
European Red Cross Return Initiative

A study on how to support sustainable
return in safety and dignity



European Community under
the RETURN – Preparatory
Actions for 2006



BritishRedCross



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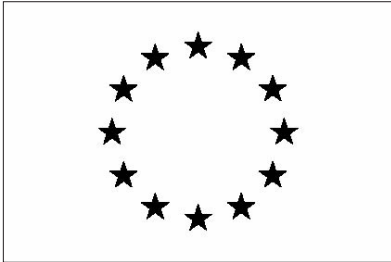


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**Red Cross / EU Office
Bureau Croix-Rouge / UE**

**Croix-Rouge suisse
Schweizerisches Rotes Kreuz 
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The *European Red Cross Return Initiative* is a joint project of the British Red Cross, the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross and the Red Cross/EU Office, co-financed by the European Community under the RETURN – Preparatory Actions for 2006.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, ensuring the return of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants has emerged as key concern of European governments. While being viewed as a necessary means of combating irregular migration, return is also considered important in order to counter misuse of asylum procedures and to maintain the integrity of asylum systems.

In this regard, the recently adopted EU Return Directive, which “sets out common standards and procedures to be applied in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals”, aims to “provide for an effective return policy as a necessary element of a well managed migration policy”.¹

At the same time, return raises humanitarian concerns. Many rejected asylum seekers and other migrants who are obliged to return find themselves stranded in European countries for long periods of time, living under difficult conditions, sometimes in destitution. Prospects for sustainable return are often bleak.²

Those who do return may face uncertain and precarious conditions, sometimes finding themselves in a worse situation than when they left their country of origin. They may have serious concerns about their livelihood as well as their safety. Moreover, any use of force risks causing human suffering and enforced removal can, therefore, create situations of extreme vulnerability.³

Return should only take place in safe and dignified conditions. The principle of *non-refoulement* must be respected at all times.

In 1991 the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) requested the components of the Movement “*to actively seek support of the governments with a view ... to ensure that a decision to deny asylum is taken only within the framework of fair and proper procedures and that the principle of return in safety and dignity of rejected asylum-seekers is reaffirmed and, if assistance is given by National Societies, to respect their adherence to the Fundamental Principles of the Movement.*”⁴

1 Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, Official Journal of the European Union, L 348, 24.12.2008.

2 *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *The Movement and refugees*, Resolution 9, Council of Delegates, 1991.

The starting point for Red Cross and Red Crescent action in favour of returnees is the additional vulnerability caused by return to persons who are already in a vulnerable situation. Aiming to prevent and alleviate human suffering, several European National Societies provide assistance to vulnerable persons who are obliged to return to their country of origin, both those who comply with the obligation to return and persons who are subject to enforced removal. At the same time, they recognise that supporting returnees can be a challenging task, therefore requiring jointly agreed guidance.⁵

Following the adoption in 1999 of “repatriation guidelines”⁶ by the *Platform for European Red Cross Co-operation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants* (hereafter referred to as PERCO⁷), discussions continued about how to address at policy level the issue of return and how to adequately define the role and activities of National Societies. A working group on return within PERCO developed an updated guide on return – *Return: Policy and Practice*⁸ – that was adopted in 2008 and which sets out set a framework for Red Cross and Red Crescent action in favour of returnees.

In 2006, the Swedish Red Cross, in co-operation with the Spanish Red Cross, the Red Cross Society of Serbia and Montenegro and the Red Cross/EU Office, organised the *European Open Forum on Return*. The objective of this project, which was co-financed by the European Refugee Fund, was “to facilitate the exchange of good practices in the field of return in the EU, taking into account experiences of countries of origin”. Gathering experts from 17 Member States and several third countries as well as international organisations, the forum examined “models of good practice” and discussed ways of how to better support rejected asylum seekers⁹. Building on its recommendations, the present project – the *European Red Cross Return Initiative* (hereafter referred to as ERCRI) – was conceived with the aim of developing a “co-ordinated European Red Cross response”.¹⁰

At the European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Istanbul in 2007, National Societies across Europe made a commitment to “*improve cooperation between National Societies in countries of origin, transit and destination in order better to protect and assist migrants and returnees and to strengthen partnerships with external actors working in this field*”.¹¹

5 *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008.

6 *Repatriation Guidelines for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1999.

