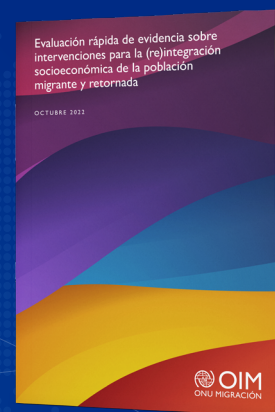


# Rapid Evidence Assessment<sup>1</sup> on Socioeconomic (Re)integration Interventions for Migrants and Returnees

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The effects of the pandemic continue to negatively impact South America and socioeconomic recovery will continue to lag, disproportionately affecting the (re)integration processes of migrants and returnees. The most impacted sectors have been construction, tourism, gastronomy, and domestic work, among others, all of which are mainly dominated by migrants and returnees. Due to the loss of jobs, a significant number of migrants have returned to their countries and the reintegration of this population continues to be insufficient, partly due to the limited capacity of labour markets to absorb labour. For these reasons, and others that are analyzed in this study, regional coordination and critical interventions by governments and civil society will be necessary to facilitate the socioeconomic (re)integration of migrants and returnees and at the same time provide support to host communities. The research was carried out between June and August 2022, and, in total, 126 studies were found. A review was conducted based on critical appraisal criteria and of these 65 studies were included in the final analysis.

**Objective:** Identify and analyze the factors that contribute to the success or failure of the socioeconomic (re) integration processes of migrants or returnees. Specifically, the research questions were:

- What interventions<sup>2</sup> have been effective in increasing/ contributing to i) integration in labour markets, ii) financial sustainability of enterprises, iii) access to social welfare provision, iv) social cohesion in host communities, v) cultural integration of migrants or returnees?
- What are the factors that make these interventions effective in their implementation and what hinders them?

### KEY FINDINGS

- Interventions were most effective when they combined activities that addressed three or more dimensions:

economic, social, and psychosocial. The few studies of larger scale interventions that applied an integrated approach were effective and combined four dimensions - economic, social, psychosocial and cultural.

- Interventions for integration into labour markets rarely addressed the specific needs of low-educated migrants, young migrants and female migrants. Success was greater in interventions that focused on a combination of options: job placement, job search assistance systems, temporary employment, vocational skills training, and entrepreneurship.
- No studies or data were found that evaluate the financial sustainability of enterprises. Successful interventions aimed at increasing the sustainability of enterprises included the existence of public policies, pre-return counselling for returnees, and family and community support.
- Regarding social welfare, interventions focused on promoting and facilitating access to social assistance were limited and migrants and returnees faced obstacles to access due to personal documentation requirements and limited government services available.
- Interventions that offered cultural activities integrated and complementary to economic, social and psychosocial activities were more successful. Since cultural integration was present in interventions aimed at supporting adaptation to a new culture, it was underrepresented in reintegration interventions.
- Community projects and communication campaigns contributed to fostering social cohesion between host communities and migrants.
- Three factors were identified that impacted the degree of effectiveness of (re)integration interventions: proper program design, profile of migrants and returnees, and relevant public policies.
- Three factors were found to hinder (re)integration interventions: inadequate program design; the political and economic context; and insufficient attention to the psychosocial dimension of migrants and returnees.

<sup>1</sup> The Rapid Evidence Assessment (also referred to as research or study in this report) was carried out by a team of three researchers from Owl RE, an external research and evaluation consultancy at the request of the Labor Mobility and Social Inclusion Unit of the Regional Office (OR) for South America of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the REA, the term intervention encompasses all kinds of humanitarian and development work that can be evaluated, such as projects, programs, policies, strategies, thematic areas, technical assistance activities, advice on public policies, institutions, mechanisms financing, instruments, or other activities.

GRAPHIC: DIMENSIONS - (RE)INTEGRATION INTERVENTIONS



## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A successful and sustainable intervention requires a holistic approach that encompasses the three levels of (re)integration: individual, community and structural and in at least four dimensions: economic, social, cultural, and psychosocial. However, the research showed that many interventions focused exclusively on the economic dimension, individual level, and short limited duration. The study confirms that when the focus of (re)integration interventions is so narrow, the impact is limited. Patterns for (re)integration are similar around the world, however, large-scale studies on (re)integration interventions are mainly from Africa and some countries with returnees from Europe and to a lesser extent from the Americas.

The results were also similar among the different populations: migrants, returnees, and mixed migrant population. Differences were found in the focus of the interventions, especially regarding the social, cultural, and psychosocial dimensions, since the challenges faced by each population are usually diverse. For example, returnees had to face the stigma of returning, which migrants did not. These, in turn, faced other challenges such as isolation and the challenges of adapting to a new culture. It is clear that both populations had to face discrimination and hostility in their receiving communities.

