPs (see Section 3.1). In Ghana, this phenomenon was observed among some returnees in the sample. According to one counsellor's assessment, however, such cases were relatively rare (Exp_13). Similar behaviour was reported by returnees in Northern Iraq – for example, some supported individuals sold livestock purchased with programme funds to finance medical care or repay debts. With regard to the PME's objective of sustainable reintegration through income generation, this phenomenon represents a negative unintended effect; however, it primarily highlights shortcomings in addressing the acute social needs of returnees. The issue of repurposing support was known, at least in Ghana, but no changes were made to the programme.

Some respondents felt that being photographed with the in-kind support they received was humiliating and, in their view, posed particular risks for persecuted women in Northern Iraq. Several returnees in Northern Iraq consistently reported that a partner NGO routinely took photos of them as they received their support, explaining that the images were required for reporting purposes. They described the process as degrading and reported having repeatedly requested that no photographs be taken. In one case, a returnee was particularly concerned for her safety afterwards, as she had not informed her family of her return due to death threats from her ex-husband. It remained unclear to her whether the photos taken by the NGO would be published.

3.3 Impact and sustainability of the measures at individual level

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have the reintegration services contributed to strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?

Evaluation Question 5: What factors influence the efficacy of reintegration services in strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?

Evaluation Question 6: To what extent are the effects of the reintegration services long-lasting?

This chapter addresses the impact and sustainability of the BMZ's measures to support reintegration at the individual level. It examines the extent to which reintegration services contributed to strengthening returnees' economic and social participation (impact) and the degree to which the effects were lasting (sustainability). The rating of impact and sustainability

at the individual level was based on findings from the case studies in Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq. Insights from programme documents, internal studies and evaluations, as well as additional expert interviews, were also incorporated into the rating.

The impact at individual level rating focused on examining the extent to which the reintegration services contributed to enhancing economic and social participation. The process tracing method was used to examine the causal mechanism of new business creation step by step. For this purpose, 76 interviews with returnees³⁸ from the three case study countries were analysed, and the findings were contextualised with additional expert interviews. This made it possible to determine in which cases the support provided contributed to strengthening economic participation (Indicator 4.1.1). The study also examined whether the returnees surveyed experienced social participation (Indicator 4.1.2) and explored the extent to which any limited efficacy of the measures was linked to shortcomings in programme design and implementation (Indicator 4.1.3). Contextual factors relevant to the efficacy of the reintegration services were also considered outside the scope of the rating.

Box 7 Impact rating (individual level)³⁹

AC 4.1: The services contributed positively to the current economic situation of returnees, thereby improving their economic and social participation.

Overall rating: Barely fulfilled

Indicator 4.1.1: For the target group surveyed, the services used contributed positively to their economic participation => *barely fulfilled*. Only a few of the returnees surveyed were able to use the services to improve their current economic situation. Around a seventh of the returnees surveyed managed to enhance their economic participation through the support received. For the vast majority of respondents, the programme did not lead to any improvement. The results were similar across all three case study countries. Limitations in the benefits arose due to individual and country-specific contextual factors, as well as shortcomings in programme design and implementation.

³⁸ Only returnees who, according to the CMT, were referred to a partner organisation and received support for starting a business (IP 1a).

³⁹ The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex. The case-specific ratings of the indicators can be found in Chapter 2.1 of the online annex.

Indicator 4.1.2: For the target group surveyed, social participation is achieved => *partially fulfilled*. Some of the respondents are psychologically stable and accepted within their social environment. About a third of them demonstrated successful social participation, meaning they maintained stable relationships with family and friends while also being in a stable psychological condition. Nevertheless, the majority of returnees who had expressed such needs did not participate in any measures that specifically addressed their psychosocial problems.

Indicator 4.1.3: For the target group surveyed, the services were designed and implemented appropriately => *barely fulfilled*. Shortcomings in programme design and implementation were systematically observed. In some cases, the support process was discontinued due to such shortcomings. Almost half of the returnees surveyed abandoned the business creation process. This issue was evident across all three case study countries.

The **sustainability at individual level** rating focused on whether the support services contributed to progress towards lasting reintegration. Data was collected on whether the businesses

established had survived for more than six months and whether returnees were able to cover their living expenses with the income generated (Indicator 6).

Box 8 Sustainability rating (individual level)

AC 6: The support services enabled improved economic and social participation, indicating progress towards lasting reintegration of returnees.

Overall rating: Barely fulfilled

Indicator 6: Employment obtained through participation in the measure, or the businesses established, continued to exist six months after inception and allowed returnees to cover their living expenses => *barely fulfilled*. Few of the returnees surveyed reported that their employment or business had lasted longer than six months and enabled them to cover their living costs from the income generated. The returnees had on average been back in their countries of origin for around 3.6 years, yet the majority were facing serious financial difficulties and achieving little or no economic participation. More than two-thirds of the returnees surveyed stated that they were barely – or else not at all – able to support themselves independently.

Finally, the evaluation examined which factors in the individual and country-specific contexts influenced the efficacy of the reintegration services. While some contextual factors could be improved through PME measures (for example, the financial situation), others – in particular, country-level factors

– could be influenced only to a limited extent or not at all (for example, the national economy). For this reason, no assessment criterion was established for this evaluation question; instead, a structured overview of the identified contextual factors affecting programme implementation was prepared.

3.3.1 Programmatic perspective

The starting point for answering the question of impact at the individual level is the definition of sustainable reintegration. As described in Section 1.1, sustainable reintegration encompasses economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. This holistic approach also underpins the BMZ's measures to support sustainable reintegration: under the PME, sustainable reintegration is reflected in the programme goal of improving prospects for the economic and social participation of returnees, thereby encompassing all three dimensions of sustainable reintegration.

The programme placed particular emphasis on measures to improve economic participation. Many returnees face difficult financial circumstances upon arrival in their home country, and generating an income as quickly as possible is a high priority (see Section 3.1). This is reflected in the central outcome defined in the ToC: that target groups generate income to sustain their livelihoods through employment (see Figure 2). The causal analysis using process tracing therefore focuses on impact pathway 1a: Improving economic participation through business creation.

Creating a business was the central pathway through which returnees could improve their economic participation by earning an income. The reintegration process under PME focused on support services aimed at enhancing economic participation. The underlying logic is that returnees can improve their financial situation if they earn an income, which they can obtain through employment. This can be achieved either by creating a business or taking up paid work. To this end,

returnees received financial support, in-kind support, counselling sessions and qualification measures. The employment types listed, including all associated support services, can be represented in two impact pathways for improving economic participation: impact pathway 1a “business creation” and impact pathway 1b “formal employment”. Case study data and monitoring data from all partner countries show that the majority of returnees followed pathway 1a “business creation” During the PME period, 35,305 returnees entered employment, with a total of 33,303 measures supporting business creation for returnees (based on SR data).⁴⁰ The evaluation assessed the efficacy of all support services made available to returnees during the business creation process. Business creation supported under the PME does not constitute a single measure in the process tracing impact analysis. It comprised four steps: beginning with contact at the counselling centre, followed by counselling sessions and referrals to services from implementing partners, and concluding with the establishment of the business. In this way, a range of support services collectively form the impact pathway (see Figure 7).

Social participation improves when returnees' basic psychosocial needs are met and their social environment accepts them. Pathway 2 describes the programme's theory of change for enhancing social participation (see Figure 2). Psychosocial support measures address a range of returnees' basic needs, such as physical and mental health and housing. The PME's underlying theory of change assumes that meeting these psychosocial needs strengthens the relationship between returnees and their family and social environment, thereby improving social participation (Doc_7).

⁴⁰ The indicator reflects measures that help people create a business but does not imply that a business start-up has been successful.

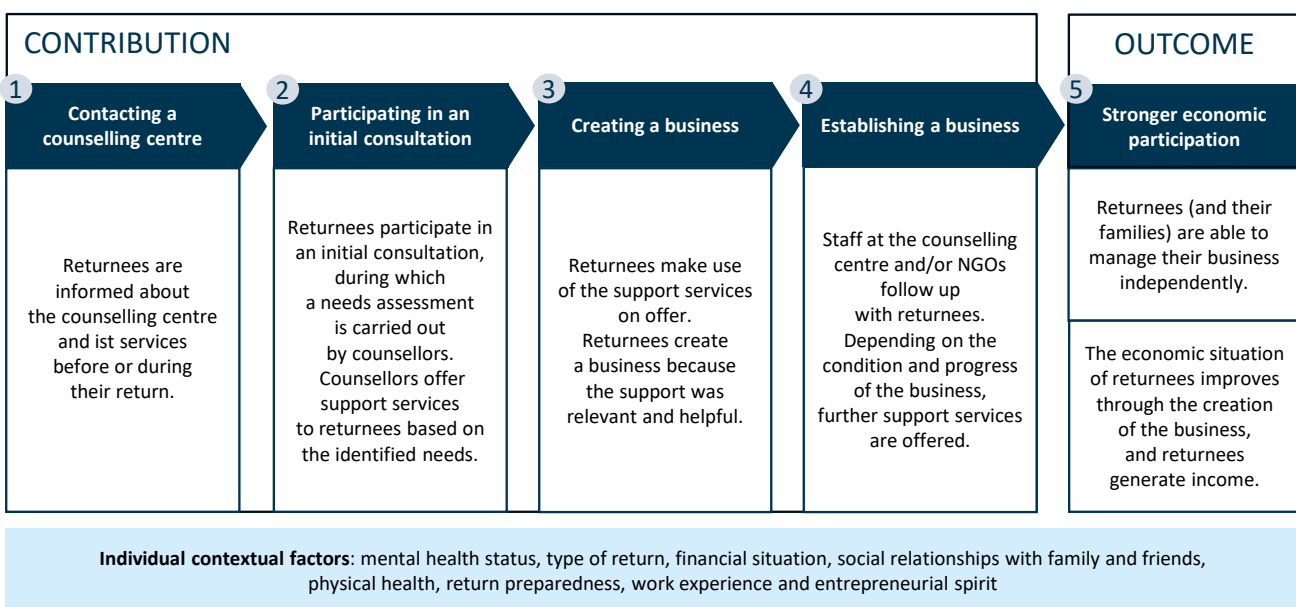
Box 9 Application of the process tracing method to the impact pathway: “Improving economic participation through business creation”

Process tracing was applied in this impact analysis in three steps. (1) Returnees who successfully achieved the outcome of economic participation were identified first. (2) For these cases, the individual steps of the pToC were analysed to determine whether the successful outcome could be directly attributed to the programme contribution. (3) Cases in which no positive effect of the programme contribution was observed were examined to understand why. Gaps and breakdowns in the pToC were identified, which could be traced to (a) individual and country-specific contextual factors, (b) shortcomings in programme design and measure structure, or (c) shortcomings in implementation. Contextual factors differ structurally in origin from deficiencies in programme design and implementation. They are exogenous conditions, such as the educational background of returnees or the economic situation in the partner country, which the programme may address but cannot fundamentally change. Individual and country-specific contextual factors were analysed to answer EQ 5 in Section 3.3.6. Shortcomings in programme design and implementation are endogenous, arising from the way measures are planned and carried out. They can weaken the pToC without fully interrupting it, or, in more severe cases, lead to returnees leaving the programme, resulting in a complete discontinuity of the pToC.

The derived pToC for business creation comprises five steps. It was developed through an iterative process, based on PME programme documents and supplementary academic literature. The pToC was validated in expert interviews and continuously refined during data collection in the case studies. This approach

aims to define a generic process representing the implementation of impact pathway 1a in all partner countries. The extent to which this causal mechanism operated during the PME programme period was examined using data collected from the three case study countries: Ghana, Morocco and Northern Iraq.

Figure 7 pToC – individual level: Business creation



Source: DEval, own visualisation

The pToC for business creation distinguishes the following five steps (see Figure 7):

1. **Contacting a counselling centre:** Returnees first receive information about the counselling centres and their services before or during their return. This information is a prerequisite for returnees to visit the centres in person or make contact by phone.
2. **Participating in an initial consultation:** The first session is conducted by counsellors from the counselling centre or NGO staff. Its purpose is to gather biographical information from returnees and, directly or indirectly, identify needs in the economic, social and psychological domains, as well as the appropriate and necessary support services that counsellors can offer to returnees. A prerequisite for the initial consultation is that returnees are aware of the counselling centres in their countries of origin and have made contact with them.
3. **Creating a business:** Returnees take up the support services on offer and are accompanied by counsellors during the business creation phase. Different support services are interdependent (for example, knowledge gained in business training is used to create a business plan, and achieving psychological and social stability requires basic needs to be met, such as having adequate housing). Counsellors maintain an overview of the implementation of support services, guide the process through further counselling, and can adjust the support if problems arise.
4. **Establishing a business:** Following the creation phase, counsellors and returnees remain in contact so that counsellors can follow up on the condition and progress of the business. During this phase, counsellors are able to discuss challenges that arise with returnees and, if necessary, make adjustments or initiate further measures.
5. **Stronger economic participation:** A case is considered successful in terms of contributing to strengthened economic participation if (1) returnees are able to continue running their business independently after the creation phase, and (2) their economic situation has improved as a result of creating the business, with returnees earning an income, even if it does not yet fully cover their living costs.

The sustainability of effects achieved at the individual level is assessed based on the duration of employment and income generation. Unlike short-term support during the return process, sustainable reintegration means that social and economic participation is secured over the long term. Measures supporting this process should therefore be assessed up to one year after return (Black et al., 2004; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012; OECD, 2020; Barnett et al., 2023). This involved checking whether employment or the business was still ongoing six months later and assessing the current condition of the business at the time of the survey. It also considered whether living costs were fully or partially met during the employment or business period and at the time of the survey.

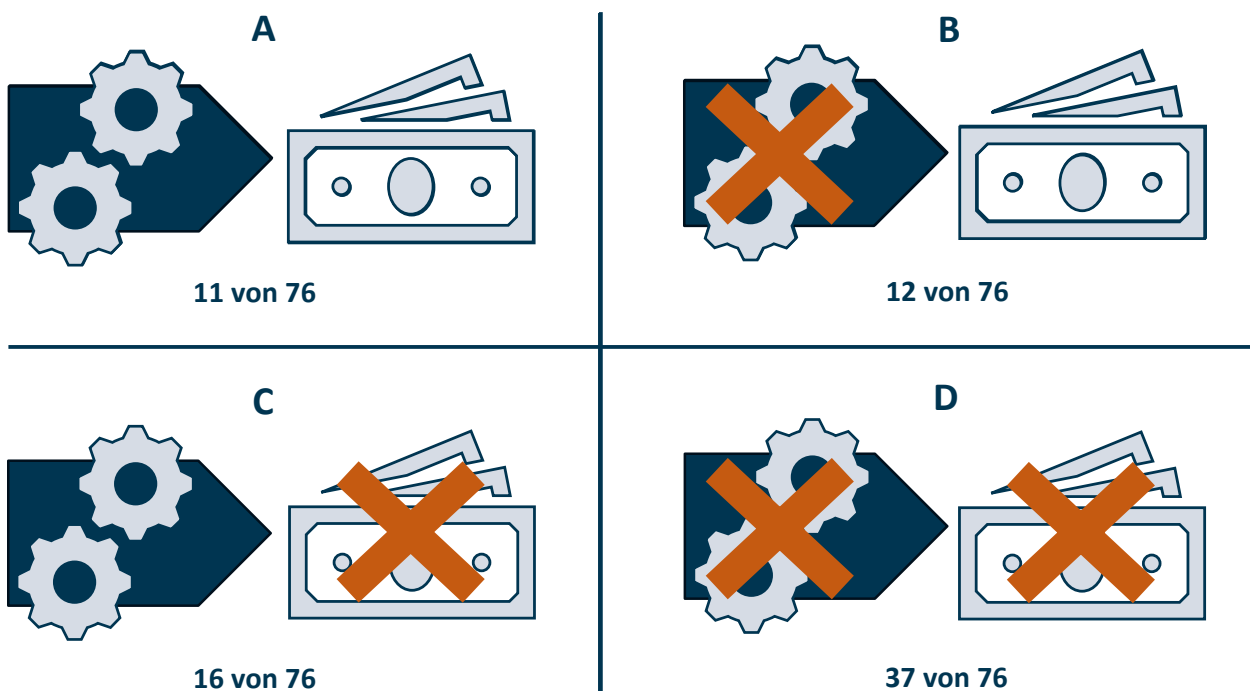
The pToC is summarised below and analysed across all three case study countries. The empirical data from each case was analysed individually according to the pToC steps, and the underlying mechanisms were examined. Building on this, a cross-case synthesis was developed, which is presented below structured according to the three indicators (4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3). Further pToC analyses (synthesis grids for all three case studies) can be found in Chapter 2.3 of the online annex.

3.3.2 Impact: economic participation

For the vast majority of returnees surveyed across the three case study countries, the PME did not lead to an improvement in economic participation. Around a seventh of the returnees surveyed managed to enhance their economic situation through the support received. This finding aligns with a number of studies, which largely report only limited efficacy of AVRR programmes, often restricted to certain types of support and under specific conditions (Doc_40, pending publication).

Figure 8 presents the results obtained from the case analyses using process tracing. The four fields A to D indicate whether the programme contributed effectively and, in doing so, achieved economic participation. Struck-through elements show where there was either no effective contribution or no economic participation. The results of the 76 analysed cases of returnees who received support with business creation were assigned to fields A, B, C or D.

