



ABOUT The *Data Bulletin: Informing the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration* series aims to summarize in an accurate and accessible fashion existing evidence on migration to support the discussion and any follow-up activities.

As part of the project “Support to IOM for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” funded by the European Union, *Data Bulletin* outlines the strengths and limitations of relevant migration data and highlights innovative data practices that are pertinent to the Global Compact for Migration. This publication reflects the collaborative nature of the Global Compact for Migration process by including relevant contributions from different parts of IOM, as well as other agencies and migration experts.

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Assisted voluntary return and reintegration

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management. It contributes to achieving safe, orderly and dignified migration, as it safeguards the human rights of migrants, upholds international principles and standards, and contributes to preserving the integrity of regular migration structures and asylum systems.¹

IOM has a long history of AVRR programme implementation, dating back to 1979 and involving more than 1.6 million migrants assisted by 2017. Implemented in cooperation with governmental, non-governmental organizations and diaspora communities, AVRR provides vital assistance to tens of thousands of migrants returning home voluntarily every year under a diverse range of circumstances. AVRR relies on partnerships and institutional dialogue, as well as data collection, monitoring and evaluation for evidence-based policy and programme formulation.

AVRR represents a humane and dignified manner for a migrant to return to his/her country of origin (subject to safeguards such as risk and needs assessments), whatever the reason may be, including a rejected or withdrawn application for asylum, having fallen victim to human trafficking, exploitation or extortion, being in an irregular situation, or lacking the means to return.

AVRR legal foundations are anchored in international and rest on two main pillars

- The protection of the rights of migrants during the return and reintegration process.** The rights of migrants within a State's territory, or otherwise under that State's jurisdiction, must be respected and protected, regardless of their nationality or migration status, and without discrimination, in order to preserve their safety, physical integrity, well-being and dignity.
- State sovereignty.** States have the sovereign right to determine who may enter and remain on their territory, subject to their respective obligations under international law.

AVRR contributes to ensuring safe, orderly, and dignified migration by observing the following principles²

PRINCIPLE 1. Voluntariness: This principle has two components, i.e. (a) freedom of choice, i.e. the absence of physical or psychological pressure to enrol in an AVRR programme; and (b) an informed decision which requires the availability of timely, unbiased and reliable information upon which to base the decision.

¹ For more info on AVRR, see IOM AVRR Key Highlights 2017: www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/avrr-2017-key-highlights.pdf, IOM AVRR Bulletin January-June 2018: www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/avrr_bulletin_2018_q2.pdf, and IOM Thematic Papers www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf and www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Assisted-Voluntary-Return-and-Reintegration.pdf

² For more details, please see: IOM, *A Framework for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration* (2018, forthcoming)



Figure 1: Number of AVRR beneficiaries per year from 2005 to 2017



Source: International Organization for Migration, Number of AVRR beneficiaries per year from 2005-2017 in: AVRR Key Highlights 2017, available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/avrr-2017-key-highlights.pdf>

The sex distribution (68% male, 32% female) remained the same as in 2017. 25 per cent of AVRR beneficiaries in 2017 were children, which is comparable to the share of children assisted with AVRR in 2016 (27%). More than half of returnees (52%) were aged between 18 and 40.

Figure 2: Sex breakdown of AVRR beneficiaries

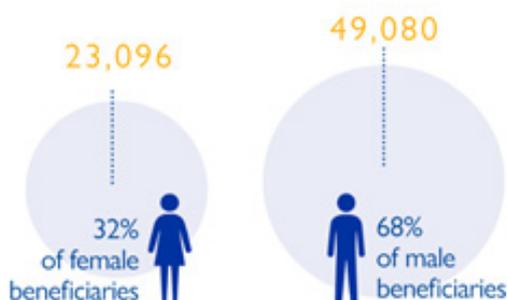
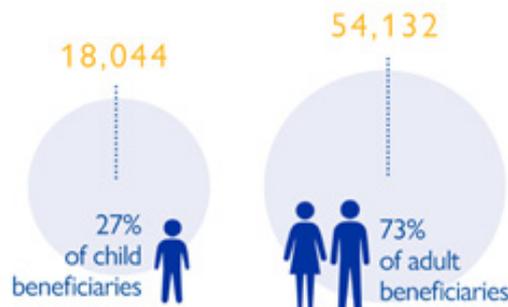


Figure 3: Age breakdown of AVRR beneficiaries



Source: International Organization for Migration, Number of AVRR beneficiaries per year from 2005-2017 in: AVRR Key Highlights 2017, available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/avrr-2017-key-highlights.pdf>

PRINCIPLE 2. Migrant-centred response: Put the rights and the needs of the migrant at the forefront. Individual assessments should be undertaken to provide tailored, gender and age-sensitive support to each migrant throughout the process.