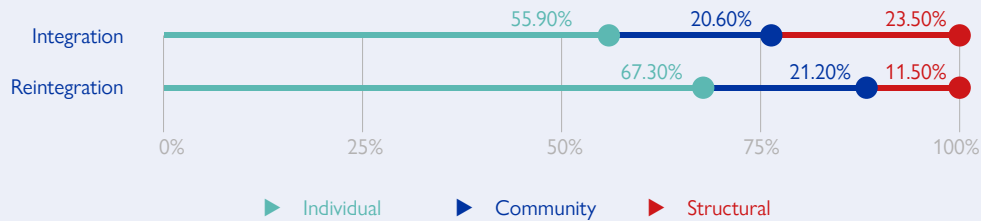
## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS

- Holistically address the individual, family, community, and structural levels, as well as the economic, cultural, social, and psychosocial dimensions. Increase interventions at the community level to achieve social cohesion and

cultural integration. At the individual and community level, strengthen psychosocial counselling, network development and community support. Promote interventions at the structural level that strengthen (re) integration efforts promoted by governments and the private sector, as well as interventions that guarantee access to education, health, and social welfare.

- Apply a participatory and cooperative design approach with beneficiaries (migrants and returnees) and partners (CSOs, local businesses and government services) - whenever possible - for (re)integration interventions.
- Integrate gender aspects considering the skills of migrant and returnee women for the labour market and their family, social and psychosocial needs. Apply a differentiated approach to minorities, people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly, among others.
- Extend the duration of interventions to at least four years to ensure regular monitoring of interventions, especially around entrepreneurship.
- Evaluate the feasibility of each entrepreneurship proposed, guarantee the availability of appropriate seed capital, and provide long-term follow-up advice and mentoring.
- Regarding the social dimension, increase activities at the structural level and foster the fight against discrimination and xenophobia towards migrants who wish to access social services.
- Include activities at both individual and community levels in addressing the psychosocial dimension. Consider the differentiated needs of the various migratory profiles and design activities tailored to the specific group, such as returnees or mixed migration populations.
- Increase the cultural dimension in interventions, mainly at the individual and community level, for migrants and returnees.

GRAPHIC: REINTEGRATION AND INTEGRATION - LEVELS



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR (RE)INTEGRATION

- Strengthen public policies that facilitate the (re)integration of migrants and returnees, integrated into a broad and coherent migration governance strategy. Adopt specific measures, including regularization, access to housing, education, and social welfare services.
- Carry out information campaigns about health services and psychosocial care, security and justice, support for entrepreneurship and business development, and facilitate equal access to migrants and returnees.
- Guarantee a comprehensive approach and inter-institutional coordination between ministries and government services that develop policies for (re)integration and thus provide a cohesive and complementary offer to migrants and returnees.

## EVIDENCE GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

- Not enough studies were found on interventions for (re) integration. Most of the studies described and analyzed the situation of returnees, migrants or mixed populations, but without being linked to a specific intervention. The number of studies on interventions for integration is smaller compared to those on reintegration. A weakness was also found in the analysis of the results of activities.

**Recommendation:** Systematically evaluate and conduct further research on (re)integration interventions that also focus on outcome levels applying robust methods, wherever possible. Integration interventions should be the focus of further research.

- Not enough studies were found to cover the full range of support provided for (re)integration: They focused on intervention outcomes in isolation, with little reference to other types of support or services that beneficiaries might be receiving. **Recommendation:** Carry out more studies that examine, evaluate, and compare the impact of interventions including services and other support that migrants or returnees are receiving.
- Insufficient number of studies on the institutional level of the interventions studied. **Recommendation:** Carry out complementary research at the institutional level, which considers the reform of public policies.

Interventions and public policies for (re)integration generate an impact on migrants and returnees who, often and in different contexts, face challenges in finding work, connecting with society, adapting (or re-adapting) to a new culture and feel at ease with their families and host communities. It is therefore relevant to design and implement (re)integration initiatives for migrants and returnees that are effective and that respond comprehensively to the multiple challenges of the migration experience.



**International Organization For Migration (IOM)**

Regional Office For South America • Buenos Aires, Argentina • Tel.: +(54) 11 4813 3330



[www.robuenosaires.iom.int](http://www.robuenosaires.iom.int)



[OIMSuramerica](#)



[OIMSuramerica](#)



[OIMSuramerica](#)



[ONUMigración](#)