Figure 8 Process tracing results table for business creation



Source: DEval, own visualisation

In all three case studies, the distribution of results across the four fields is similar. Cases in fields A and B can be considered successful in terms of economic reintegration progress, although only A cases can be directly attributed to the programme. Some of these successful cases (A and B) benefited from positive contextual factors. Cases in fields C and D show no progress in economic participation. These cases are in a highly precarious

economic situation and are unable to cover their living costs. In C cases, there is evidence of a contribution from the programme, but this did not result in improved economic participation. External contextual factors limited the success of business creation in these cases. The four fields are illustrated below with an example of evidence for each.⁴¹

⁴¹ All names have been changed for anonymity.

- A. PME support contributed to the creation of a successful business that generated income. A more detailed analysis of the individual cases showed that these returnees were aware of the counselling centre, received comprehensive initial counselling, used the support to create and establish a business, and ultimately generated an income. In these cases, all process steps of the pToC were in place. This applied to about a seventh of the returnees surveyed across all case studies (11 out of 76).

Sarah runs a drinks business and covers her living expenses with the income it generates. She returned to her home country with support from the IOM's transnational guidance. On the return flight, she was given contact details for the IOM, the counselling centre and a GIZ partner NGO, and she contacted all three institutions on arrival. During her initial consultation at the counselling centre, she presented her business idea and developed it further with her counsellor. Sarah took part in two business training courses, which helped her refine her business concept. Together with her counsellor, she went through the procurement process and opened a wholesale drinks business. She also received financial support from the partner NGO and from the IOM, which she invested in setting up her company. Due to the difficult economic situation, Sarah scaled down her business after a few months into a retail drinks outlet. Her company has now been operating for over two years, and the profits are enough to cover both her living costs and her daughter's tuition fees.

Assessment: Sarah was able to build up her return preparedness through transnational guidance. She successfully went through the referral process and received relevant and appropriate counselling from staff at the counselling centre as well as from a partner NGO. Sarah benefited from several support measures provided by different stakeholders, which together gave her a solid financial starting point. Her entrepreneurial skills allowed her to adapt her business model to the difficult economic environment. Her case shows that both the referral mechanism and the business creation process can work.

- B. No successful businesses were created with the support of the PME. In most cases, this was due to shortcomings in programme design and implementation, such as limited budgets or insufficient support during the procurement process. Nevertheless, returnees were able to draw on other sources of income to cover their living expenses. This indicates improved economic participation, but not as a result of the programme. This applied to about a seventh of the returnees surveyed (12 out of 76).

Nabil owns several buildings and lives off the rental income. He had already been in contact with the counselling centre before leaving Germany. After arriving in his country of origin, a counsellor called him and immediately referred him to an NGO staff member. In a follow-up consultation with the NGO staff member, Nabil discussed his idea of opening a second-hand shop. He received three days of business training. Together with the NGO staff member, he developed a business plan and carried out the procurement process. He opened his second-hand shop and was visited several times by the NGO staff member. After just under a year, however, Nabil had to close the shop because it had been running at a loss for several months. The location turned out to be unfavourable, with not enough footfall, and there was little demand for the products on offer. Although Nabil is currently unemployed, he owns several buildings in the city and is able to support himself through the rental income.

Assessment: Nabil successfully took part in the referral process and received support services. At the same time, he does not belong to the vulnerable group of returnees. Even before creating his business, he was financially secure and able to improve his economic participation. On the one hand, the support provided was not selected on the basis of his specific needs. On the other hand, the business model consultation and business plan were not based on up-to-date market analyses.

- C. PME support made a contribution, but it did not result in the creation of a successful business that generated income. This was particularly the case when external contextual factors at the individual and country level had a negative impact on the business creation process. While the programme's process steps were in place, in most cases they were unable to offset these adverse contextual conditions. This applied to around a fifth of the cases examined (16 out of 76).

Khalid sells dental products, but his income is not sufficient. Three years after his deportation, a friend told him about the counselling centre. He contacted a counsellor, who invited him to an initial consultation before referring him to an NGO staff member. In a more detailed consultation with the NGO staff member, Khalid described his previous work selling dental products for another company. On the basis of this experience, the NGO staff member advised him to create a business in this field. Khalid sought out services independently and completed the procurement process together with the NGO staff member. With the NGO's support, Khalid created his business. The business has now been running for nine months, but the income is not sufficient to cover his living expenses. Khalid lives with his mother and receives financial support from his family.

Assessment: Khalid's case illustrates the impact of negative external contextual factors on the effectiveness of support services. His business targets a niche market where demand for the products is limited and highly price-sensitive. The mechanisms for business creation worked, and Khalid benefited from the support provided. There were some gaps in the referral process, which delayed his reintegration path but did not cause it to break down. Ultimately, however, the support measures were not enough to keep the business profitable in the difficult economic environment or to strengthen his economic participation.

- D. PME support did not contribute to economic participation, and no successful businesses were created. These returnees are currently unable to cover their living expenses. This applied to around half of the cases examined (37 out of 76).

Adil is unable to cover his living expenses, lives in social isolation and suffers from psychological problems. Five years after his deportation from Germany, he learned about the counselling centre. He contacted a counsellor and took part in an initial consultation. The counsellor informed him about the possibility of financial support for business creation and referred him to an NGO staff member. According to Adil, his mental health was not addressed during the initial consultation. Nor was his work experience discussed, so he did not mention either his knowledge of German or his wish to improve it in order to work in a call centre. Adil was not offered any psychological support or business training. Together with the NGO staff member, he discussed the idea of starting a mobile coffee cart. Adil managed the procurement process independently – a task he found very challenging and which took several months. The budget only covered the motorised vehicle without any catering equipment. Adil used the vehicle for a few months to work as a delivery driver. By this time, he was no longer in contact with the counsellor or the NGO staff member. Since the venture was not financially viable, he ended up selling the vehicle. Adil is currently unemployed and in the process of applying for a job in a call centre.

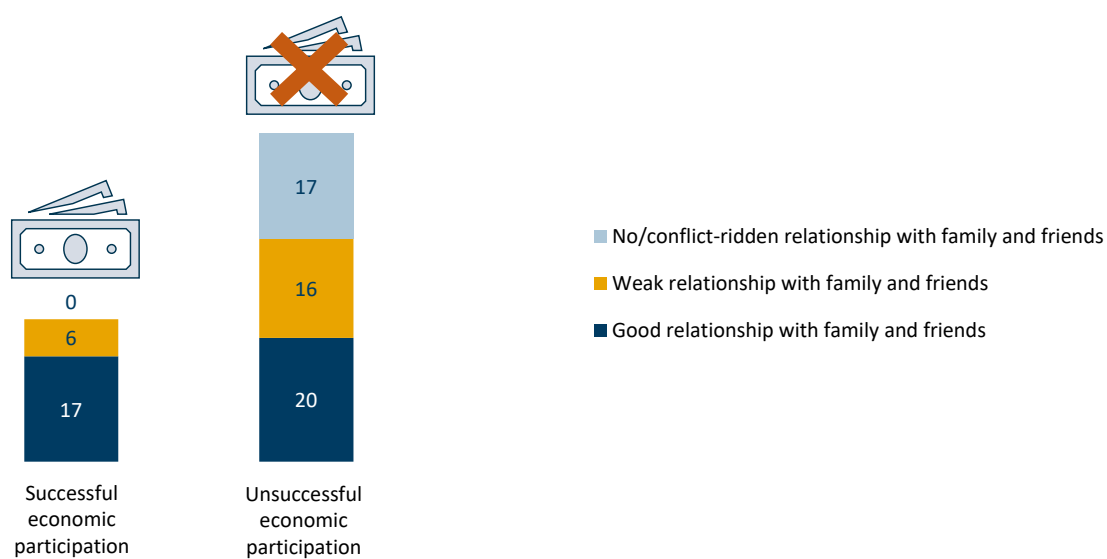
Assessment: Adil's case reveals gaps at every step of the pToC. He received no referral or other information about the counselling centre and was therefore unaware of the available support services. His initial consultation lasted only a few minutes, focused solely on business creation, and did not assess his needs and skills. Nobody developed a business plan with him, and he did not receive any support during the procurement process. Despite his low level of education and lack of entrepreneurial experience, he was not offered any accompanying business training. In the end, the budget was insufficient to launch the planned business. There was also no follow-up with a counsellor to prevent the failure of the start-up process. **Taken together, these gaps meant that the intended causal mechanism did not take place and the goal of improved economic participation was not achieved.**

3.3.3 Impact: social participation

The relationships of the returnees surveyed with their families and friends varied considerably. Based on their responses, these relationships can be grouped into three categories: (1) returnees described their relationships with family and friends as (very) good. They returned to a stable social environment, were welcomed by their families and received support, such as accommodation. (2) Returnees described their relationships with family and friends as neither good nor bad. They did not

maintain close ties but remained in contact with their social environment. (3) Returnees reported having no relationship or a conflict-ridden relationship with family or friends. They did not return to a stable social environment, and some of them did not even inform their families or wider circles about their return. As a result, these returnees were left to manage on their own and relied on external support. Roughly equal numbers of returnees described their relationships with family and friends as good, weak or non-existent/marked by conflict.

Figure 9 Quality of relationships between the returnees surveyed and their family and friends (absolute figures)

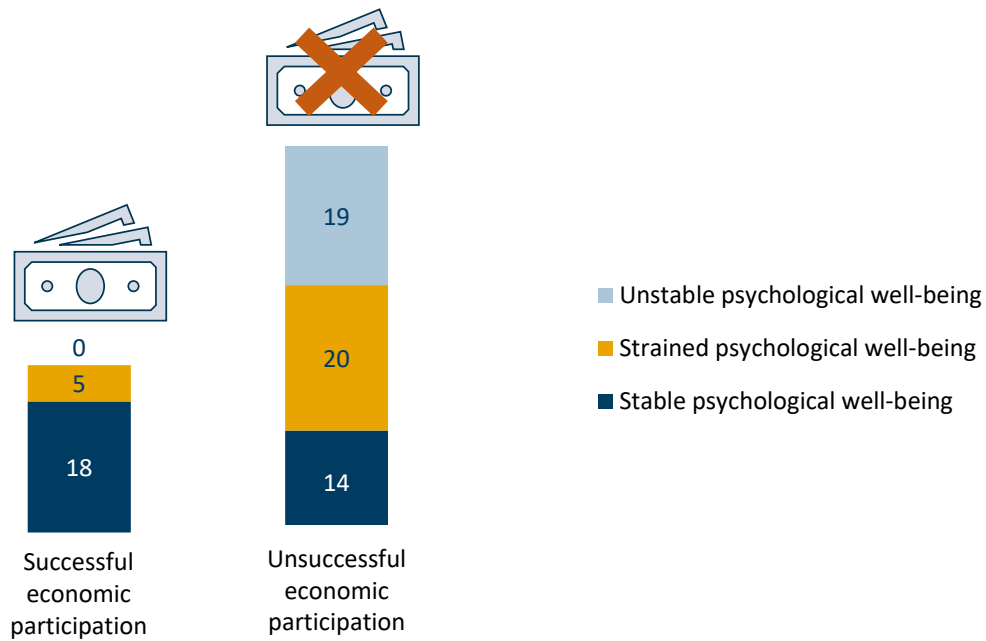


Source: DEval, own visualisation

A stable social environment was a positive contextual factor for many of the returnees surveyed who demonstrated successful economic participation. Figure 9 shows the social relationships of the returnees surveyed, broken down by successful and unsuccessful economic participation. Those who maintained good relationships with family and friends made up a much larger share of the economically successful group than of those who were not. Many of the returnees who were economically successful also reported that support from family and friends had been important. The causal

analysis likewise identified a stable social environment as a positive contextual factor. In these cases, the case studies show a positive relationship between social and economic participation – that is, the successful cases benefited after their return from a supportive social environment. The analysis further indicates that returnees reporting no or conflict-ridden relationships with family and friends were more likely than those with stronger social ties to be unsuccessful in achieving economic participation.

Figure 10 Psychological well-being of the returnees surveyed (absolute figures)



Source: DEval, own visualisation

Stable psychological well-being was a positive contextual factor for many of the returnees surveyed who demonstrated successful economic participation. Figure 10 shows the psychological well-being of the returnees, broken down by successful and unsuccessful economic participation. The proportion of returnees surveyed with stable psychological well-being was far higher among those with successful economic participation than among those without. Some respondents reported that economic success had a positive impact on their self-image, their ability to process trauma and their social relationships within the community. At the same time, there was a high number of economically unsuccessful returnees whose psychological well-being was strained or unstable. In many cases, returnees described a negative spiral in which the pressures of unstable psychological well-being after return and the financial hardship caused by lack of income reinforced one another.

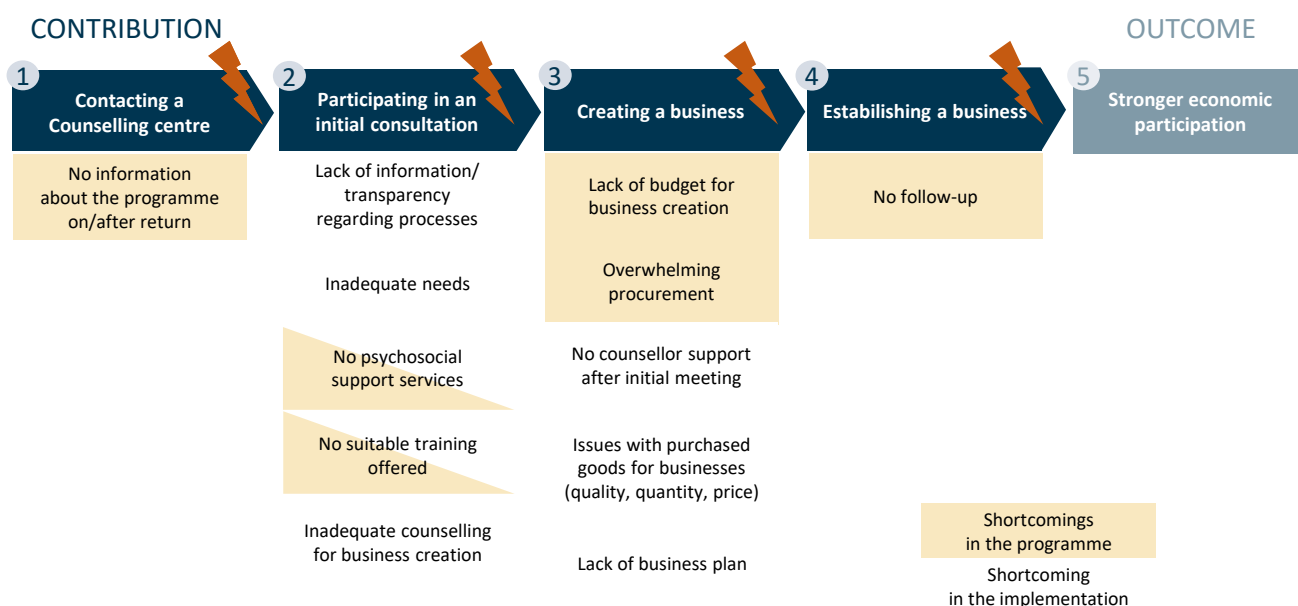
About a third of them demonstrated successful social participation, meaning they maintained stable relationships with family and friends while also being in a stable psychological condition. In most of these cases, the data shows that returnees came back to a situation in which their social participation was already secured. In individual cases, a positive interaction between economic success and psychosocial well-being was evident. By contrast, the majority of surveyed returnees who were not economically successful also had unmet psychosocial needs. These returnees did not participate in any measures that directly addressed their psychosocial problems.

3.3.4 Impact: Shortcomings in programme design and implementation

In the individual case analysis, systematic gaps and breakdowns were identified in all three case studies during the business creation process. These stemmed either from process-related gaps and breakdowns or shortcomings in the programme design and implementation of the PME. As a result, returnees were unable to complete certain steps in the pToC successfully and could not move forward in the process. Figure 11 shows the specific shortcomings identified at the respective process steps. Shortcomings in the programme design occurred at the beginning of the counselling and business creation process, as returnees were not systematically informed about the counselling centres but instead learned of them through acquaintances. At the end of the process, too, shortcomings in the programme design became apparent,

as no structured support after business creation was envisaged, such as follow-up visits. Shortcomings in implementation were most evident during the initial consultation. According to the programme design, returnees were to be supported with creating a business through training and the preparation of a business plan (Doc_4). The empirical findings, however, show that in many cases no suitable training was available and returnees did not prepare a business plan. In addition, both returnees and experts consistently criticised the budget for business start-ups as being too small. The pToC analysis also highlighted this point, demonstrating in some cases that the available budget was only sufficient to purchase part of the equipment required to start a business. This shortcoming had already been identified during PME III in internal studies (Doc_20).