PRINCIPLE 3. Safety: Account for safety considerations, e.g. the general level of security, and operational challenges that may affect the provision of return and reintegration assistance.

PRINCIPLE 4. Sustainability of reintegration: 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.

PRINCIPLE 5. Confidentiality: Respect migrant privacy by putting in place strict institutional safeguards for handling personal data of AVRR beneficiaries, taking all reasonable and necessary precautions to preserve the confidentiality of personal data and the anonymity of individuals.³

³ This includes, among others, the principle of lawful and fair collection of

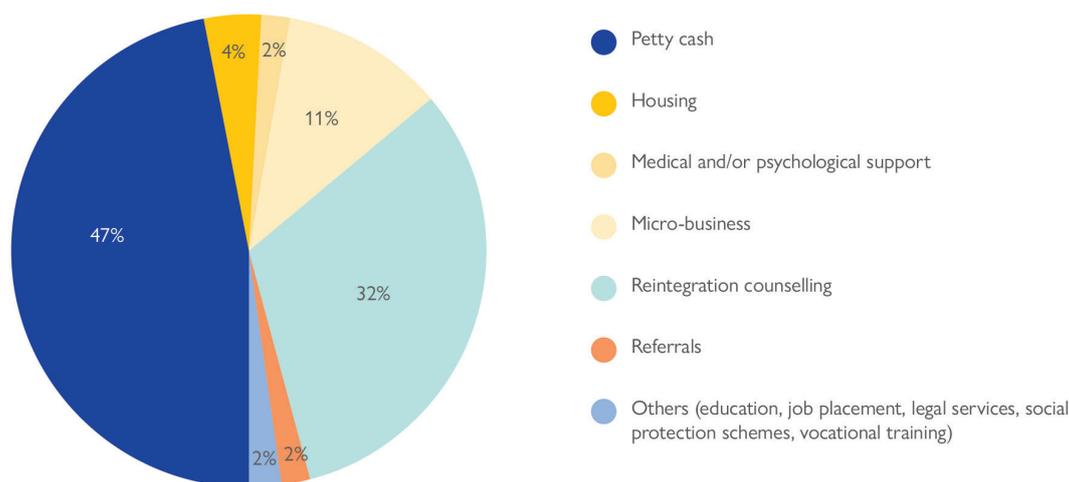
PRINCIPLE 6. Dialogue and partnerships: Fostering constructive and balanced exchanges between stakeholders involved at different stages of the AVRR process, to enhance the range and quality of return assistance available to migrants, avoid duplication of efforts and strengthen the sustainability of reintegration processes.

PRINCIPLE 7. Evidence-based programming: Establish systematic and continuous data collection, monitoring and evaluation throughout the entire AVRR process to understand the impact of AVRR interventions and inform ongoing and future programme design.

AVRR is critical in the context of **transit migration**, as it provides assistance to stranded migrants who are in distress and are often destitute, or who lack the means to continue their journey, be they in a regular or in an irregular situation. Conversely, the lack of such programmes can exacerbate the vulnerability experienced by specific groups – in particular, unaccompanied

data, for a specified and legitimate purpose, the principles of consent, confidentiality, access and transparency and data security. See for example IOM Data Protection Principles available from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iomdataprotection_web.pdf

Figure 4: Reintegration activities implemented in 2017, in percentage (%)



Source: International Organization for Migration, Number of AVRR beneficiaries per year from 2005-2017 in: AVRR Key Highlights 2017, available from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/avrr-2017-key-highlights.pdf>

and separated migrant children, those with health needs, and victims of trafficking – and can present an additional burden for national assistance care systems in host countries.

From a **State perspective**, AVRR is a consensual and cost-effective option that helps strengthen the integrity of asylum systems, while avoiding a systematic and generally costly use of law enforcement. For countries of origin, AVRR fosters the economic, social and psychosocial reintegration of returnees in the communities to which they return. AVRR also complements and supports the capacities of host countries, transit countries and countries of origin by assisting migrants through travel document acquisition, counselling, travel arrangements and arrival assistance, among others.