7 PERCO is a network of the National Red Cross Societies of Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

8 *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008.

9 *European Open Forum on Return - Final Report*, Swedish Red Cross and the Red Cross/EU Office, 2006.

10 ERCRI is a joint project of the British Red Cross, the Bulgarian Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Swedish Red Cross, the Swiss Red Cross and the Red Cross/EU Office, co-financed by the European Community under the RETURN – Preparatory Actions for 2006.

11 *The Istanbul Commitments*, 7th European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, 2007.

Moreover, in November 2007 the Council of Delegates requested the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement “*to cooperate closely and coordinate within and beyond the Movement to support the provision of the necessary services and protection to vulnerable persons throughout the entire migratory cycle, including return and reintegration*”.¹²

In May 2009, responding to a request by its 16th General Assembly, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies adopted a comprehensive *Policy on Migration*, providing guidance for National Societies world-wide. Recognising that “*Returning migrants will often face challenges, particularly in terms of their reintegration*”, the policy provides e.g. that “*When working with and for them, National Societies are only concerned with the returnees’ own needs and interests. At all times, they must maintain their impartiality, neutrality and independence. National Societies in countries of destination and return should cooperate, both in preparation of returns, and in receiving the returnees*”.¹³

1.1. Objective and Methods

The overall objective of the ERCRI project is:

- To contribute to sustainable return in safety and dignity through effective co-operation and co-ordination among National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (the ICRC) and the Secretariat of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the International Federation) as well as with external stakeholders.

To this end the project aimed to further develop capabilities for co-ordinated return activities of National Societies, taking into account the extensive experience of the Movement in assisting and protecting asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants.

With a view to provide recommendations for the development of an effective co-ordination structure and the implementation of concrete joint return projects, the ERCRI project has examined the current capacities and approaches of European National Societies, the ICRC and the International Federation, undertaken feasibility assessments in three selected countries of return, and initiated a dialogue with governments and other major stakeholders.

¹² *International Migration*, Resolution 5, Council of Delegates, 2007.

¹³ *Policy on Migration*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009.

This report presents an overview of the project's findings, outlines a best practice model and offers recommendations to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as well as to governments and EU institutions. On a more general level, it seeks to promote a debate among National Societies by enhancing the knowledge about Red Cross and Red Crescent involvement in the return of vulnerable migrants who are obliged to return to their country of origin.

The report is based on a survey that targeted PERCO members, four field missions to EU Member States, feasibility assessments in three countries of return (Kosovo, Mali and Iraq/Jordan), visits to three International Federation Zone Offices (Europe, West and Central Africa, and Middle East and North Africa), the ICRC regional office in West Africa, and the head offices of the International Federation and the ICRC, as well as discussions with other stakeholders, including the European Commission, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The field missions and the feasibility assessments were made to assess capacities and approaches, to clarify roles and identify assistance gaps, and to generally get a better understanding of the phenomena of return as well as to serve as illustrative examples.

Red Cross staff supporting vulnerable returnees were questioned in semi-structured interviews followed by an additional questionnaire for those National Societies that were engaged in return actions, to clarify certain aspects.

Based on draft recommendations developed by the project, a final seminar in Höör bringing together representatives of 17 National Societies, the ICRC, the International Federation, the European Commission, the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, the UK Border Agency, the International Organisation for Migration, Caritas, the Danish Refugee Council and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), further discussed and offered suggestions on the way forward.

1.2. Concepts, Definitions and Limitations

This study focuses on protection and assistance offered by European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies¹⁴ to vulnerable persons who are *obliged to return to their country of origin*¹⁵.

A major challenge to any meaningful discussion about return related activities is the proliferation of concepts, such as “voluntary return”, “mandatory return” and “forced return”, which are used in various and sometimes contradictory ways by

¹⁴ National Societies which are members of PERCO; see footnote 7.

¹⁵ In some instances a person may be returned to another country than the country of origin.

governments, international organisations, NGOs and National Societies. For the purpose of this report, it was therefore important to find a common description of the project's target group that would be inclusive, applicable in as many contexts as possible and accepted by major stakeholders.

To this end it was agreed that the following category of persons would be considered "returnees":

- Rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants and other vulnerable persons who are obliged to return to their country of origin, irrespective of whether the persons concerned comply with the obligation to return or are subject to enforced removal, including those who are kept in detention.¹⁶

While, where necessary, the report refers to various concepts as used *by the different stakeholders*, it does not attempt to explain their meaning in the particular national or institutional context.