Figure 11 Empirically identified shortcomings in programme design and implementation

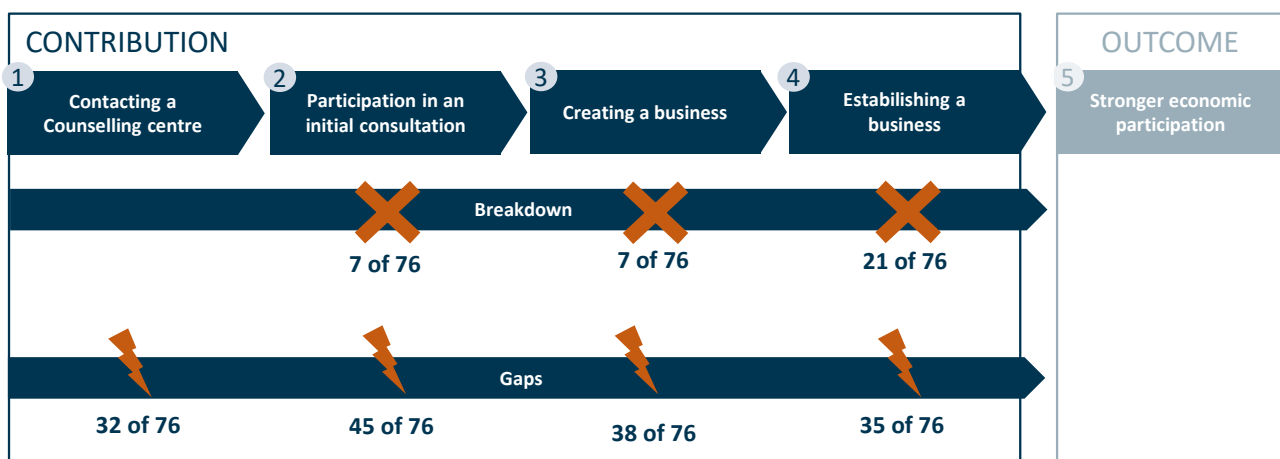


Source: DEval, own visualisation

On average, around half of the returnees surveyed experienced gaps or breakdowns during the process, which limited the efficacy of the programme. Figure 12 shows the number of gaps and breakdowns identified during the business creation process. Nearly half of the returnees surveyed abandoned the business creation process at one of the four steps (35 of 76). A breakdown meant that returnees decided to withdraw from

the business creation process or to give up an unprofitable business. In some cases, the analysis showed that several gaps had already hampered the process before it broke down. In most cases, returnees did not inform either the counsellors or the NGO staff of their decision to abandon the business creation process. As no systematic follow-up took place, counsellors and NGO staff were unable to respond in a timely manner.

Figure 12 Number of gaps and breakdowns identified during the business creation process



Source: DEval, own visualisation

Gaps and breakdowns were frequently observed during the initial consultation and the start-up process, as illustrated by the two following case examples. Where counsellors failed to carry out a thorough needs assessment and did not take account of returnees' psychological well-being while they were participating in an initial consultation, returnees

who needed support received no psychological assistance. This shortcoming led to a gap in the business creation process. For many returnees, unstable psychological well-being was a challenge and had a negative effect on the efficacy of the programme contribution to strengthening economic participation.

Detention pending deportation and the deportation itself were traumatic experiences for Said that have shaped his life ever since. A year after his deportation, he heard about the counselling centre from friends. Said contacted a counsellor, who invited him to an initial consultation. According to Said, the consultation was brief and focused on business creation. At that time, however, his daily life was marked by depression and suicidal thoughts, and he would have been grateful for some psychological support. The counsellor did not ask about his psychological well-being, and Said did not feel able to raise it himself. He was not offered any psychological support. Said has now been living back in his country of origin for six years, feels socially isolated and still suffers from depression. The business he started has not generated any income, so he has temporarily closed it.

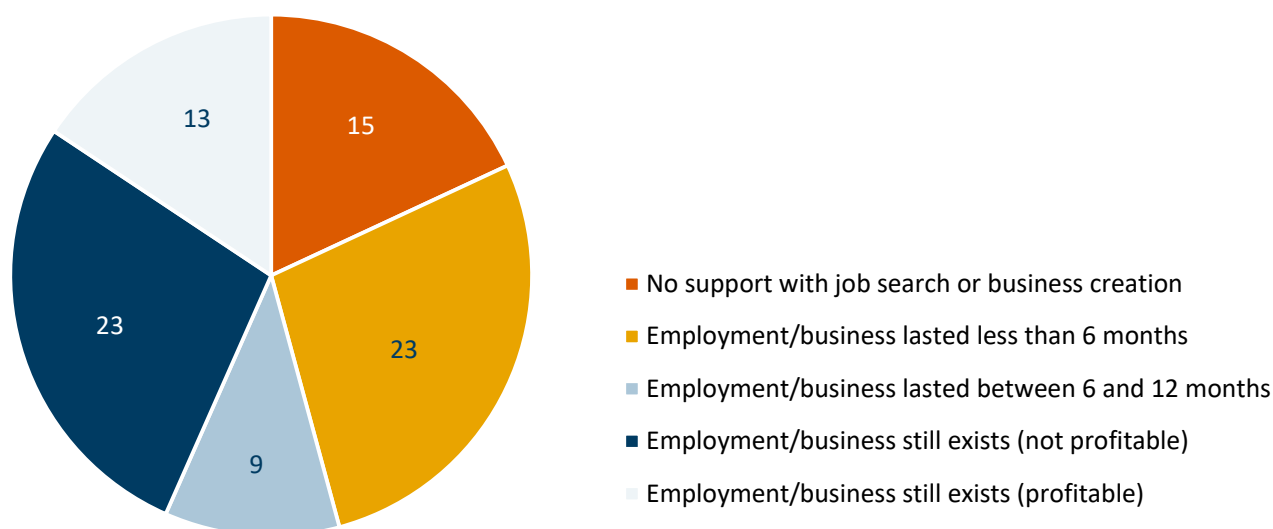
A breakdown during the “creating a business” step was in many cases due to insufficient financial support and the returnees’ own lack of financial resources. Where returnees had no additional financial support from their social networks, the budget provided for business creation was usually not sufficient.

Mohamed discontinued the business creation process. He had been living in Morocco for three years before a friend told him about the counselling centre. He contacted a counsellor, who invited him to an initial consultation. He was then referred to an NGO staff member who was supposed to support him with setting up a business. Mohamed presented two business ideas, which the NGO staff member rejected without giving clear reasons. Instead, the NGO staff member recommended that he open a café. Mohamed spent several months searching independently for premises; however, due to the high rental and deposit costs, he was unsuccessful. He reported this challenge several times to the NGO staff member before eventually abandoning the search. Mohamed did not inform either the counselling centre or the NGO staff member of this decision.

3.3.5 Sustainability of economic support services

A medium- or long-term effect of the measures implemented in terms of sustainable reintegration was observed in only a few of the returnees surveyed. Figure 13 shows how many of the businesses created were still in existence. Across all three case studies, around a sixth of the surveyed and supported returnees succeeded in establishing a business that survived for more than six months and was profitable enough at the time of data collection to cover their living expenses. Some of these success stories, however, were built on businesses that had already existed prior to receiving support. In other individual cases, returnees managed to close their business and use the proceeds to start a new one that proved more successful. The assessments of counsellors and NGO staff regarding the sustainability of economic reintegration support partially matched the data collected from the returnees. Across the case studies, NGO and counselling centre staff estimated the success rate of businesses following their support at around 50 percent (Exp_87, Exp_88, Exp_68).

The empirical results of the three case studies show that just over half of the businesses established survived longer than six months, but were not profitable during that period. Counsellors and NGO staff considered business creation to be very challenging under the given conditions. According to the GIZ, there had been plans to provide longer-term support for returnees during the start-up phase; however, due to output pressure and high demand from new clients, this was not possible in all countries. In these cases, the priority was to enable new clients to start a business rather than to provide longer-term support for existing ones (Exp_99). The returnees had on average been back in their countries of origin for 3.6 years, yet the majority were facing serious financial difficulties at the time of the survey and achieving little or no economic participation. Around 70 percent of the returnees surveyed stated that they were barely – or else not at all – able to support themselves independently. At the time of the survey, some were receiving financial support from family and friends.

Figure 13 Sustainability of employment/self-employment among the returnees surveyed

Source: DEval, own visualisation

Note: Absolute figures, including all returnees surveyed who, according to CMT, participated in a measure to improve economic participation (Σ 83)

Academic literature and further studies point to the limited sustainability of measures to promote the economic participation of returnees. The accompanying study on the federal StarthilfePlus programme examined the living conditions of returnees three years after their return. Around three quarters of those surveyed reported that their income was barely or not at all sufficient to cover their living expenses. Returnees aiming at self-employment in particular were still not in a stable income and employment situation even after three years (Kothe et al., 2023). The financial obligations and economic conditions in countries of origin present such major challenges for many returnees that securing an income through temporary economic support services remains unlikely (Altrogge, 2023; Kothe et al., 2023). Experts from the GIZ described deficits in the measures with regard to sustainability. According to them, sustainability had not been a focus in the early stages of the PME, due above all to strong domestic political pressure in Germany to curb irregular migration (Exp_100; Doc_20). A GIZ document on structural change in the labour market in development cooperation stated with reference to measures to promote business creation that these are not sustainable if they serve exclusively for income generation. In emergency situations,

such support may provide short-term social relief but does not lead to long-term success (Kühnert, 2022). The results of GIZ's internal tracer studies, however, are more positive: around 40 percent of the returnees surveyed who received support for business creation reported being able to cover their living expenses (own calculations based on tracer studies data). This divergent finding, however, may be due to the methodological limitations of the tracer studies (see Box 3 in Section 2.5).

3.3.6 Individual and country-specific contextual factors of efficacy

The causal analysis of economic participation identified individual and country-specific contextual factors that strongly influenced the efficacy of the PME. The following section distinguishes between individual and country-specific factors identified in the analysis of each case context and categorised according to their positive or negative influence. In Figure 16 (pToC institutional level: knowledge transfer), the contextual factors are shown in the lower box. This illustrates how contextual factors can affect the entire pToC.

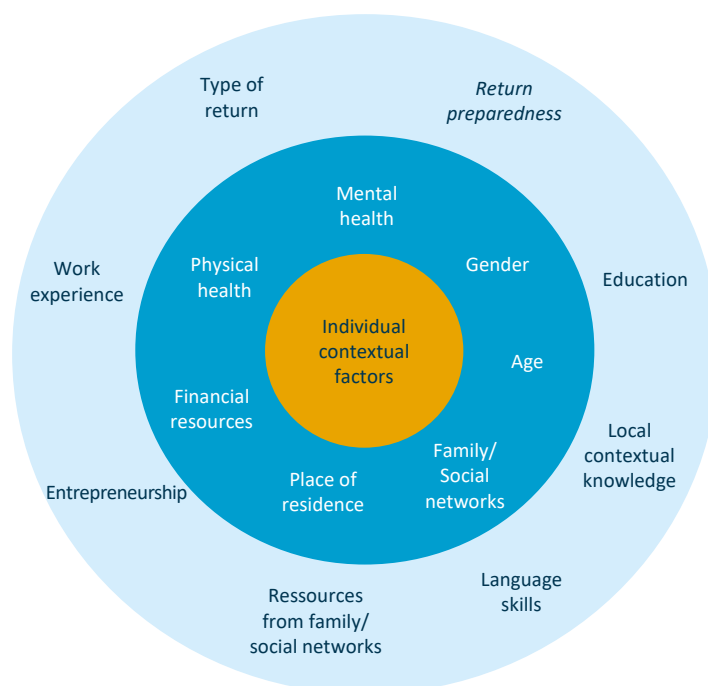
When the pToC was created, the contextual factors mainly considered were those that previous academic studies of the reintegration process had identified as significant (Doc_40, pending publication). By comparing these with the data collected from the three case study countries, the contextual factors were adapted and expanded. Each contextual factor listed in the following figures had a decisive influence on the reintegration process for at least one returnee. In most cases, several contextual factors operated simultaneously.

The individual and country-specific contextual factors identified are in some cases closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Each factor can play out in different ways, with positive or negative implications for the context and therefore for the chances of successful reintegration. For example, the financial situation has a positive effect on the causal mechanisms of the pToC if it is characterised by a regular income and savings. By contrast, having no income or being in debt negatively affects the causal mechanisms of the pToC.

Individual contextual factors

Across the case studies, it was observed that **social relationships with family, friends and the community had a major influence on the success of returnees' economic participation.** Stable relationships and family structures could mitigate the impact of negative contextual factors. In contrast, unstable relationships or social isolation reduced the likelihood of successful business creation. In other words, the efficacy of measures to promote economic participation was strongly dependent on the contextual factor of returnees' social relationships. This is consistent with the findings of many academic studies (Doc_40, pending publication). Figure 14 shows all the individual contextual factors identified in the three case study countries. Those highlighted in dark blue are key factors that played a role in all cases of the returnees surveyed.

Figure 14 Individual contextual factors



Source: DEval, own visualisation

The negative manifestations of the following five contextual factors had a major influence on returnees who failed to achieve better economic and social participation.

1. **Unstable mental health:** The IOM's IMPACT study found that the experience of migration and return can negatively affect the mental health of returnees (Hall and IOM, 2022). In our sample, too, there was a high proportion of returnees who were not in a stable psychological state (34 of 83, around 41%). If returnees' mental health is unstable, this has a major influence on the causal mechanisms of the pToC. Creating and running a business is very demanding and requires psychological resilience.
2. **Type of return:** The type of return was found to be crucial to people's mental health. Deportations and other short-notice departures gave those affected no opportunity to prepare mentally for return, which in some cases triggered trauma that continued to prevent sustainable reintegration years later. More than half of the deported returnees in our sample are currently not in a stable mental state (12 of 21). The type of return also affected returnees' overall ability and capacity to reintegrate in their country of origin. A lack of preparation time before departure limited their ability to make arrangements for their arrival back home.
3. **No / hardly any financial resources:** Limited financial resources are another contextual factor common to the "unsuccessful" cases across the case studies. Many of the returnees surveyed are affected by relative poverty, with no regular income and no savings. Debt also affects returnees' situations, having a negative impact on their economic and social participation and on the reintegration process (Barnett et al., 2023). This negative contextual factor is also widespread among the local population in the case study countries.
4. **Limited relationships with family / social networks:** Good relationships with family and friends enabled some returnees to ease their financial hardship with support from their social environment. In cases where no improvement in economic and social participation was observed, the absence of a social network and family conflicts often coincided with financial hardship. In particular, the stigma of failed migration poses enormous challenges for returnees. It makes it more difficult for them to reach out to family and friends and helps explain why, on arrival in their country of origin, they isolate themselves and do not ask for or receive support from their social environment (Carr, 2014; Eager, 2020; Flahaux, 2017; Mielke, 2023; Paasche et al., 2016; Şahin-Mencütek, 2023; Schmitt et al., 2019).
5. **Physical health:** Several returnees who did not achieve improved economic and social participation were found to be in poor physical health. This contextual factor has also been identified in academic research as decisive for the reintegration process (Doc_40, pending publication). In the cases examined, it was likewise evident that poor physical condition had a negative impact on mental health.

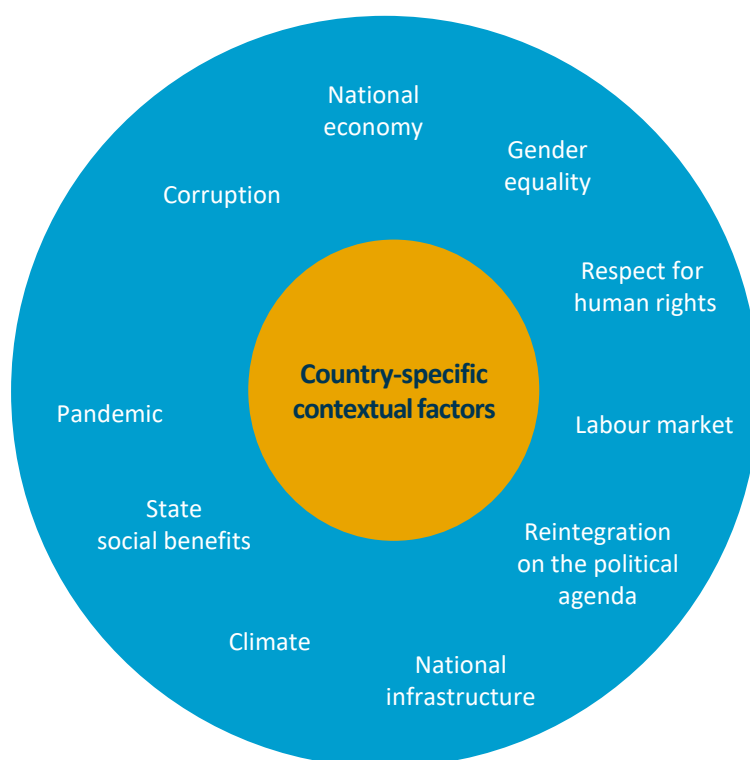
The positive manifestations of the following three contextual factors had a major influence on returnees who achieved better economic and social participation.

