



Migration Research Leaders Syndicate Dialogue on the Global Compact for Migration: Managing Return and Reintegration

Concept Note

United Nations, Room CR 6, New York, 17th May 2018

13:15 - 14:30

Context

Return migration takes place in different ways and under different circumstances. Migrants return to their countries of origin in a spontaneous manner at the end of their employment assignments or can be returned by the country of destination in the framework of bilateral or regional readmission agreements. The return and reintegration of irregular migrants, (rejected) asylum seekers and migrants stranded while in transit have become increasingly prominent in migration governance discussions, given their transnational nature and impact on a multitude of players. For migrant hosting countries, return of migrants not authorized to stay is an important component of ensuring the integrity of their immigration systems and exercising their sovereign right to determine who can enter and remain on their territory, without prejudice to the principle of *non-refoulement*, and is critical for public confidence in the ability of governments to manage migration. For countries to which migrants return, returns, particularly in large numbers, can raise significant economic, social and even stability challenges.

Recent developments in the global political agenda reflect the growing recognition that both return and reintegration are essential aspects of the migration cycle: return is not an isolated moment that marks the end of a migration process, but rather an integral part of it. Assisted voluntary return and reintegration have emerged as a preferred consensual and cost-effective option that helps strengthen the integrity of regular migration and asylum systems – as opposed to the more arduous and often more costly law enforcement means – while safeguarding the rights of migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, and upholding international principles and standards.

In this spirit, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants recognizes the urgent need to address “return ..., and improve[e] cooperation in this regard between countries of origin and destination” as a means of facilitating “safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people”¹. In its Objective 21, the zero draft of the Global Compact² (GCM) calls on governments to “cooperate in facilitating dignified and sustainable return, readmission and reintegration..., upholding the preference for voluntary return over deportation”. Therefore, the question is no longer whether return and reintegration should be managed, but rather how they can be managed for the benefit of migrants, host, transit and origin countries.

To gain better evidence-based understanding of key aspects of international migration, and support negotiations leading to the adoption of the GCM, IOM established the Migration Research Leaders

¹ <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceb74a4.html>

² https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180205_gcm_zero_draft_final.pdf



Syndicate (MRLS), bringing together some of the world's leading migration researchers to share their expertise and knowledge. The Syndicate consists of 36 researchers with diverse geographic and thematic backgrounds, including those from traditional host and transit countries and countries of origin. The Syndicate has been designed in an inter-disciplinary manner, including researchers from law, geography, economics, demography, international relations, sociology and political science.

Objectives

In collaboration with Member States, non-governmental stakeholders and other migration experts, the Syndicate Dialogue aims to inform, provide policy ideas, and contribute to build trust among the policy makers on complex policy issues and implementation mechanisms of relevance to the GCM. This Dialogue will provide a forum for government representatives, UN entities, civil society organisations, academia, migrants and members of the Migration Research Leaders Syndicate to discuss the topic of migrant return and reintegration.

The session will be conducted in an informal, Davos-style format with expert discussants. Experts will address in short interventions (5-minutes) some conceptual and practical questions related to the return and reintegration of migrants. They will also be encouraged to focus on concrete measures that might help States find creative and practical solutions to tough issues in the negotiations. These presentations will be followed by an open discussion with Member States and other stakeholders.

Agenda

Welcome Remarks by the co-hosts

Setting the scene, Moderator- Jonathan Prentice, Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for international migration

Speaker 1. Conceptual and policy frameworks for return migration, Kathleen Newland, Co-founder of the Migration Policy Institute, Syndicate Member

Just like migration broadly, experiences of and approaches to return vary greatly. The determinants and types of return have been examined by researchers, yet common understanding of best practices is yet to come. Governments apply different criteria for return, which translate into diverse policies, even for returns to the same country of origin or across countries for the same returnee populations. This session will present recent conceptual and policy frameworks on return migration, shedding light on the criteria of analysis used by scholars and variables applied by policy makers and will address the multiple perspectives on return frameworks as viewed from host, origin and transit countries as well as migrants and their advocates.



Speaker 2: Alternatives to detention and the impact on absconding in the return process, Michele LeVoy, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM),

The Global Compact on Migration calls to use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives. Alternatives to detention that use a case management system and replace closed detention centers by other solutions have been tested by certain countries. Results observed can help to assess whether alternatives based on case management promote compliance and case resolution, including voluntary return, as well as protecting the rights of migrants. This session will present perspectives from tested alternatives to detention, as well as their results and recommendations for policy discussions based on evidence and practice.

Speaker 3. Sustainability of return, sustainability of reintegration? Policy implications and indicators, Nicola Graviano, Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, Senior Specialist, IOM,

The terms “sustainable return” and “sustainable reintegration” are often used by policy makers and practitioners in an interchangeable manner. However, these concepts have different policy implications depending on the point of view, particularly regarding how re-emigration options after return are understood. Recent efforts have been made by academia and IOM to reflect on sustainability in the context of return and reintegration and to formulate indexes to gauge it, which will be presented in this session.

Speaker 4. Can return and reintegration be conducive to development? Linguère Mbaye, Syndicate Member,

To achieve its full potential for development, return and reintegration, including with regard to migrants in vulnerable situations, should be managed in cooperation across different sectors and between relevant ministries with different mandates (for example interior, foreign affairs, and labour and social affairs). Complementarities between different funding instruments should be encouraged, as well as partnerships among local governmental agencies and non-governmental entities (NGOs, CSOs, local or regional authorities, legal service providers, health service providers, academic institutions, the private sector and the like). This session will consider best practices to align reintegration programming with national and local development strategies, along with concrete forms of cooperation among different actors before and after return. Concrete examples to ensure dignified return of vulnerable migrants and support their reintegration will also be examined.

Discussion with Member States and other participants

Conclusions

Rapporteur: Anh Nguyen, Head of Migration Assistance and Protection Division, IOM