It should be noted, moreover, that this report does not examine in detail National Society "participation in expulsions and deportations of migrants" as a specific activity, i.e. provision of assistance and monitoring of conditions during removal operations. This activity was discussed in February 2009 at a seminar organised by the French Red Cross and the Council of Europe¹⁷. It is also addressed in the International Federation's *Policy on Migration*.¹⁸

With regards to activities in favour of *detained* migrants (including returnees), guidelines are currently developed under the lead of the ICRC¹⁹.

16 Meeting of the ERCRI Reference Group, Belgrade, 19 April 2008; cf. *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008.

17 *Strasbourg Recommendations*, Seminar on Migration, Unaccompanied Minors and Forced Returns, French Red Cross and the Council of Europe, 2009.

18 *Policy on Migration*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009; the policy provides that "National Societies are under no obligation, as auxiliaries to public authorities or otherwise, to have a role in coercive acts or migration control. In fact, their direct participation may endanger the neutrality and humanitarian identity of the Movement." Accordingly, "National Societies shall avoid participation in expulsions or deportations of migrants. However, with the prior consent of both, those who will be forcibly removed and the National Society in the country of return, they may respond to humanitarian needs. In such cases, stringent programming conditions must be respected".

19 These guidelines do not cover assistance or monitoring during removal operations. The ICRC is of the opinion that direct participation of components of the Movement to removal operations may endanger the neutrality, independence and humanitarian identity of the Movement.

2. Return in the European Union

Return has become an important component of EU Member States migration policies in recent years and is viewed an action that facilitates the return of third country nationals to their country of origin or another country outside the EU. Returning migrants are a heterogeneous group that includes rejected asylum seekers, refugees after the termination of their status, irregular migrants and migrants having overstayed their visa or whose temporary work permit has expired. The realities vary in the different Member States and so also the understanding and legislation related to return.

As already mentioned, the EU Return Directive, adopted in December 2008 by the European Parliament and the Council, “sets out common standards and procedures to be applied in Member States for returning illegally staying third country nationals”. Its provisions must be implemented in national law by the end of 2010. While Denmark, the United Kingdom and Ireland are not bound by the directive, it constitutes a development of the Schengen *acquis* and therefore affects all Schengen countries.

The Return Directive distinguishes between two categories of return, “voluntary return” (defined as return “in voluntary compliance with an obligation to return”) and “enforced removal”. It encourages Member States to “provide for enhanced return assistance and counselling and make best use of the relevant funding possibilities offered under the European Return Fund”. The directive further promotes “Cooperation between the institutions involved at all levels in the return process and the exchange and promotion of best practices” and recognizes that “International cooperation with countries of origin at all stages of the return process is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable return”.²⁰

The knowledge about the different return assistance schemes that exist is limited. Return assistance is primarily provided in the framework of bilateral projects between a host country government and IOM. The target group is returnees from a given nationality residing a particular host country. Some receive substantial return and re-integration packages, like for example returnees from Denmark to Kosovo in 2006/7²¹. Some receive only a one-way ticket to their original home location and others receive nothing. The conditions vary considerably between European countries.

20 Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, Official Journal of the European Union, L 348, 24.12.2008

21 See Annex IV: Return to Kosovo – What It Could Look Like.

In addition, those that are subject to enforced removal do not receive any assistance and are often returned under difficult conditions. Many aspects of return are not documented and data collected on return varies from one country to another. Data may be collected by various actors, but no overall figure for a country is available. Evaluations of return programmes are few and the examples of successful and sustainable programmes even fewer.

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in their role as auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field or otherwise, are engaged in the area of return assistance. However, National Societies can only perform activities that respect the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The activities of a National Society are in response to the vulnerabilities in a given country as well as the services offered by the government and other stakeholders. To better understand the current actions in the area of return assistance, one must therefore be able to understand the environment in which the National Society is operating. To illustrate this, four governments' practices in the area of return have been included in this report.

2.1. Return in Denmark

Asylum seekers who either withdraw their application for asylum, or whose application is rejected, have the possibility to receive a small amount of economic assistance towards their “voluntary return” to their country of origin.