6. **Return preparedness:** As highlighted in previous academic studies (Doc_40, pending publication; Cassarino, 2004), being prepared for return played a key role for the returnees in our sample. It had a major influence on the efficacy of measures to support sustainable reintegration. In many of the cases rated as successful in the impact analysis, a certain level of return preparedness had already been achieved prior to return. The level of return preparedness depends primarily on the type of return (Altrogge, 2023). More than half of the returnees surveyed who achieved successful economic participation had returned to their country of origin with the support of an AVRR programme. Return preparedness also has the potential to positively influence other contextual factors, such as mental health or family and network relationships.
7. **Work experience:** Returnees benefited from their work experience during the business creation process. Many came to their initial consultation at the counselling centre with a business idea already in mind, which accelerated the start-up process. Those who had been active entrepreneurs in a given sector before migration also found it easier to connect with networks and move their business plans forward. In some cases, however, the work experience they already had was not sufficiently taken into account during counselling, meaning it could not have a positive effect.
8. **Entrepreneurial spirit:** The analysis shows that entrepreneurial spirit and strong motivation on the part of founders played an important role in very successful business creation. Experts interviewed emphasised that businesses should preferably not be started out of necessity but should be based on recognised opportunities and potential (see also Kühnert, 2022). This was particularly evident in cases where greater financial leeway was available and founders were already able to cover all or part of their living expenses from their own resources before creating the business.

Country-specific contextual factors

Across the case studies, it is evident that implementing measures to support sustainable reintegration in countries of origin faces a range of challenging cross-cutting issues. Figure 15 shows all the country-specific contextual factors identified from the available data in the three case study countries.

The efficacy of support measures for returnees is particularly at risk from a poor national economic situation, a labour market with limited absorption capacity and the structural disadvantage faced by women.

Figure 15 Country-specific contextual factors

Source: DEval, own visualisation

1. **National economic situation:** In all three case studies, the causal mechanisms of the pToC were strongly affected by a poor national economic situation. This was evident, for example, in businesses affected by massive price fluctuations and high inflation.
2. **Labour market:** In all three case study countries, the difficult labour market situation also had a negative impact on the course of reintegration, as highlighted in academic studies (Altrogge, 2023). As a result, returnees often considered many job offers unattractive due to low pay or the sector involved. At the same time, many returnees opted for self-employment and business creation because of the difficult labour market, although this path is also dependent on many contextual factors, such as entrepreneurial experience (see Figure 14).
3. **Gender equality:** The structural disadvantage of women was above all a contextual factor in the case study of Northern Iraq, where it often negatively influenced the causal mechanisms of the pToC. Gender-specific barriers in the reintegration process and women's restricted access to the labour market were likewise found in a study by BAMF (Kothe et al., 2023).

3.3.7 Case study findings in context

The impact analysis shows that the likelihood of successful and lasting economic reintegration of returnees through business creation is low. In just under a third of the cases examined, measures to support business creation were found to have been carried out effectively (A and C cases; see Figure 8). This means that in these cases, returnees successfully completed the prescribed process steps of the causal pathway for business creation and the measure contributed to the establishment of the business. In half of these cases, however, this positive contribution did not materialise in improved economic participation, as the businesses created failed due to negative contextual conditions, such as high inflation. A case is considered successful in terms of contributing to strengthened economic participation if (1) returnees are able to continue running their business independently after the creation phase, and (2) their economic situation has improved as a result of creating the business, with returnees earning an income, even if it does not yet fully cover their living costs. Ultimately, only a seventh of the businesses created were found to have helped returnees achieve improved economic participation. In around two thirds of the cases examined, no measures to support business creation were found to have been carried out effectively (B and C cases; see Figure 8). In these cases, shortcomings in the design or implementation of the process steps were identified, so that the measure ultimately made no positive contribution for returnees. At its core, process tracing demonstrated that while the theorised causal pathway to business creation was conceptually possible, the actual likelihood of a positive outcome (that the income generated is sufficient to cover living expenses) is low.

A key reason for the limited efficacy is the lack of alignment between the most frequently used instrument of employment promotion – business creation – and the conditions present among the target group of returnees. The needs assessment of returnees surveyed shows that their primary concern is to generate income as quickly as possible to cover their living expenses. Across countries, the majority of returnees belong to a target group with little or no financial resources and little or no entrepreneurial experience, yet these are precisely the conditions required for business creation to be effective (Storz et al., 2024). Businesses created out of necessity and without the appropriate framework conditions run the risk of constituting unsustainable material or financial support (Kühnert, 2022; Whyte and Hirslund, 2013). This observation applies to many of the cases studied across all three case study countries. Experts from various stakeholder groups confirmed that the demands of entrepreneurship could not be met by most returnees and emphasised that not everyone is able to start a business (Exp_100, Exp_31, Exp_83, Exp_84, Exp_97, Exp_26, Exp_6). Studies carried out within the framework of the PME also indicate that only careful selection of suitable individuals can lead to promising business creation (Dok_20; Kühnert, 2022). The support services offered – such as training, business plan advice and material assistance – could not provide the conditions needed for successful business creation among returnees. The detailed impact analysis using process tracing also showed shortcomings in the way the support services were designed in the partner countries and in how they were implemented. For example, business creation training lasted only a few days, the business plans drawn up were incomplete and lacked market analysis, there was no support during the difficult phase of establishing the business, and the budget provided was insufficient for the plans.

The national economic situation in countries of origin also constitutes a difficult contextual condition for business creation. Academic studies point to a range of challenges for business creation in development cooperation partner countries. These include weak financial markets, low demand, the absence of a favourable legal and regulatory environment for entrepreneurs, and a lack of technical infrastructure (Müller and Rammer, 2012). Empirical studies examining the effects of business creation on improving livelihoods report mixed or negative outcomes depending on the target group, the support measures available and the size of the businesses established (Kluve et al., 2017; Grimm and Paffhausen, 2015). In the context of return and reintegration, the specific challenge is that returnees face additional barriers in the local labour market as a result of migration. Studies indicate that returnees sometimes lack social capital in their country of origin, which is needed to start a business. Moreover, return preparedness influences the extent to which returnees are able to mobilise additional financial resources for their economic participation (OECD, 2020).

3.4 Impact and sustainability of the measures at institutional level

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have the reintegration services contributed to strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?

Evaluation Question 7: To what extent are the state partners institutionally able and willing to maintain the (re)integration support structures over time?

This chapter addresses the impact and sustainability of the BMZ's measures to support reintegration at institutional level. It looks at the extent to which the measures contributed to building institutional capacity in the partner countries (impact) and the extent to which state partners are able and willing to maintain the established structures over time (sustainability). The rating of impact and sustainability at institutional level was based on the findings of the case studies in Ghana and Morocco. Insights from the Northern Iraq case study, the CC-survey and additional expert interviews also informed the rating.

To rate the impact at institutional level, the analysis examined the extent to which the services made a positive contribution to strengthening national institutions in the field of return and reintegration. This drew on the views of interviewees from different stakeholder groups regarding the contribution of measures to institutional support (Indicator 4.2.1). In addition, the functionality of the causal mechanism for knowledge transfer⁴² was tested step by step (Indicator 4.2.2). Through the application of process tracing, the analysis established the extent of the causal link between PME measures and institutional capacity-building, as well as the points at which problems arose in the process.

⁴² In the exploratory case study in Ghana, the knowledge transfer mechanism was identified, together with programme managers and partners, as an important area of the ToC. The resulting pToC is shown in Figure 16.

Box 10 Impact rating (institutional level)⁴³

AC 4.2: The services made a positive contribution to building national institutions in the field of return and reintegration.

Overall rating: Mostly fulfilled

Indicator 4.2.1: Respondents from different stakeholder groups described the contribution of the measures for institutional support (knowledge transfer mechanism and other measures) as crucial overall for building national institutions in the field of return and reintegration => *mostly fulfilled*. The case studies showed that the services for institutional support made an important, but not solely decisive, contribution to building national institutions in the field of return and reintegration. Findings from the other partner countries also point to broad-based cooperation with state stakeholders.

Indicator 4.2.2: The knowledge transfer mechanism, previously identified as potentially effective, is rated as functional => *partially to mostly fulfilled*. For Morocco, the knowledge transfer mechanism is rated as partly functional, and for Ghana as functional, although existing challenges arising from contextual factors could only be partly addressed. Thanks to the programme's integrated approach – including tandem work with counsellors from Morocco's national employment agency and a secondment programme linked to the counselling centre in Ghana for staff from the Ministry of Labour and its employment agencies – knowledge was shared on how to address the needs of potentially traumatised returnees, helping to improve the quality of counselling provided by public institutions.

The rating of sustainability at the institutional level looked at how far the counselling centres are embedded in the counselling landscape in the countries of origin and whether state stakeholders have taken on institutional responsibility for them. As part of the case studies in Ghana and Morocco, it was assessed whether national and international stakeholders regard the counselling centres as a fixed part of

the counselling landscape (Indicator 7.1) and as a central point of contact for migration counselling (Indicator 7.2). The analysis also examined the extent to which state stakeholders take the lead in cooperation in the field of migration policy (Indicator 7.3) and the extent to which they contribute to the costs of the measures (Indicator 7.4).

Box 11 Sustainability rating (institutional level)

AC 7.1: The counselling centres are an established part of the counselling landscape in the countries of origin and a point of contact for (inter)national stakeholders.

AC 7.2: State stakeholders in the countries of origin assume institutional responsibility in the field of migration policy.

Overall rating: Partially fulfilled

Indicator 7.1.1: National stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground describe the counselling centre as an established part of the counselling landscape in the country of origin => *fulfilled*. In both case studies, national stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground described the counselling centres as an established part of the counselling landscape in the country of origin.

⁴³ The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex. The case-specific ratings of the indicators can be found in Chapter 2.1 of the online annex.

Indicator 7.1.2: International stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground recognise the role of the counselling centres as a central point of contact => *partially fulfilled*. While in Ghana, international stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground recognised the role of the counselling centre as a central point of contact. This was not the case in Morocco.

Indicator 7.2.1: Operational level: State stakeholders take the lead in cooperation in the field of migration policy => *partially fulfilled*. In both case studies, state stakeholders had assumed some additional responsibility during the evaluation period. Some obstacles in this regard were partly overcome. In the other partner countries, there are indications that partners will continue the programme.

Indicator 7.2.2: Political level: State partners also contribute to the programme costs => *barely fulfilled*. At the political level, both case studies show that the state partners contributed little to the financial costs of the programme. This is also confirmed by findings from the case study in Northern Iraq.

3.4.1 Programmatic perspective

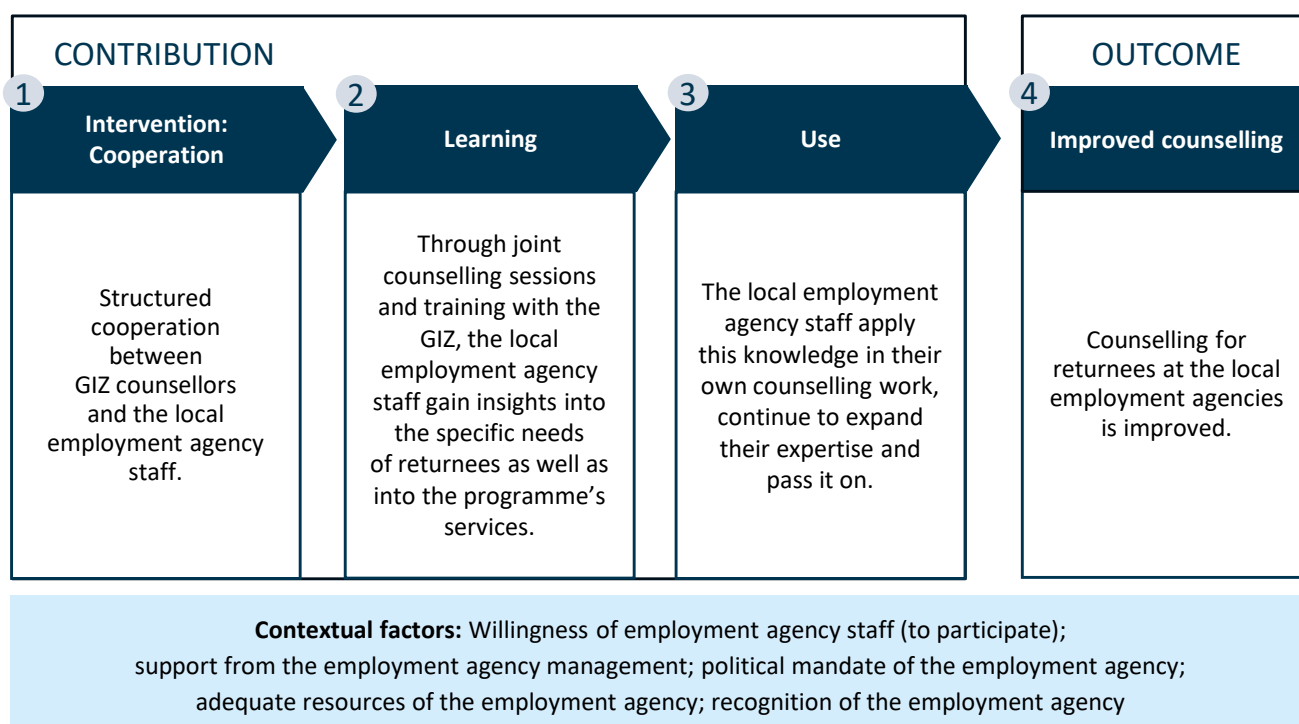
In addition to the individual level (see Section 3.3), the BMZ's measures to support sustainable reintegration also targeted the institutional level, with the aim of strengthening state capacities in the partner countries and creating conditions for the programme's sustainability. Within the theory of change described in Section 2.2, the institutional impacts are set out (see Figure 2 on the right-hand side). The counselling centres represent the central output. They were to be established by the GIZ in close coordination and under joint management with the partners. At the same time, efforts were to strengthen the institutional capacities of state stakeholders and build their willingness to take on institutional responsibility. The counselling centres were to be established as a fixed part of the counselling landscape in the countries of origin and as a point of contact for (inter)national stakeholders (Doc_6). To achieve these outcomes, accompanying capacity development measures with ministries and/or subordinate authorities (e.g. specialist/counselling expertise, state services, intermediaries, staff development) were agreed and implemented jointly (Doc_4). The measures to strengthen the institutional capacities

of the partners were described as important steps to ensure the sustainable efficacy of the intervention (Doc_4) so that our partners can eventually assume responsibility for counselling and placement themselves on a long-term basis (BMZ, 2019, p. 10).⁴⁴ Although capacity-building was initially seen as an accompanying part of the assignment, its importance grew over the course of the programme and more and more activities were carried out in this area (Exp_99; Doc_39).

Experts identified the knowledge transfer mechanism in advance as a potentially powerful part of the institutional impact pathway. The pToC for the knowledge transfer mechanism (see Figure 16) was reconstructed on the basis of an extensive review and analysis of programme documents and exploratory interviews in Ghana. It sets out the intermediate steps required to demonstrate a causal link between the measure and the outcome. The pToC presentation also highlights contextual factors relevant for the analysis. This pToC was empirically tested using process tracing in the case studies in Ghana and Morocco.

⁴⁴ International discussions suggest that close cooperation between the counselling centres and different government agencies helps build awareness of the importance of supporting returnees (OECD, 2020). If local partners are both willing and able to institutionalise these structures and services and provide them to the local population, the programme could eventually be transferred to national stakeholders.

Figure 16 pToC – institutional level: knowledge transfer



Source: DEval, own visualisation

3.4.2 Findings from the Ghana case

Institutional impact:

Building professional and counselling capacity

During the evaluation period, the GIZ delivered extensive measures to strengthen institutional capacity in Ghana. It organised training for staff of the counselling centre, the BPs, the Ministry of Labour, the state employment agencies (public employment centres – PECs) and NGOs. The GIZ also supported the development of buildings and IT infrastructure at ten PEC locations (Exp_18, Doc_38).

- **Staff at the counselling centre and within the BPs received training in various areas.** Topics ranged from counselling methods, psychological counselling and de-escalation management to self-care and stress management (Exp_21, Exp_6, Exp_18). Since many staff members had no prior experience in reintegration counselling, the training courses were considered highly relevant and important (Exp_6, Exp_13, Exp_23, Exp_7). Some of the training was delivered directly by the GIZ, while others were offered under PMD or by partners such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) or the University of Ghana (Exp_30, Exp_52, Exp_25).

- The GIZ also conducted numerous training courses for staff at the Ministry of Employment and its subordinate employment agencies. These covered customer counselling and engagement (including on migration), basic IT skills and office management, and were aimed at employment agency staff as well as administrative personnel and middle management in the Ministry of Labour (Exp_20, Exp_18). Employment agency staff and ministry officials highlighted the good access, quality and added value of the training for their work (Exp_46, Exp_44). In addition, exchanges were organised between employment agency staff in Ghana and South Africa, along with study trips to Germany (Exp_49, Exp_50).
- **NGO staff also found the services to expand counselling capacity useful, although they noted that improvements were still needed in the area of working with vulnerable groups.** To support its implementation partners and the state employment agencies, the GIZ regularly organised seminars and conferences on relevant topics in reintegration work, such as mental health, psychosocial support, and reintegration processes and dynamics. NGOs regarded these as useful because they helped to strengthen their skills in reintegration work (Exp_28). Not all partners, however, were equally prepared for working with vulnerable target groups. One partner NGO of a BP, for example, had not adapted its counselling services to the needs of potentially traumatised and marginalised people, despite having direct contact with them. Although it had received further training in organisational development, it had not been sensitised to working with these groups (Exp_27). According to BP counsellors, there remains a high and ongoing need for training on the needs and counselling of vulnerable groups among returnees. To date, they have counselled only a few returnees from these groups compared to members of the local population, and cooperation with them has tended to be the exception. Counsellors often reported facing difficulties in responding to their needs in a differentiated way (Exp_7).