Trends

In recent years, in line with the increase in the number of migrants travelling irregularly, including forcibly displaced people, particularly in certain regions of the world, the number of returns has also significantly increased. In 2015, IOM provided AVRR services to more than 69,000 migrants, and this number reached more than 98,000 in 2016. In 2017, beneficiaries of IOM AVRR programmes decreased by 27 per cent to 72,000. This decrease can be explained by a combination of structural and contextual factors, that vary from country to country. The 2015–2017 figures represent a considerable increase in comparison with the average number of migrants assisted by IOM every year between 2005 and 2014 (34,000 per year on average). Recent trends also indicate that South-South returns, including from transit countries, are also increasing.⁴

In 2017, the number of beneficiaries returning from the European Economic Area (EEA) decreased by 38 per cent from 50,587 compared to 81,671 in 2016. The EEA nevertheless remained the main region from which migrants returned (70% of the total caseload), mainly to Iraq, Albania and Serbia. On the contrary, the number of migrants returning from the Western and Central African Regions increased by 42 per cent from 2016 to 7,032 in 2017, accounting for almost 10 per cent of the total number of returns (against 4% in 2016). This trend is expected to continue in 2018.⁵

⁴ IOM Global Compact Thematic Paper on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration. Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Assisted-Voluntary-Return-and-Reintegration.pdf

⁵ IOM (2018). AVRR Bulletin. Available from www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/avrr_bulletin_2018_q2.pdf

Despite a 42 per cent decrease relative to 2016, South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SEECA) remained the main region to which migrants returned (39% of the global caseload), followed by Asia and the Pacific (18%). Returns to the West and Central Africa increased by 47 per cent to 10,757, accounting for 15 per cent of the total caseload.⁶

Data and measurement challenges

As the largest global provider of assisted voluntary return (AVR) and assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes, IOM collects voluntary return data under its various programmes on a regular basis. IOM data include the number of migrants assisted, migrants' host and origin countries, as well as sex, age and reintegration support. IOM data also include information on assisted migrants by specific vulnerability (namely, unaccompanied and separated migrant children, migrants with health-related needs and victims of trafficking). Since 2010, IOM has published key data on IOM's AVRR page.⁷

However, challenges and data gaps remain in terms of data on return and reintegration, including:

- Data on forced return and on voluntary return are scattered across different data sources and are often incomplete or only partially publicly available. For example, several countries that implement voluntary return and reintegration programmes (under either IOM or government auspices) are not reported on in the Eurostat database (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom).
- There is a large gap in post-return data, due mainly to the lack of definitions and established indicators for measuring "reintegration".
- The difficulty of measuring the sustainability of reintegration also results from the long-term and multidimensional nature of the process. Indeed, the monitoring and evaluation exercises undertaken in the field of voluntary return and reintegration have so far primarily examined programmes performance, with a focus on outputs and much less on outcomes.
- Additionally, while focusing on economic interventions supporting the reintegration process, the social and psychosocial dimensions remain understudied.

⁶ IOM (2018). AVRR Key Highlights 2017.

⁷ IOM, Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration section. Available from www.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration

In order to address these gaps, IOM has developed, on the basis of conclusions from the MEASURE Project, funded by the UK Department for International Development, a new scale of indicators to measure reintegration sustainability at the individual level, together with a scoring system, allowing to measure reintegration outcomes and to facilitate the measurement of returnees' progress towards sustainability.

Reintegration sustainability

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.

Implementing Global Compact for Migration commitments on return and reintegration

In order to enable sustainable return and reintegration, and the effective implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, the following steps should be prioritized in terms of data going forward:

Reinforce return and reintegration data collection and monitoring systems globally, through the adoption of harmonized sets of indicators and monitoring procedures.

- This will allow for the assessment and comparative analyses of the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of reintegration assistance programming at all three levels of intervention (individual, community and structural).
- Harmonized sets of indicators and monitoring procedures are necessary for comparative research and to analyse the impact of reintegration assistance for beneficiaries returning under different circumstances, in different contexts, and between different countries, as well as in comparison to the local population.

Promote evidence-based programming by encouraging long-term, systematic and comprehensive data-collection and monitoring and evaluation schemes, to help assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of voluntary return and reintegration assistance.

- This includes taking into account gender and the specific needs of migrants in vulnerable situations in the formulation of return-related policies and programmes, and in particular, across AVRR programmes.
- The EU-IOM External Actions in Support of Migrant Protection and Reintegration should also be strengthened, as it contributes to an improvement of data collection on migration flows and profiles. So far, 19 Flow Monitoring Points have been set up in the West and Central Africa region, and are collecting and analysing data, and publishing reports.

IOM's GMDAC

In response to growing calls for better data on migration, and for better use and presentation of migration data, IOM has created the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC).

Located in Berlin, Germany, the Centre aims to provide authoritative and timely analyses of data on global migration issues as a global hub for data and statistics on migration.

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