

## **WHAT IS EFFICIENT REINTERGATION FROM THIRD COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE**

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**“There is no one-size fits all  
reintegration approach”**

But there are indexes that point toward an efficient reintegration strategy: They include:

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- Return should be voluntary and in dignity;
- Rights of the returnee is safeguarded throughout the process of return;
- The push factor leading to emigration are addressed; and
- Reintegration approach should be holistic factoring the returnee, returning community and third country to ensure complete buy-in.

Reintegration is a process which enables formerly displaced people and other members of their community to enjoy prosperity, greater degree of physical, social, legal and material security. The process entails the erosion and ultimately the disappearance of any observable distinction which set the returnees apart from other members of the community, particularly in socio-economic terms in our case.

Thus, an efficient reintegration strategy will be one that addresses the factors that pushed people to emigrate in the first place as well as ensures that the non-immigrant local communities are not disadvantaged by the return but rather benefit from the newly acquired or enhanced skills of the returning migrants.

In Nigeria, the primary push factor is economic, which manifests itself in various forms, including,

- Perceived lack of career prospects;
- Perceived lack of economic opportunities;
- and
- Family and peer pressure to emigrate on account of positive migration experiences of relatives and acquaintances, etc

It is imperative that these factors are addressed to ensure that reintegration is efficient. The process should begin from the destination country to ensure the complete buy-in of the returnee into the reintegration strategy, this should continue through to arrival in the third country, where the returnee is expected to be provided basic standard assistance on arrival to set the stage for future engagement and earn his/her trust. We should always bear in mind that an indispensable component for an efficient reintegration is the migrants' motivation, ownership and active participation in the reintegration process.

Reintegration package must consider providing the returnees with adequate support to promote self-sufficiency and enable them to contribute to the local community.

Efficient reintegration strategy will therefore factor an articulate referral system to provide the opportunity for self-actualization on arrival. In Nigeria, a standard operating procedure to handle returns has been developed. The SOP addresses, on arrival the registration and profiling of returnees to determine individual needs. This provides the basis for referrals and monitoring and evaluation of the reintegration process.

Provision of career opportunities is also an integral element of return migration as it is expected to empower and protect returnees by providing them with necessary tools to effectively reintegrate into society. As we all are aware, a situation of glaring lack of opportunity may push returnees to a situation of vulnerability. Certainly, without access to income generating activities that allow the returnee to meet his/her needs and that of their dependants, it will be difficult to avoid remigration.

Traditional reintegration assistance takes different forms from limited once-only reinstallation grants at the micro-level, to a range of economic and social measures, including for the community of return and individual assistance for vulnerable migrants. Assistance may also be provided in the form of institutional assistance at the macro level to the communities of return, which involve longer term, structural and development aid for the whole country.

These interventions are crucial to the returnee because irregular migration can be a very costly venture to the migrant, both in terms of finance and material. The financial implication could include money payment to the smugglers or agents; transport and accommodation; time spent on the journey; the cost of separation from loved ones, etc

Development of social networks upon return is also important for an efficient reintegration. Our profiling of returnees confirms that some returnees are accompanied by feelings of shame, loss, failure, disorientation and stress, hence the

imperative for social support. Thus, cultivation and development of a social network is a vital element for an efficient and sustainable reintegration strategy, as these new contacts can go along with the returnees through the reintegration process by welcoming them back into the community; providing them with information and social capital; assist them in difficult situation through safety nets; and help them shed the negative feelings the return has imposed on them.

Social support is particularly vital to the reintegration of single female migrants in Nigeria because of the widespread perception that most of them engaged in prostitution while abroad, which comes with suffocating stigma and criticism by family, friends and society at large.

In conclusion, like all projects and programs, an efficient reintegration strategy can only be successfully driven by a vibrant partnership: between destination countries and third countries; between relevant international organizations and local focal agencies and other stakeholders charged with the subject matter; and between international NGOs and local counterparts.

This partnership can only be dynamic, if all the partners are on the same page, hence the imperative for the technical partners to build the capacity of third countries to the level of the destination country for synergy to deal with this multi-dimensional and multi-faceted area of concern.

In Nigeria, our efforts to reintegrate returnees are work in progress, but with the assistance of our technical partners, we

are making progress. Government and communities' buy-in and ownership of the process of reintegration; opportunities for the returnee to be self sufficient; cultivation of social support and capital for the returnees, if properly exploited, can achieve one of set objectives of an efficient reintegration strategy, which is preventing re-emigration. This is our position and it calls to question the assertion that reintegration assistance could constitute a pull factor and attract irregular migration. From our assessment, thus far, no matter the extent of reintegration package it is unlikely that it will cover the financial and human costs of irregular migration. **Thank You.**

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