Institutional impact: Knowledge transfer through a secondment programme

The central knowledge transfer mechanism in Ghana was a secondment programme, under which staff of the employment agencies and the Ministry of Labour worked for several weeks at the counselling centre. The aim was to transfer knowledge on return counselling methods and migration-related topics into the state structures. This knowledge transfer mechanism was examined along the pToC outlined in Figure 16. The analysis was based on interviews with staff of the counselling centre, the three PECs (in Accra, Tema and Kumasi) and the Ministry of Labour, all of which had seconded personnel to the counselling centre.

- **“Hospitation programme”:** During the evaluation period, the hospitation programme established a comprehensive knowledge transfer mechanism. It was based on an agreement between the GIZ and the Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) and provided for officials of the Ministry of Labour and staff of the PECs to be seconded to the counselling centre. The aim was to promote knowledge exchange and strengthen cooperation with the Ministry of Labour (Doc_45). Between 2017 and 2023, a total of 13 PEC staff from eleven locations in different regions (Greater Accra, Bono Region, Ashanti Region) were seconded to the counselling centre in Accra (Exp_20, Exp_49). Together with local staff, they conducted referral counselling, career coaching and migration counselling, and organised information events, training sessions and workshops (Exp_14). The counselling centre usually hosted two secondees at the same time: one official from the Ministry of Labour was seconded for a full year, and one PEC staff member for six to eight weeks (Exp_17). Interviewees (programme participants and other partners) suggested that the programme should be structured more systematically in the future and offer secondments of varying duration, so that more PEC staff could take part (Exp_14).

- “Learning”. The hospitants from the three PECs consistently reported numerous learning experiences during their time at the counselling centre.** These included new counselling methods, particularly for working with highly vulnerable groups, insights into the specific needs of migrants, skills in using new forms of communication and electronic data processing, as well as learning from exposure to the counselling centre’s work processes. *Case example: one hospitant reported gaining new understanding in how to deal with traumatised returnees, in particular that creating a good conversational atmosphere and building trust are crucial to the success of reintegration counselling. He learned this through close cooperation with the experienced counsellors at the counselling centre (Exp_46).* Other respondents confirmed similar insights in the areas mentioned above (Exp_49), for example on different reintegration support services, networking with other stakeholders involved in (re) integration work (Exp_49, Exp_14), or with regard to work processes and IT skills (Exp_14).
- “Use, expand, share”. After returning to their workplaces in the PECs, staff did apply what they had learned, but their role as intermediaries remained limited.** The learning experiences mentioned above were largely integrated into day-to-day counselling at the PECs after the hospitation. *Case example: According to the self-assessment of one employment officer interviewed, counselling sessions with returnees were adjusted so that sensitive topics were only addressed later in the conversation, with the initial focus on creating a trusting atmosphere (Exp_46).* Innovative practices relating to work culture and processes were also adopted from the counselling centre (Exp_47). The expectation that former hospitants would expand on their insights as intermediaries and pass them on to colleagues at the PECs (Exp_17) was only partially fulfilled. While it was reported that the newly applied practices attracted interest and were partly adopted (Exp_45, Exp_46), systematic transfer of knowledge and methods did not take place. At the time of data collection, no handbook for hospitants was available. Instead, knowledge transfer functioned more directly via the counselling centre, which organised training for PEC staff independently of the hospitation programme (Exp_14). Conveying knowledge on new communication formats and electronic data processing in the PECs also proved challenging. In two of the three PECs examined that had received infrastructural support from the BPs, these approaches worked. In one supported PEC and in the remaining PECs, however, the shift from analogue to digital communication failed due to inadequate hardware and building infrastructure.
- Outcome: “Improved counselling”. The quality of counselling in the PECs on migration-related issues improved as a result of the hospitation programme, while at the same time it led to staff turnover that in some cases had negative effects on the work of the PECs.** According to the former hospitants interviewed, the quality of their counselling improved after returning to their workplace (Exp_46, Exp_45, Exp_14, Exp_15). With the help of adapted methods, PEC staff were able to provide better counselling to clients who were under psychological strain. *Case example: An employment officer reported, “Two men came to see me. After we welcomed them, we tried to understand their concerns as best we could. They seemed disoriented, but by speaking to them in a calm way and reassuring them, we were able to ease their anger and confusion. The training I had taken allowed me to comfort them through the way I spoke. By the end of our meeting, they realised they could see things differently and they thanked me. Overall, we were able to improve the quality of our counselling.” (Exp_46).* Staff of the Ministry of Labour at both operational and political level also evaluated the hospitation programme positively (Exp_49, Exp_43, Exp_47). On the negative side, however,

the programme exacerbated the already strained staffing situation in the PECs. Depending on team size, they had to partially (Exp_46) or completely (Exp_49) suspend their services during the hospitalisation phase. The GIZ was aware of the problem and addressed it in discussions with partners, but was unable to counteract the temporary shortage of staff (Exp_8). Interviewees also pointed to the issue of staff turnover. Not all staff seconded from the PECs returned to their former positions at the employment agencies after completing the secondment. Some took on other roles in the Ministry of Labour in the capital, which undermined the original aim of strengthening decentralised counselling capacities and competences through the secondment programme.

- Context: Despite making important contributions, the institutional impact of the PME was limited by the lack of visibility and inadequate resourcing of the PECs.** The PECs' work in Ghana was said to be barely known among the local population (Exp_49). A recent study on public perceptions of the PECs in the Bono, Bono East and Ahafo regions showed that only about a quarter of respondents had heard of the PECs. Just 13 percent knew where the PEC in their district was located (Appiah et al., 2022). Another limiting contextual factor was the inadequate resourcing of the PECs. In addition to the staffing problems mentioned above, there were serious shortcomings in terms of equipment. Ten PECs in three pilot regions received infrastructural assistance as part of the support measures. In addition to building renovation, they were provided with urgently needed IT infrastructure and training to enable a switch to digital communication (Exp_14, Exp_11, Exp_8). In two of the three PECs examined, offices had already been refurbished and services improved, while in the third case, dilapidated premises and insufficient technical solutions disrupted work processes – with negative consequences for the quality of counselling services (Exp_49).

Sustainability of the established structures

Sustainability of the counselling centre: The counselling centre in Accra has become well established since it was created in 2017. It was built in cooperation with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations on a former car park of the Ministry. Consistent with staff at the counselling centre, ministry staff at both operational and political level described it as a firmly established and well-integrated counselling institution (Exp_17, Exp_18, Exp_43, Exp_47). The counselling centre is regarded as a model and an important driver for the further development of the national PECs thanks to its modern facilities and innovative working methods (Exp_47, Exp_46). And with the current expansion of its remit to include labour migration, the counselling centre's work is expected to remain relevant in the future (Exp_42, Exp_48).

International stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground recognise the counselling centre as a central point of contact. At working level, the evaluation period saw the establishment of regular exchange and cooperation with international stakeholders in this field (e.g. the IOM, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the World Bank and the EU) (Exp_37, Exp_38, Exp_3, Exp_41, Exp_40). The counselling centre and the IOM, for instance, referred returnees to one another depending on the topic and the services available. During the evaluation period, the IOM also provided psychosocial counselling on behalf of the GIZ. NGOs active in this field likewise described the counselling centre as a central institution to which they refer their clients (Exp_34). Originally founded as the “Ghanaian-German Centre”, it was renamed the “Ghanaian-European Centre” in February 2022 following EU co-financing (Doc_46), marking a further step towards institutionalisation.

The state stakeholders played only a limited leading role when it came to cooperation on migration policy at the operational level. It became clear that, in the PECs selected by the PME, structural conditions had been improved to decentralise job placement and, in future, to be able to provide migration counselling. However, the PECs were not involved

in the referral process of the counselling centre in Accra or in return counselling up to the end of the evaluation period. On the one hand, returnees from remote regions were often counselled at the counselling centre instead of using the PEC structure (Exp_44). For example, PEC staff referred returnees to the counselling centre in Accra, citing a lack of resources, because they could receive better support there (Exp_49, Exp_46). On the other hand, there was no referral of returnees who had initially been counselled at the counselling centre to the PECs – neither the returnees interviewed nor the employment officers could report such cases (Exp_49, Exp_46, Exp_14). One Ministry of Labour official described the GIZ programme as a wake-up call for the ministry to start working on labour migration policy at the head office and take it to the regions (Exp_42); however, the explicit aim of the programme – to strengthen the institutional capacities of state stakeholders (Doc_6, Exp_47, Exp_17) – has so far only been partially achieved.

Although the partners in the Ministry of Labour generally supported the GIZ programme, the financial contribution of the partners at the policy level was very limited. Senior officials in the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations described the institutional support provided by PME as an important contribution to building state institutions (Exp_43, Exp_48). At the same time, the partners also stressed that their financial leeway in this area was very limited. Despite the conceptual leadership role assumed by the ministry (Exp_17), no financial contribution from the partner side could be identified apart from providing the land for the counselling centre (Exp_17, Exp_42, Exp_43, Exp_49). Well-informed experts in the Ministry likewise reported that, due to tight budget constraints during the evaluation period, there had been no financial support for the expansion of the PECs (Exp_42). The low level of ownership on the part of the partners was also evident in their unwillingness to bridge the staffing shortages in the PECs caused by the hospitation programme.

This lack of ownership makes it difficult to sustain the established structures over time. To safeguard the achievements, medium-term funding from external donors is required as a minimum. Interviewees from the GIZ and the partner side agreed that the aim of capacity building at the institutional level had been to increasingly transfer responsibility to the partners (Exp_17, Exp_18, Exp_43, Exp_48, Exp_42). Although important progress was made during the evaluation period, respondents indicated that, at the operational and political level in the partner country, doubts remain as to whether the progress achieved so far is sufficient for a handover (Exp_48, Exp_46, Exp_49, Exp_50). Through the programme's support, the PECs are better able to provide counselling to their clients, but are hardly in a position to offer concrete services themselves (Exp_50). The Ministry of Labour has so far been unable to secure additional funding from the Ministry of Finance to strengthen the PECs (Exp_42, Exp_17). The unanimous view of interviewees is therefore that further capacity-building will continue to depend on external financing in the future (Exp_50, Exp_45).

3.4.3 Findings from the Morocco case

Institutional Impact: Building professional and counselling capacity

The counselling centres in Morocco were formally integrated into the structures of the national employment agency. Supported by the responsible ministry, seven Moroccan-German counselling centres (espace d'information maroco-allemand – EIMAs) were established over time in different cities. These centres are located on the premises of the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment and Skills (Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences – ANAPEC). The EIMAs are not independent counselling centres, but fully embedded in the national structure as part of the local authorities (Exp_78). Staff working in these centres (EIMAs) are employees of the GIZ, while the counsellors based at ANAPEC are employees of the national employment agency.

In Morocco, PME contributed to building the technical and counselling capacities of staff from the national employment agency and cooperating NGOs. During the evaluation period, a total of twelve training sessions were held for counsellors at the counselling centres (EIMA), the employment agency, and in some cases for NGO staff. The main topics included counselling methods, working with vulnerable groups – particularly individuals under psychological strain – and exchange between staff of the EIMA and ANAPEC to improve counselling and referral processes. In addition, thematic workshops were offered on regular migration, such as the recognition of vocational qualifications in Germany (PC_2, Exp_82, Exp_83, Exp_78). Training sessions on psychosocial health were provided for NGO staff, who rated them as useful (Exp_88, Exp_87, Exp_89).

Institutional impact: Knowledge transfer through a tandem programme

The central mechanism of knowledge transfer in Morocco is the tandem programme. Counsellors from the counselling centres (EIMA) and the national employment agency (ANAPEC) formed tandem partnerships designed to ensure close cooperation and regular exchange, with the aim of embedding knowledge of return counselling requirements and other migration-related topics into state structures. The pToC (see Figure 16) sets out the assumptions underlying this knowledge transfer mechanism, which were examined as part of the case studies. In Morocco, the analysis was based on interviews conducted in the cities of Beni Mellal, Casablanca and Tangier with EIMA counsellors, their ANAPEC tandem partners and two ANAPEC directors. The findings are presented below in line with the pToC.

- **“Tandem programme”. The tandem arrangements – made up of counsellors from the EIMA and ANAPEC – facilitated intensive integration into the existing structures of the Moroccan employment agency.** During the evaluation period, six counselling centres were opened within ANAPEC offices. The locations were selected in close consultation with the Ministry of Labour (Exp_93, Exp_78). The GIZ employed one counsellor per EIMA,

while ANAPEC assigned its specialist counsellors for international job placement, self-employment and regular migration to the tandem role. A prerequisite for successful tandem cooperation was that EIMA staff integrated themselves into the existing ANAPEC structure and regarded themselves as part of this institution. As one EIMA counsellor put it, “There was no official body that had previously taken on this work [of the EIMA], which meant that no model for it existed within a public institution. We had to follow ANAPEC procedures and integrate our support accordingly” (Exp_81). In all three EIMAs included in the study, the tandem relationship was described on both sides as trusting and open, with close cooperation. This cooperation was, however, limited to the operational level (Exp_84).

- **“Learning and awareness-raising”. Training sessions helped raise awareness of the specific needs of returnees and the related counselling requirements, and informed the tandems about available services for this group.** As described above, several training sessions on role understanding and on technical and methodological skills were held during the evaluation period for EIMA and ANAPEC staff. In addition, two tandems took part in a study visit to Germany, where they visited the Federal Employment Agency. Further opportunities for exchange were provided through meetings with counsellors from other PME partner countries. In all interviews, the tandem partners evaluated the training and exchange formats positively, noting that they had sensitised them to the particular needs of returnees and equipped them with the skills required to counsel vulnerable individuals. Across all interviews with tandem counsellors, it was clear that returnees must be recognised as a target group with specific needs. According to one EIMA staff member, “As the programme progressed, awareness grew of the individual needs of returnees and the diversity of their profiles. Initially the administration thought mainly of Moroccans abroad and returning experts, but the reality turned out to be much more diverse, with different levels of vulnerability” (Exp_81).

- **“Practical cooperation and application of what was learned”.** According to the tandems, joint working structures developed over the course of the programme, **although these were not yet fully efficient.** Operational cooperation within the tandems was described as trusting and informal. Their physical proximity allowed counsellors to exchange ideas during their day-to-day work. All three tandems reported holding regular *jour fixe* meetings in their regions, which they found particularly helpful in the initial phase as a way to learn from one another. All three ANAPEC tandems interviewed stated that their new role had enabled them to build expertise and develop professionally. One counsellor saw additional career opportunities for herself in German-Moroccan cooperation on regular migration (Exp_97). The lack of shared data interfaces, however, was criticised. Cooperation between counsellors is currently hampered because they work in separate databases and must always rely on the availability of their tandem partner (Exp_96, Exp_94). The ANAPEC management also noted that the partner side lacked sufficient data to make an independent assessment of the effectiveness and impact of EIMA activities (Exp_95).
- **Outcome: “Improved counselling”.** Counsellors from the EIMA and ANAPEC worked together in tandems at every site visited, which improved counselling for returnees. Before the PME, ANAPEC did not provide specific counselling for returnees. Through the programme, a counselling and referral system was established that explicitly addressed the needs of returnees and was implemented jointly with the Moroccan employment agency. Counsellors emphasised that psychosocial support and the direct financing option provided through the GIZ were essential additions to the ANAPEC portfolio. They also noted that ANAPEC offices without EIMA presence lacked information in the area of reintegration counselling. Ultimately, the EIMA offices helped to raise awareness of ANAPEC services among part of the target group. The EIMA played a decisive role in raising awareness of and promoting the support services offered by ANAPEC, thereby increasing ANAPEC’s visibility (Exp_94).
- **Context: Despite improved counselling, the institutional impact of the PME was limited by the lack of efficacy and inadequate political support.** Senior ANAPEC staff and counsellors at the operational level acknowledged the programme’s added value due to its innovative approaches; however, the limited impact at the individual level also reduced the effects at institutional level. Shortcomings in programme design and implementation in the area of business creation (see Section 3.3.4) restricted the reach of joint counselling services. Referring to the widespread problem that many returnees were unaware of the programme, one ANAPEC staff member explained: “The number of participants was not as high as expected, which was due to various factors, including the innovative character of these measures and the challenges involved in their implementation” (Exp_94). The efficacy of cooperation at institutional level was also limited by ANAPEC’s mandate to offer only employment-promoting measures. While ANAPEC’s management supported the establishment of the EIMA, psychosocial support services were not part of its remit.

Sustainability of the established structures

During the evaluation period, the introduction of the EIMA added an important new element to the counselling landscape. Unlike in Ghana, no separate counselling centres were established; instead, the GIZ placed counsellors in *espaces* (rooms) within the offices of the Moroccan employment agency ANAPEC. Representatives of ANAPEC management stressed that the EIMA counsellors were not external actors, but fully integrated into the agency’s structures and under its management authority (Exp_93, Exp_95). This close cooperation was also confirmed by agency staff at the operational level (Exp_96, Exp_97, Exp_94).

International stakeholders in the field, however, did not attribute a central role to the EIMA within the counselling landscape. On the one hand, a Europeanisation of the EIMA was imminent at the time of data collection: similar to Ghana, the centres were to be renamed from “Espace Allemand” to “Espace Européen” (Exp_78) while retaining their role

as contact points for the BPs in promoting training and regular migration to Germany. On the other hand, experts considered the EIMA of limited relevance due to the very small number of returnees counselled. There was also criticism of unclear cooperation with international stakeholders such as the IOM and the EU, and in particular of the lack of coordination between the GIZ and the IOM (Exp_91, Exp_92). According to the EU, responsibility for structuring the referral processes in the new EU Joint Initiative Programme financing phase lay primarily with the GIZ (Exp_91). A well-informed expert, however, was unable to provide any information on the design of the EU-funded Joint Initiative Programme or on the role of the EIMA within it (Exp_92).

At the operational level, ANAPEC counsellors took on greater responsibility for work processes during the evaluation period, though this varied across sites and was hampered by insufficient data exchange. In the six EIMA offices, the tandem programme led to closer cooperation and the establishment of a clear division of labour between EIMA and ANAPEC staff (Exp_93). At some sites, tandem staff had already changed without interrupting cooperation. ANAPEC offices with EIMA presence recognised the added value for their work, and the ANAPEC tandems interviewed recommended setting up EIMA offices at other sites of the national employment agency as well (Exp_94, Exp_97). At two sites, ANAPEC counsellors assumed more responsibility for the referral process, which fostered relationships with the GIZ's partner NGOs. At the same time, the lack of mutual access to databases (Exp_93, Exp_96, Exp_94) made it more difficult for them to take on ownership.

Despite the intensified cooperation on reintegration counselling within the structures of the national employment agency, there was little willingness at political level to contribute to the costs of the PME. As in Ghana, the government's financial contribution in Morocco was low. While the ANAPEC counsellors involved in the programme were paid by the Moroccan side and the national employment agency provided the premises (and materials) for the EIMA, there was no further financial contribution from Morocco to the programme (PC_2).

3.4.4 Case study findings in context

With regard to impact and sustainability at the institutional level, the case study on Northern Iraq, the CC-survey and expert interviews provided additional findings to help contextualise the results presented above.

Findings from the Northern Iraq⁴⁵ case study complement the evidence from Ghana and Morocco on institutional sustainability and highlight in particular the political and financial hurdles involved. During the evaluation period, staff at the counselling centre in Erbil and the responsible ministry (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs – MOLSA) received training on case management and integration. Four ministry staff members were trained as trainers. While MOLSA expressed interest in expanding cooperation with the counselling centre, a lack of resources hindered the continuation of institutional capacity-building, meaning that the trained individuals could not be deployed as intended (Exp_61). The background to this was an ongoing dispute over political priorities and funding between the government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the central government in Baghdad. MOLSA and its implementing organisations did not receive the financial allocations required to carry out the measures (Exp_73). An internal evaluation of the Migration for Development Programme (PME) for Iraq as a whole concluded that although training sessions had taken place, they had not led to closer working relations or further outcomes (Doc_20).

The implementing staff in the counselling centres of the other partner countries painted a generally positive picture. The CC-survey showed that capacity-building was pursued at different levels in most partner countries. In almost all countries, training sessions were offered to staff of the state partners and were taken up by them. In Egypt, Ghana, Senegal and Serbia, they even participated in training sessions in Germany. In around half of the partner countries, staff of state institutions spent longer periods in the counselling centres to gain experience in counselling work. Conversely, in around half of the partner countries,

⁴⁵ The Northern Iraq case study focused on examining the individual level. Nevertheless, interviews were also conducted with partner representatives and implementing staff, which provided important insights into the institutional level.

counsellors from the counselling centres occasionally worked within the structures of the partners, in two countries for longer periods. In addition, implementing staff in seven of the eight countries reported that capacity-building measures for NGOs had been offered and that active networking between civil society and state stakeholders had been promoted. With regard to the sustainability of the structures created, all implementing staff interviewed were optimistic that, if cooperation were to end, at least parts of the services would be maintained by the partner government. Some even expected that substantial elements would be preserved. However, this positive assessment by the implementing staff covered only partial aspects of institutional sustainability. Moreover, since these statements could not be compared with those of the partner side, and the case studies revealed significant differences between the two perspectives (see also Section 3.5 below), the statements from the CC-survey were assessed as less meaningful compared with the findings of the more comprehensive case studies.

According to GIZ, structures were established in several partner countries where the PME/ZME was not continued and handed over to local partners. By the end of the evaluation period, counselling centres had been handed over to partner structures in two of the programme's 13 countries (Albania and Senegal), with the process under way in three others (Gambia, Kosovo and Serbia). The GIZ reported that functioning partner structures had been established in these countries and broadening the range of services had helped strengthen the profile of reintegration. In Senegal, the counselling centre was transferred to state partners in mid-2024 and subsequently operated as a subordinate agency of the Ministry of Youth (GIZ, 2024). The aim was to maintain the referral network, but the GIZ's services are no longer available, and referrals are now made only to its own provision and that of the IOM (Exp_99).

3.5 Coherence between BMZ measures and state partner activities

Evaluation Question 8: To what extent are there synergies or areas of tension between BMZ-supported (re)integration services and those provided by state partners?

This chapter addresses the coherence between the BMZ's measures and activities of state partners. It focuses on the extent to which BMZ services were embedded in the existing structures and activities, and where synergies and tensions emerged. The analysis begins by rating how far the measures were integrated in Ghana and Morocco, with a focus on synergies and parallel structures (Indicator 8.1). The subsequent section describes the areas of tension that are relevant for effective and sustainable support and reviews the extent to which these could be resolved during the evaluation period (Indicator 8.2). The rating of the coherence criterion draws not only on the findings from the case studies in Ghana and Morocco, but also on insights from the case study in Northern Iraq, the results of the CC-survey and additional expert interviews.

Box 12 Coherence rating⁴⁶

AC 8.1: BMZ measures are embedded in state structures in a way that harnesses synergies rather than creating parallel structures.

AC 8.2: The area of tension most relevant for effective and sustainable support was resolved during the evaluation period.

Overall rating: Partially fulfilled

Indicator 8.1: Rating of the embedding of BMZ measures in the state structures of partner countries => *partially fulfilled*.

There were only limited synergies between BMZ measures and the services of state partners, and parallel structures were identified. At the operational level, the services in the case studies in Ghana and Morocco were embedded in state structures, although in Morocco this varied by location. Parallel structures were observed in both Ghana and Morocco, where the counselling centres' services duplicated the state counselling structures for labour market integration. In the Northern Iraq case study, embedding in state structures was limited, and opportunities to create synergies through cooperation with another key stakeholder in national reintegration policy were not taken.

Indicator 8.2: Rating of the resolution of the area of tension relevant to effective and sustainable support => *partially fulfilled*. The area of tension most relevant for effective and sustainable support was only partially resolved during the evaluation period. In both case studies, political differences between Germany and the partner countries emerged as a key area of tension. While such tensions persisted in Morocco throughout the evaluation period, they were partially resolved in Ghana through the close involvement of state partners.

3.5.1 Programmatic perspective

The PME programme documents emphasise the aim of embedding the counselling centres coherently in partner structures, while also identifying the area of tension between the objectives of the state partners and those of the German government as a central obstacle. As outlined in Chapter 3.4, the measures to support sustainable reintegration were intended to be implemented in cooperation with a range of state partners. The goal of embedding within state structures to harness synergies is explicitly mentioned in the programme documents, which state that embedding the counselling centres in partner structures and existing programme activities

should avoid the creation of parallel structures (Doc_21, p. 3). In line with the political objective that state partners should ultimately assume responsibility for counselling and placement (BMZ, 2019), the final programme phase placed greater emphasis on embedding in state institutions and cooperating with them (Exp_99; see also Section 3.4). A central area of tension arose from the differing objectives of the BMZ and the state partners. The programme documents note the risk that these divergences, combined with a lack of ownership on the part of state partners, could hinder or even prevent the implementation of measures (Doc_4, p. 21).

⁴⁶ The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex. The case-specific ratings of the indicators can be found in Chapter 2.1 of the online annex.

3.5.2 Findings from the Ghana case

In Ghana, there was close exchange between state institutions and the counselling centre at both political and operational level. As described in Section 3.4.2, the counselling centre in Accra is an established part of the counselling landscape and closely interwoven with state structures. At political level, the programme cooperated with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MERL), and at operational level with the state employment agencies (PEC). Both sides described the cooperation as good. At political level, monthly meetings were held between the centre's management and the ministry, while at operational level there was a weekly exchange. As set out in Section 3.4.2, the counsellors at the centre worked closely and confidentially with the ministry and the PEC.

Synergies and parallel structures

Cooperation at working level between the counselling centre and the PECs was described as synergistic and complementary, with parallel structures largely avoided. The counselling centre's services expanded those provided by the state. In addition to training courses offered by the counselling centre for staff from the ministry and the PECs (PC_3, Exp_42), the services for returnees in particular were regarded as complementary (Exp_14, Exp_15, CC-survey). Since the PECs focus on job placement, the counselling centre's services promoting new business creation among returnees were seen as an additional element (Exp_14, Exp_15, Exp_46). With regard to counselling for the local population too, the counselling centre was regarded as a model in employment services thanks to its modern working processes and counselling methods (Exp_48), and its services were described as complementary: "There are no overlaps. The counselling centre goes far beyond that by providing training as well as start-up capital to encourage people to stay in the country and set up their own business. The establishment of the counselling centre is therefore of great importance" (Exp_46). Despite this positive assessment, the counselling centre's counselling for the local population can indeed

be seen as a parallel structure to the state PECs. A further parallel structure to the PECs existed in the youth employment agency (YEA) attached to the Ghanaian presidential office (Exp_20). Its aim was to bring young Ghanaians between the ages of 15 and 35 into employment through training and counselling. The programme had no influence over this duplication.

Area of tension

In Ghana, differing policy priorities between Germany and the partner country emerged as a key area of tension. Compared with other policy areas, the Ghanaian government appears to show limited interest in questions of return migration. In their migration policy study, Kandilige et al. (2023) observed a lack of interest on the part of the Ghanaian government in measures to promote return.⁴⁷ According to partners in the Ministry of Employment, ownership on the issue of return migration relates more to labour migration and institutional capacity building, and less to reintegration support for returnees. Interviewees with different perspectives nevertheless acknowledged a basic level of programme ownership (Exp_5, Exp_17, Exp_18, Exp_41, Exp_48); however, the divergent priorities became evident when it came to reintegration support. While Ghanaian partners broadly accepted the idea of assisting poorly qualified and largely inexperienced returnees in setting up small businesses, critics argued that this did not reflect government interests and offered only limited potential to boost employment (Exp_43, Exp_48).

Through the close involvement of state partners, the area of tension was partly resolved during the evaluation period. Owing to the close cooperation between counsellors at the counselling centre and the Ministry of Employment at operational level (see Section 3.4.2), the state partners were sensitised to the issue of return and reintegration. At policy level too, both sides agreed that involving partners closely in the planning and design of PME had helped build

⁴⁷ The issue relates above all to forced return. There are concerns that promoting return could undermine Ghana's diaspora engagement programmes, reduce remittance flows and increase unemployment in the country itself. In addition, opposition parties could use cooperation with European partners on this sensitive issue for their own purposes during election campaigns (Arhin-Sam et al., 2021).

mutual understanding and incorporate the respective interests into the programme (Exp_18, Exp_42). Overall, a change in awareness of return migration developed among state partners over the course of the programme. This also applied to the issue of deportations, which has more recently been recognised by state institutions as important (Exp_40). While the area of tension has not yet been fully resolved, there is now greater alignment between Germany's priorities and those of the partner government. It proved effective to set out the respective interests clearly from the start and to seek balance on an ongoing basis (Exp_18).

3.5.3 Findings from the Morocco case

At working level, there was close exchange between the state employment agencies and the EIMA based there, although the degree of involvement varied by location. As described in Chapter 3.4.3, PME in Morocco envisaged integrated cooperation with the state employment structures. Overall, the working-level relationships were described by different parties as good (Exp_76, Exp_78, Exp_84, Exp_94). The CC-survey gave a more neutral rating of cooperation, although collaboration at operational level was rated more positively than at political level. Annual meetings were held at political level, while operational-level meetings took place monthly (CC-survey). The degree of involvement of counsellors at the state employment agencies varied: in Tangier, referrals of returnees were always handled by the GIZ, whereas in Casablanca the tandems were in direct contact with the partner NGOs. In Tangier, tandems were overall less involved in counselling and referral processes than in Casablanca, as they were only able to devote part of their working time to cooperation with the EIMA (see Section 3.4.3; Exp_94, Exp_84).

Synergies and parallel structures

The integrated approach and close exchange between the state employment agencies and the EIMA based there created synergies. The majority of respondents in the CC-survey felt that EIMA services were a good complement to state measures. The services of the state institutions were neither very similar to, nor in conflict with, those of the EIMA. This complementarity was particularly evident in the area of psychosocial support, where, according to the tandems interviewed for the case study, responsibilities were clearly delineated. Because of the mandate restrictions of the national employment agency (ANAPEC), the psychosocial needs of returnees were addressed exclusively through the additional services provided by the EIMA (Exp_83).

Parallel structures, however, emerged in the area of labour market integration. In this field, additional services were created alongside those already offered by ANAPEC. The PME-funded provision of material resources for business start-ups was seen as an attractive supplementary service. At the same time, partners questioned the parallel structure that had been established. The national employment agencies, they argued, had their core competence in labour market integration and already offered a well-developed range of services for their target groups (Exp_95, Exp_93, Exp_94). It was also noted critically that the potential for synergies in the counselling process had not been fully utilised (Exp_95, Exp_94). Although the national employment agency had expertise in start-up counselling, returnees were referred to NGOs for this purpose. These NGOs then worked with external experts to review business plans, for instance, despite ANAPEC having its own specialised staff for such tasks. An experienced expert on the partner side recommended that the EIMA be more strongly integrated into ANAPEC structures and that the expertise of counsellors there be further developed, rather than outsourcing counselling for new business creation. The expert also suggested that ANAPEC could assume greater responsibility for psychosocial support. While it cannot offer these services itself because of mandate restrictions, it could still meet the need by cooperating with appropriate external actors (Exp_95).

Area of tension

As in Ghana, the central area of tension in Morocco lay in the differing policy priorities of Germany and the state partners.

From the German perspective, the focus was on the goal of promoting return and reintegration (Exp_76, Exp_80), whereas the Moroccan government showed little interest in this. Two problems arose in relation to ownership:

- Interviews with Moroccan partner stakeholders highlighted that, because only a small number of Moroccan returnees come back from Germany and the EU – most of them with low levels of education and little entrepreneurial experience – reintegration programs are not a high priority for the government. There was greater interest in promoting regular migration. At the start of the programme, it was agreed that the number of supported returnees and the number of migrants travelling to Germany through regular channels should roughly balance out. According to the figures, however, no such balance exists and the promotion of regular migration has fallen far short of Moroccan expectations (Exp_93, Exp_95). The GIZ acknowledged that counselling on regular migration played only a minor role during the PME and was not provided at all in the final phase, PME III (Exp_99).
- The lack of ownership of sustainable reintegration support is also linked to the fact that ANAPEC is responsible solely for measures promoting economic participation, and social or psychological support does not fall within its remit. Continuing the programme as a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees would therefore only be conceivable with the involvement of additional stakeholders.

The identified area of tension could not be resolved during the evaluation period. While good work was carried out at operational level in the EIMA, the differing objectives at political level persisted until the end of the Migration for Development Programme (PME). The general relief on all sides that this conflict of objectives is beginning to be addressed through the realignment of the follow-up project, “Centres for Migration and Development” (Exp_78, Exp_80), illustrates the complexity of the situation. No measures were identified during the evaluation period that could have resolved the area of tension. The fact that there were several changes on the Moroccan side in the ministries responsible for migration policy (between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour; Exp_76, Exp_85) made it more difficult to find constructive solutions to this problem.

3.5.4 Case study findings in context

Findings from the Northern Iraq case study complement the evidence from Ghana and Morocco on coherence and reveal significant parallels. In addition to the referral process established under PME within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA), similar structures existed under the Ministry of the Interior. With IOM support, a national referral mechanism was set up there and implemented by the Joint Crisis Coordination Centre (JCC). Returnees are registered with the JCC and entered into a database. According to one interviewee, the names of almost all returnees were recorded in this database (Exp_66). MOLSA stated that the JCC is even the lead government body responsible for the issue of returnees. MOLSA would have welcomed integration of the two parallel referral processes, but this had not occurred during the review period (Exp_66).

The implementing staff in the counselling centres of the other partner countries generally described the integration of measures to support sustainable reintegration into state structures at both political and operational level in positive terms. At political level, the relevant ministries of labour typically served as points of contact. At operational level, cooperation often took place with employment agencies or similar institutions. The type and intensity of this cooperation varied from country to country.

- **At the political level, the importance of the issue of return migration varied for the governments of the partner countries, but cooperation at this level was generally assessed positively.** Overall, only three of the nine implementing staff stated that the issue had been a priority for the partner government. Nevertheless, in the CC-survey, seven out of eight implementing staff reported that the partner governments had welcomed measures for returnees. Cooperation at political level was largely evaluated positively in terms of communication, trust and transparency. Five of the eight implementing staff considered that cooperation at political level had been characterised by trust and shared objectives. The intensity of cooperation at political level varied considerably: in some countries meetings were held monthly, while in others they took place less than once a year.
- **At operational level, cooperation between the state employment agencies and the counselling centres was assessed positively by the vast majority of the implementing staff.** All eight respondents stated that both sides had pursued the same objectives in their cooperation. Communication at operational level was described as good throughout the project period; in cases of disagreement, compromises were always reached, and cooperation was characterised by great mutual respect and trust. Existing structures were used effectively to better organise support for returnees. Meetings at operational level were held weekly in four countries and monthly in the other four.

4.

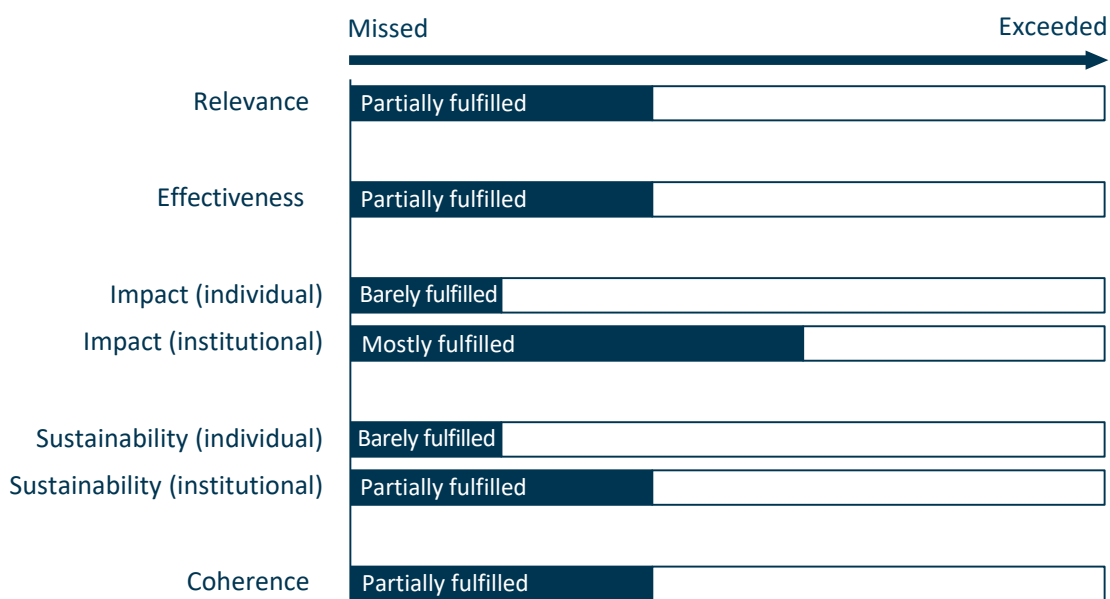
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Overall rating

This evaluation is the first comprehensive independent assessment of German development cooperation’s engagement in the area of sustainable reintegration of returnees. The evaluation focuses on measures supporting the sustainable reintegration of returnees from Germany in their countries of origin. Most of these measures were implemented through the global programme PME, as well as through bilateral and regional programmes in 13 partner countries. The ratings

of the BMZ’s engagement are based on a broad set of primary and secondary data. The methodological approach is described in detail in Chapter 2. The evaluation examines the BMZ’s engagement in support of sustainable reintegration against five OECD DAC criteria, differentiating between measures at the individual and institutional levels.⁴⁸ This final chapter begins with an overall rating, followed by three fundamental and six further recommendations relevant to the further development or redesign of engagement in the field of return and reintegration.

Figure 17 Rating of the OECD DAC criteria, differentiated by individual and institutional level



Source: DEval, own visualisation based on individual ratings (see Chapter 3)
 Note: Rating scale = missed, barely fulfilled, partially fulfilled, mostly fulfilled, fulfilled, exceeded; The assessment criteria, indicators and rating scales used for the ratings are set out in Chapter 1.5 of the online annex.

The overall evaluation finds that the 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, against most criteria. At the individual level, the ratings for the criteria of impact and sustainability are negative, both scoring “barely fulfilled”

(see Figure 17). Important needs of returnees in the social and psychosocial domains were not sufficiently addressed by the measures offered. Examination of the process of business creation also reveals numerous shortcomings in programme design and implementation, which meant that the measures achieved sustainable effects only in rare cases. The findings are particularly problematic in relation to the especially vulnerable

⁴⁸ The data basis used for the rating and the methodological approach are set out in detail in Chapter 2. An overview of the data sources and methods, organised by evaluation questions and DAC criteria, can be found in Section 6.2 of the annex.

target group of deported returnees. Although they represent the largest subgroup among returnees (Doc_49 to Doc_60), they were often reached only sporadically or by chance. At institutional level, by contrast, capacity-building measures and integrated cooperation with some partners were more successful in making an important, albeit in terms of sustainability limited, contribution to the development of national structures in the field of return and reintegration. The ratings for the criteria of impact, sustainability and coherence are more positive at institutional level, being partially or mostly fulfilled.

Regardless of the findings of this evaluation, supporting returnees in their reintegration process will remain a relevant task for migration policy in the years to come. Through transnational guidance and the counselling centres in PPH partner countries, the BMZ has pursued an innovative approach and established itself as a recognised stakeholder in both German and international migration policy. It has consistently emphasised that its engagement is not aimed at domestic policy objectives (e.g. creating incentives to leave the country). The decisive factor for the BMZ's engagement in this area is development policy objectives centred on

promoting the sustainable reintegration of returnees in their countries of origin. These objectives, and the measures linked to them, are likely to remain in place in future (Exp_103). Against the backdrop of international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), reintegration support is warranted, as it contributes to safe and dignified return and fosters sustainable economic and social reintegration into the society of the country of origin.

To ensure that development policy engagement in the field of return and reintegration remains viable in the future, the findings of this evaluation point to the need for far-reaching adjustments at both the political and operational levels. With the aim of better achieving the goal of sustainable reintegration in future, this evaluation first derives three fundamental recommendations for the political-strategic level. These address a key area of tension with regard to the efficacy of the measures. They are intended to provide a basis for managing this tension more effectively and to contribute to more effective BMZ engagement in the field of return and reintegration in the future. This is followed by six further recommendations, which are directed at both political and operational level.

Box 13 The contribution of measures in the field of return and reintegration to the 2030 Agenda

In addition to various links to several SDGs, there is particular potential for measures in the field of return and reintegration to contribute to the achievement of SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). In practice, however, the contribution observed has been very limited. In essence, the measures in the field of return and reintegration are intended to contribute to SDG 10, particularly Target 10.7: “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). In addition, an internal study on the counselling centre in Ghana (Doc_47) identified further SDGs that the activities were intended to address: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth). These SDGs were partly addressed. In line with the overall limited efficacy of the measures, their contribution to the achievement of SDG 10.7 was also small. Nevertheless, the potential to make a future contribution to reducing inequality is assessed as high. To better realise this potential, adjustments to the programme in line with the recommendations set out here (see Section 4.2) are required.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Fundamental recommendations

The overall evaluation should be viewed in the context of the tension between the domestic policy expectation of increasing the return of individuals without the intention or prospects to stay on the one hand and, on the other hand, the development policy objective, as pursued by the BMZ and its measures, of achieving the sustainable reintegration of returnees. There was a conflict of objectives between the domestic political expectation of rapid, visible results from promoting return and the development policy objective of creating a stable livelihood for returnees in their countries of origin in order to achieve sustainable reintegration. Domestic policy objectives primarily viewed return through the short-term lens of return support. The development policy perspective, by contrast, was directed towards sustainable reintegration and followed a medium- to long-term approach. Here, the vulnerability of the target group is also an important criterion. Within this area of tension, two distinct axes of conflict emerged.

1. **The first axis of conflict within this area of tension lay in the differing time horizons of the domestic and development policy perspectives.** Reintegration support was implemented under the PPH initiative theme, which was launched in response to strong (domestic) political pressure arising mainly from the high number of asylum applications lodged in Germany in 2015 and 2016. The PPH initiative theme was established to help promote the departure of individuals in Germany without the intention or prospect of staying. There was, however, a predominant domestic expectation that results would be achieved and made visible as quickly as possible. The PPH was therefore subject to strong output pressure. This became particularly evident in the case of the special reporting (SR),

which created incentives to implement as many measures as possible within a short time. The BMZ, however, emphasised that this domestic policy objective did not align with the ministry's self-understanding and that the longer-term goals of promoting sustainable reintegration had always been decisive. At the same time, it proved impossible to implement a holistic reintegration approach that effectively combined short-, medium- and long-term support services for returnees (see Recommendation 1).

2. **The second axis of conflict within this wider area of tension primarily concerned the treatment of deported returnees from the domestic and development policy perspectives.** From a development policy perspective, targeted support for deported returnees is particularly relevant due to their large numbers and heightened vulnerability. They often suffer from the psychosocial consequences of deportation. In addition, compared with supported returnees, they are poorly or not at all prepared for return and therefore have a correspondingly high need for short-term reintegration support. From a domestic policy perspective, however, it seems more appropriate to offer return and reintegration support only to those whose return is not the result of deportation. These conflicting perspectives impair the design and effectiveness of measures (see Recommendation 2). The particularly vulnerable group of deported returnees was not adequately addressed and therefore not reached systematically,⁴⁹ even though deported persons make up by far the largest group among returnees (see Section 3.1.1).

⁴⁹ Deported returnees were part of the target group of the PME but were not explicitly addressed in the programme design, even though the measures were open to them.

The area of tension and axes of conflict could not be resolved during the evaluation period and had a negative impact on the efficacy of measures to support sustainable reintegration at both individual and institutional level. Many of the problems in the referral process described in Chapter 3, as well as the shortcomings in programme design and implementation, are linked to this area of tension. At individual level, the high output pressure meant that counselling and referrals were conducted rapidly and the needs of returnees were not sufficiently addressed. This applied in particular to the physical and mental health of returnees and to financial resources for covering immediate living expenses (relevance, effectiveness). In addition, the process of business creation revealed shortcomings in programme design and implementation (impact). Priority was given to measures that produced rapid results and could be accessed by large numbers of participants. Follow-up processes were unsystematic and did not serve to accompany returnees further in their reintegration process or adapt measures to individual needs in the interest of efficacy (sustainability). At institutional level, even expanding the target group in partner countries did not succeed in generating sufficient political ownership of return and reintegration. As a result, despite partial successes in strengthening state institutions (impact), it was only partly possible to embed the structures created within partner institutions (sustainability).

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 programme lacking sufficient conceptual differentiation is problematic. In addition to the reintegration of returnees, the objective of the PPH initiative area also included creating prospects to stay for the local population in the countries of origin. The majority of the measures implemented by the counselling centres,

partner NGOs and bilateral programmes were directed towards this group, which therefore also contributed to the programme's high overall output. The objective of creating 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).

In light of the overall critical findings of this evaluation and the continued relevance of the topic – both domestically and from a development policy perspective – the BMZ's engagement in the field of sustainable reintegration of returnees should be fundamentally reconsidered. The evaluation suggests that the success of any future BMZ engagement in return and reintegration will depend crucially on whether it succeeds in resolving the identified area of tension. The short-, medium- and long-term measures examined here all served the development policy objective of sustainable reintegration, and the BMZ therefore held the mandate to steer support across the entire process. The evaluation leads to three overarching recommendations that the BMZ should implement to enhance the future efficacy of its development policy measures in the area of return and reintegration, aligning them more closely with the target group of returnees. Six further recommendations address the design of specific measures and the work of the established counselling centres, with a view to offering returnees integrated services and bundling national and international stakeholders for reintegration support in a coherent, impact-oriented approach.

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 likelihood of sustainable reintegration for returnees.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the BMZ, in line with impact orientation and its development policy mandate, understood short-, medium- and long-term measures to support reintegration as a single overall process;
- the BMZ made use of the impact pathways for economic and social participation developed in this evaluation, differentiated them further on the basis of evidence, and used them to conceptualise the overall process and identify the necessary support services along it;
- the BMZ assumed responsibility within the interministerial working group for the design and implementation of reintegration support in partner countries along this overall process;
- the BMZ ensured close coordination at the relevant interfaces with the stakeholders in Germany responsible for the departure of different groups of returnees (see also Recommendation 4);
- the BMZ systematically considered and utilised the reintegration support services offered by other stakeholders (German, European and international stakeholders, as well as those in partner countries) within the overall reintegration process. Where these stakeholders provide relevant services, the BMZ should consolidate them within a coherent overall package;
- the BMZ commissioned any missing services in order to ensure efficacy throughout the overall process.

To enable effective reintegration support in the future, a tailored approach focusing on the group of returnees should be chosen instead of the broad target group definition.

A fundamental principle of development policy is to take account of the interests of state partner stakeholders. With regard to the implementation of the global programme PME, partners requested that the services should be accessible not only to returnees but also to the local population. In line with the do-no-harm principle, this was intended to prevent social tensions within societies in the countries of origin, avoid creating migration incentives, strengthen governments' legitimacy in relation to the local population, and foster ownership of reintegration services by partner governments at institutional level. While this balancing of interests is broadly positive, the evaluation demonstrates that the broad target group definition undermined the efficacy of measures. The needs of returnees and the local population differ

systematically from one another.⁵⁰ Moreover, there is as yet no scientific evidence to substantiate the assumptions that reintegration services for returnees lead to social tensions or that they create migration incentives for the local population (OECD, 2020). The evaluation also shows that even expanding the target group did not succeed in generating sufficient political ownership of return and reintegration. As a result, despite partial successes in strengthening state institutions, it was only partly possible to embed the structures created within partner institutions. A reintegration support model that is specifically tailored to returnees would likely be attractive for partner countries, as it addresses the needs of a vulnerable group, reduces pressure on social protection systems, and, if successful, generates positive employment and income effects. Independently of this, measures for the local population can be negotiated separately as part of broader bilateral negotiations such as government consultations or migration agreements.

⁵⁰ The needs of returnees are described in Section 3.1 on relevance. Due to their migration history and the specific circumstances of life after return, these differ substantially from the needs of the local population.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the BMZ assumed ownership of the overall reintegration process in the partner countries, derived from a development policy guided by values and self-interest. With partner governments, the BMZ should promote acceptance of measures to support sustainable reintegration and continue raising awareness of the specific needs of returnees (see Recommendation 9);
- the BMZ also placed the interests of partner governments in the broader context of a more extensive political framework and took them into account accordingly. The promotion of sustainable reintegration can be anchored in migration agreements. Reintegration measures specifically for returnees can be negotiated in government consultations as part of a broader package that also includes other programmes to strengthen the economic participation of the local population.

The efficacy of measures along the overall process of sustainable reintegration and shortcomings in the design and implementation of measures were not systematically captured during the programme period; steering inputs were therefore insufficiently targeted and effective. Problems became evident both in the BMZ's overall steering of the global programme and in the GIZ's continuous steering of implementation, attributable to an inadequate monitoring system for the reintegration process of returnees. Overall steering relied too heavily on output-oriented monitoring under the SR and on only limited impact monitoring under programme reporting. With regard to continuous steering, the evaluation shows that in the vast majority of cases examined, no improvement in economic and social participation could be achieved through a programme contribution. The analysis of the pToC indicated that shortcomings in the design and implementation of measures led to gaps and breakdowns in the business creation process. Shortcomings in design can be traced to the planning of the global programme, the specific design of measures,

as well as overall and country-level steering. By contrast, shortcomings in implementation were partly due to the actions of counsellors in the counselling centres and partly to the actions of staff in partner organisations. Overall, responsibility for delivering an effective programme contribution lay with the GIZ. Against this backdrop, it would have been necessary to monitor gaps and breakdowns during the business creation process more systematically. In practice, this means placing less emphasis on output-oriented monitoring and anecdotal success stories and instead establishing integrated impact and process monitoring. Impact monitoring should take a holistic view of the overall process (see Recommendation 1) and define the outcomes of the various interlinked measures and process steps. Process monitoring should systematically capture possible reasons for termination of the reintegration process, make them available for error analysis, and derive appropriate countermeasures. The effort required for integrated impact and process monitoring is foreseeable as being lower than for the output-oriented special reporting, which covered not only returnees but also the large target group of the local population.

Recommendation 3

When commissioning return and reintegration measures, the BMZ should ensure that these include integrated impact and process monitoring in order to enable effective, outcome-driven programme management and minimise implementation gaps.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the BMZ commissioned measures to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees either separately with an appropriate monitoring system or, within a broader programme, ensured that an integrated impact and process monitoring system was commissioned for the measures relating to return and reintegration. This would prevent the impact logic of a programme from being overloaded with other migration policy measures (e.g. for the local population or to promote regular migration);
- the BMZ and GIZ refrained from relying on broader but purely output-oriented monitoring, such as the SR, in favour of impact monitoring along the overall process of sustainable reintegration;
- the GIZ used process monitoring to address shortcomings in the design and implementation of measures, while the BMZ tracked the resulting process improvements;
- the BMZ and GIZ created more space for a transparent culture of error analysis and learning, based on monitoring results, within and between the organisations;
- the GIZ drew on the pToC developed in this evaluation as conceptual input for integrated impact and process monitoring;
- the GIZ, in the short term, addressed the triggers and causes of gaps and breakdowns identified in the pToC for the three case study countries.

4.2.2 Further recommendations

Building on the three fundamental recommendations, further adjustments are needed in order to improve measures in the field of return and reintegration.

These further recommendations are also formulated in the context of the global programme “Centres for Migration and Development (ZME)”, which has been running since June 2023 and forms part of the German development cooperation portfolio in the area of migration.

Box 14 The global programme “Centres for Migration and Development”

The global programme “Centres for Migration and Development” (ZME) comprises several components. In addition to the areas of vocational training and labour migration, as well as regular migration, it continues to address the field of return and sustainable reintegration. The target groups of the ZME remain returnees and the local population in the partner countries. With regard to support for sustainable reintegration, referral counselling takes place in the countries of origin. The cooperation of the centres with other AVRR stakeholders, particularly the EU, has gained further importance. At the same time, the financial resources available for the “Centres for Migration and Development” as a whole have fallen significantly compared with the PME.

Facilitating access

The way the PME was designed made it more difficult for returnees who returned without an AVRR programme to access support services, thereby restricting programme participation particularly for vulnerable returnees.

Depending on the type of their return, returnees have different levels of access to support services for improved economic and social participation. While supported returnees could usually be referred successfully to the counselling centres through transnational guidance, deported returnees and those who returned independently without assistance were generally unaware of their existence and of the reintegration services available. As a result, these groups of returnees were usually reached only by chance, belatedly, or not at all. One exception was Ghana, where counsellors at the counselling centre were informed of return flights and where national authorities provided information to deported returnees at the airport.

There is no doubt that deported returnees and individuals returning without support are far harder to reach than those returning through an AVRR programme; however, depending on the country, the number of deported returnees is clearly higher than that of supported returnees (see Section 3.1.1). Moreover, the need for support is particularly high within the group of deported returnees, for example owing to a lack of return preparedness. In line with the programme's focus a) on the needs of particularly vulnerable people and b) on the sustainable reintegration of all returnees, measures should be taken to reach this group more effectively. This can be done either in Germany or in the countries of origin. A prerequisite for this is the exchange of data between the institutions and organisations in contact with these groups of returnees, such as IOM, BAMF, the EU and NGOs. Where possible, national authorities in the countries of origin should be involved in the referral process as contact points.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the GIZ, drawing on the experiences in Ghana, examined how national authorities in other partner countries could also be integrated into the national referral process as contact points, particularly for returnees without AVRR support and for deported returnees;
- the GIZ tested different ways of disseminating information in order to reach returnees without AVRR support and deported returnees more effectively, either in Germany or in the countries of origin.

Longer-term and case-oriented support for the reintegration process

The implementation of case management showed shortcomings in practice and was not sufficient for the process of sustainable reintegration. The evaluation identified considerable need for improvement in the design of the referral process and in the support provided to returnees during reintegration. As described in Chapter 3.3, the very limited efficacy of measures was mainly due to shortcomings in programme design and implementation, which were not systematically identified and addressed. Central weaknesses in the reintegration process were inadequate support over too short a time span and measures that were not geared to the specific needs of returnees. A case-based approach to steering measures for improved social and economic participation from a single source prevents relevant support needs from being overlooked, while also allowing more precise monitoring of the reintegration process (see also Recommendation 3). The use of a case-based approach to manage the reintegration process is also recommended by the IOM (IOM, 2019). This requires a redesign of roles and responsibilities between the counsellors

in the counselling centres and the implementing stakeholders, especially NGO staff. The IOM recommends accompanying returnees in the reintegration process for a period of twelve months. While this case-based approach entails greater use of individual resources, it appears appropriate and, despite budget constraints, advisable in light of the focused target group (see Recommendation 2) and the expected gains in efficacy.

Partner NGOs can play an important role in the case-based approach. The evaluation acknowledges that the NGO landscape in the partner countries varies and that the challenge lies in identifying suitable partner NGOs that are able, at least in large part, to implement measures to strengthen social and economic participation while also accompanying participants through the reintegration process. Examples from the case study countries show, however, that NGOs were available for this approach. Existing expertise, counselling skills and administrative capacities could also be further developed during programme implementation in the context of the planned capacity-building.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the GIZ renewed its needs analyses for returnees in order to estimate, on this basis, the resources required for twelve months of support. These analyses should explore different reintegration scenarios, ranging from cases with very high to those with very low requirements for accompaniment and measures. On this basis, a recommended caseload should be established for each caseworker;
- the GIZ reassessed the environment of available partner NGOs for each counselling centre and decided whether case-based support from a single source should be provided by the counsellors in the counselling centre or by a suitable partner NGO.

Diversifying the portfolio

The services primarily addressed the economic dimension of reintegration and were not sufficiently tailored to the specific needs of countries and target groups. In the case study countries, the data shows that the most common measures, apart from counselling sessions, were support for creating new businesses and training in business management.

Experts confirmed that the programme had been designed with an emphasis on the economic dimension of reintegration. In line with the reorientation towards the overall reintegration process set out in Recommendation 1, more measures should be included in the portfolio that address needs in the social and psychosocial dimensions.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the GIZ developed an impact matrix exclusively for the objective of sustainable reintegration. This should map the evidence-based impact pathways, including the specific measures and expected outcomes, for the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration. The impact pathways elaborated in this evaluation can serve as a starting point. The pathways developed should be adapted to the context of the partner countries in collaboration with local stakeholders, particularly partner NGOs.

The evaluation found that the services addressing social and psychological needs are still insufficient. The results of the evaluation (see Section 3.1) show that the services in the social and psychosocial sphere scarcely met the needs of returnees and thus jeopardised the overall efficacy of reintegration support. Since national institutions will not, for lack of structures and capacities, be in a position to offer such measures in the

foreseeable future, the programme's capacity in this respect should be strengthened and the relevant services expanded. It should also be noted that measures should be designed with a stronger country-specific focus. In concrete terms, this means that in countries such as Ghana, where people are stigmatised because of their failed migration history, measures such as assisted family reunification should be offered.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the GIZ increased the range of services available for returnees in the psychological and health sphere. For this purpose, cooperation agreements should be concluded with relevant providers in the partner countries. A positive example is the cooperation with TUCEE Ghana;
- in the process of developing the impact pathway for improved social participation, the GIZ reviewed additional measures that address the immediate social (non-migrant) environment of returnees, for example close family members. A positive example is the approach of several Ghanaian partner NGOs that already carry out family mediation to counteract the stigmatisation of returnees.

The most frequently offered measure to strengthen economic participation, support for new business creation, did not lead to an improved income situation for the majority of the returnees surveyed, while alternative measures were not sufficiently available. The evaluation found that business creation support measures were unsuitable for a large proportion of the returnees surveyed. The reasons for this were the highly heterogeneous levels of education and qualifications among participants and, in many cases, a lack of entrepreneurial spirit. For these reasons, only a few returnees were able to generate an income independently and promptly after returning.

A large proportion of respondents found themselves in financial distress after their return – a situation in which business start-ups are explicitly discouraged (Kühnert, 2022). Although counselling centres partly offered support in job search, this was used only to a limited extent by returnees. Both external and internal experts regard the “employability” of returnees as an important prerequisite for economic participation. The measures offered should therefore take greater account of the different starting situations of returnees than has previously been the case. For this reason, the suitability of alternative services that enable returnees to participate economically should be examined.

Recommendation 8

GIZ should expand the portfolio of economic support measures to strengthen economic participation among returnees in a range of starting situations.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- building on its expertise in employment promotion, the GIZ created alternative income-generating services alongside the existing support for job searches, business creation and related training. Options worth examining include approaches such as unconditional cash transfers or cash for training, which have already been implemented by other AVRR stakeholders (IOM, 2019).

Strengthening institutional support at the operational level

Institutional support measures primarily contributed to capacity-building at the operational level. The evaluation results on impact and sustainability at institutional level (see Section 3.4) and on coherence (see Section 3.5) show that PME worked in an integrated way with state structures and, above all at the operational level, contributed to improving counselling through knowledge transfer. This enabled counsellors in the national employment agencies in Ghana and Morocco to develop greater awareness of the needs of returnees; however, impact and sustainability at institutional level were limited by two factors. Firstly, the often tense labour market situations in the partner countries restricted employment opportunities.

Strengthening infrastructure improved the condition of state employment agencies, but this did not directly translate into improved employment prospects for returnees. Secondly, the contribution at institutional level – particularly in terms of sustainability – depended on the degree of ownership by the partner government. As the findings from the case studies illustrate, while partner governments generally supported the BMZ's reintegration measures, differing priorities meant that full ownership by the partner side was not achieved. It also remains unlikely that state partners will take over reintegration support services themselves in future. Despite these limitations at policy level, capacity-building measures at operational level should be continued to ensure reintegration efforts are effective.

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.

A constructive way to implement this recommendation would be if:

- the GIZ, building on the findings of this evaluation on knowledge transfer mechanisms (the placement programme in Ghana and tandems in Morocco), conducted a workshop on “Good practices in institutional cooperation” and subsequently made programme adjustments in other countries;
- in future placement programmes, the GIZ together with the partner ministry, ensured the continuous staffing of employment agencies to avoid the identified risk of staff turnover.

5.

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6.

ANNEX

6.1 Rating scale for DEval evaluations

DEval evaluations are structured around evaluation questions and follow the OECD DAC evaluation criteria (see Chapter 2). The rating of the evaluation subject is based on verifiable assessment criteria and on evaluative expectations defined ex ante, which must be fulfilled for development measures to be rated as appropriate and successful from the perspective of the evaluation team. Assessment criteria are derived, for example, from the theory of change and subsequently operationalised. Evaluations follow a six-tier rating scale, which is applied to the collected data.

Table 3 Rating scale

Categories	Explanation
Exceeded	The intervention clearly exceeds the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. Findings demonstrate a result well above the benchmark.
Fulfilled	The intervention meets the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. Findings demonstrate that the benchmark is met.
Mostly fulfilled	The intervention largely meets the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. Findings which demonstrate that the benchmark is met predominate.
Partially fulfilled	The intervention partially meets the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. The numbers of findings demonstrating that the benchmark is met, and those demonstrating it is not, are (more or less) equal.
Barely fulfilled	The intervention barely meets the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. Findings which demonstrate that the benchmark is not met predominate.
Missed	The intervention does not meet the benchmark for the applied evaluation criterion. Findings demonstrate that the benchmark is not met.

Source: DEval, own visualisation

6.2 Evaluation matrix

Evaluation question	Assessment criterion	Indicator	Data sources	
<p>Evaluation Question 1: To what extent are the reintegration services in countries of origin aligned with the needs of the target group?</p>	<p>AC 1: The services in the countries of origin are geared to the needs of different target groups and include particularly disadvantaged groups.</p>	<p>I 1.1: Labour market and target group analyses, and evidence of their use in the design of the global programme PME</p> <p>I 1.2: Alignment between reintegration support in countries of origin and the needs of target groups, including disadvantaged groups</p>	<p>Information from GIZ programme documents and additional information on labour market and target group analyses; statements by experts on the country-specific services; statements by target groups on the services received and their needs at the time of return</p>	<p>1. Case studies: Returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Secondary data and documents: tracer studies 4. Further expert interviews</p>
<p>Evaluation Question 2: To what extent has the design of the measures improved returnees' access to reintegration services in their countries of origin?</p>	<p>AC 2: The way the measures are designed gives different target groups better access to reintegration services.</p>	<p>I 2.1: Number of measures implemented and people reached from the returnee target group by type of service</p> <p>I 2.2: Rating of the counselling and referral process in the counselling centres</p> <p>I 2.3: Rating of the usefulness of services by type of support</p>	<p>Monitoring data on the number of measures implemented; statements by experts in the counselling centres; statements by other experts and by the target group on the design of the counselling and referral process; statements by returnees on the usefulness of the different services accessed</p>	<p>1. Case studies: returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Secondary data and documents: monitoring data, tracer studies; 4. Further expert interviews</p>
<p>Evaluation Question 3: To what extent have unintended positive or negative direct effects occurred as a result of implementing these services in countries of origin?</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Statements by returnees on negative unintended effects; statements by implementing staff and other experts on unintended effects and corresponding programme adjustments</p>	<p>1. Case studies: Returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Further expert interviews</p>

Evaluation question	Assessment criterion	Indicator	Data sources	
Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have the reintegration services contributed to strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?	AC 4.1: The services made a positive contribution to the current economic situation of returnees, thereby improving their economic and social participation.	I 4.1.1: For the target group surveyed, the services used contributed positively to their economic participation	Statements by returnees; supporting documentation of the reintegration process of returnees; statements by experts; CMT data	1. Case studies: Returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. secondary data and documents; causal analysis via process tracing
		I 4.1.2: For the target group surveyed, social participation is achieved		
		I 4.1.3: For the target group surveyed, the services were designed and implemented appropriately		
	AC 4.2: The services made a positive contribution to building national institutions in the field of return and reintegration.	I 4.2.1: Respondents from different stakeholder groups described the contribution of the measures for institutional support (knowledge transfer mechanism and other measures) as crucial overall for building national institutions in the field of return and reintegration		
	I 4.2.2: The knowledge transfer mechanism, previously identified as particularly effective, is rated as functional	Returnee statements; statements by experts; academic literature	1. Case studies: Returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. Rapid evidence review	
Evaluation Question 5: What factors influence the efficacy of reintegration services in strengthening the economic and social participation of returnees?	N/A			N/A
Evaluation Question 6: To what extent are the effects of the reintegration services long-lasting?	AC 6: The support services enabled improved economic and social participation, indicating progress towards lasting reintegration of returnees.	I 6: Employment obtained through participation in the measure, or the businesses established, continued to exist six months after inception and allowed returnees to cover their living expenses	Returnee statements; statements from experts	1. Case studies: Returnee interviews, expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Secondary data and documents: tracer studies; causal analysis via process tracing

Evaluation question	Assessment criterion	Indicator	Data sources	
Evaluation Question 7: To what extent are the state partners institutionally able and willing to maintain the (re)integration support structures over time?	AC 7.1: The counselling centres are an established part of the counselling landscape in the countries of origin and a point of contact for (inter) national stakeholders.	I 7.1.1: National stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground describe the counselling centre as an established part of the counselling landscape in the country of origin	Statements from experts, particularly (inter)national stakeholders in the countries of origin; other documents	1. Case studies: Expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Secondary data and documents; 4. Further expert interviews
	AC 7.2: State stakeholders in the countries of origin assume institutional responsibility in the field of migration policy.	I 7.1.2: International stakeholders active in migration counselling on the ground recognise the role of the counselling centres as a central point of contact		
		I 7.2.1: Operational level: State stakeholders take the lead in cooperation in the field of migration policy		
		I 7.2.2: Political level: State partners also contribute financially to the programme costs		
Evaluation Question 8: To what extent are there synergies or areas of tension between BMZ-supported (re)integration services and those provided by state partners?	AC 8.1: BMZ measures are embedded in state structures in a way that harnesses synergies rather than creating parallel structures.	I 8.1: Rating of the embedding of BMZ measures in the state structures of partner countries	Statements from experts, particularly (inter)national stakeholders in the countries of origin; other documents	1. Case studies: Expert interviews; 2. CC-survey; 3. Secondary data and documents; 4. Further expert interviews
	AC 8.2: The area of tension most relevant for effective and sustainable support was resolved during the evaluation period.	I 8.2: Rating of the resolution of the area of tension relevant to effective and sustainable support		

6.3 Timeline

Time frame	Tasks/phases
01/2023-04/2023	Development of the evaluation concept
04/2023	Reference group meeting on the evaluation concept
05/2023-09/2023	Development of the inception report
09/2023	Reference group meeting on the inception report
10/2023-02/2024	Data collection phase
03/2024-09/2024	Analysis and synthesis phase
06/2024	Reference group meeting on preliminary findings
09/2024-03/2025	Development of the evaluation report
03/2025	Reference group meeting on the evaluation report
08/2025	Publication of the evaluation report

6.4 Evaluation team and contributors

Core team	Function	CRedit statement ⁵¹
Dr Johannes Erler (formerly Schmitt)	Senior Evaluator, Team Leader	Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing, visualisation, supervision, project administration
Lena Heller	Evaluator	Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, visualisation
Lea Jechel	Evaluator	Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing, visualisation
Dr Felix Leßke	Evaluator	Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing, visualisation
Dr Gabriela Camacho Garland	Visiting researcher	Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing – original draft, visualisation
Dr Martin Bruder	Department lead	Conceptualisation, writing – review & editing, supervision
Caroline Orth	Project Administrator	Project Administrator

Responsible	Function
Dr Martin Bruder	Head of Department

Contributors	Function and area of responsibility
Dr Alexander Kocks	Peer reviewer and support for the Northern Iraq case study
Dr Jan Schneider	External peer reviewer
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Hanne Schwabe	Student assistant

⁵¹ The CRedit statement (Contributor Roles Taxonomy, <https://credit.niso.org/>) identifies the roles of the authors of this evaluation report within the evaluation process. The CRedit taxonomy distinguishes between 14 different roles to make each author's specific contribution visible.

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