In particular circumstances the Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs can decide to offer economic support for specific groups towards their “voluntary return” to their country of origin. This relates to persons residing in Denmark who have applied for asylum, but who have not yet received a residence permit in the country.

The Danish government has on different occasions (in 2003 and 2005 and latest in 2007) passed additional acts to the Aliens Act related to return matters. The aim has been to facilitate “voluntary return” to Afghanistan and Iraq²² and provide counselling and financial support. In general, i.e. not related to special laws or additional acts, the authorities cover the return ticket and the transportation of personal belongings (and the Danish Red Cross always covers medicine for the first three months in the country of return).

22 The Danish government signed a readmission agreement with the Iraqi government in May 2009. As a consequence, the Danish government closed the voluntary return project with immediate effect and the Iraqis that had chosen to take part in the project will no longer have the support described in this report.

A person who is subject to enforced removal is not entitled to any assistance by the Danish authorities other than the journey to the country of return.

The Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs is responsible for advising on return related matters. However, in reality the Ministry has entrusted the implementation to different authorities, NGOs such as the Danish Refugee Council and Care4U, and to the Danish Red Cross.

2.2. Return in Germany

In Germany, return counselling was introduced already in the late 1970ies as a right by law for labour migrants. The right of every migrant to be counselled on return still exists. The German government and the Federal States of Germany provide financial and operational assistance to destitute returnees for “voluntary return” or third country migration, through two programmes, the *Reintegration and Emigration Program for Asylum-Seekers in Germany* (REAG) and the *Government Assisted Repatriation Programme* (GARP). REAG was established in 1979 and GARP in 1989. Both programmes are premised on the assumption of permanent return. If a person comes back to Germany within five years after her/his return and stays for more than three months, she/he has to pay back the assistance received.

The development of these programmes has been closely related to the changes in the number and nationalities of migrants arriving in Germany. They are steering instruments for German migration management. The programmes target persons from “countries of origin important in terms of migration policy”²³ and allocate between EUR 200 and 500 per adult depending on the country of return. The Conference of the Interior Ministers of the Federal States (*Länder*) decides annually which third countries’ citizens the programmes will target. The criteria laid down do not allow for any flexibility with regard to individual needs or countries of return.

A person who is subject to enforced removal is not entitled to any assistance by the German authorities. Furthermore, he/she has to hand over all financial assets to the authorities before the departure in order to cover the costs for assistance provided in the detention facilities and the journey back to the country of return. In some countries, e.g. Kosovo, initiatives have been established aiming at giving returnees material support at least in their initial phase after return. These projects are funded by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* – BAMF) and governmental bodies of the regions (Bundesländer, e.g. Baden-Württemberg, Niedersachsen and Nordrhein-Westfalen). Basically, expenses in terms of urgent aid, e.g. for food and medical provision, costs for specific training measures (language courses and vocational training) and for enabling people to get access to the local/regional labour market, will be (partly) covered.

²³ Ministry of the Interior, Department MI5, *Support for voluntary return through the programs REAG and GARP*, 2003.

The REAG and GARP programmes are administrated by the Ministry of the Interior and the Federal States and implemented by IOM. The implementation is carried out in close co-operation with local and regional authorities, organisations such as the German Red Cross, and specialised NGOs.

2.3. Return in Sweden

In 2007 the Swedish government introduced “re-establishment support” with the aim to stimulate return of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine (Gaza) and Somalia. Returnees have to apply for financial support. The amounts were increased in 2009 to stimulate more persons to return. An individual can receive up to SEK 30.000 and SEK 75.000 for a family²⁴. The “re-establishment support” is paid in full in the country of return. The Swedish government co-operates with IOM.

Sweden has a tripartite agreement with the Afghan government and UNHCR on return to Afghanistan. In Serbia, the local organisation Praxis assist with information, counselling and legal assistance related to personal documents for persons in the process of re-admission in Serbia, under an agreement with the Swedish government. Presently, the Swedish authorities are looking at further developing re-integration support in countries of return, including business start-up and skills training programmes in two pilot countries/regions (Kosovo and northern Iraq).

In principle, a person that is removed by force is not entitled to any assistance by the Swedish authorities. However, some regional police authorities, that are responsible for enforcing the removal, provide pocket money to individual returnees.

The Swedish government seeks co-operation with different non-governmental actors who come in contact with asylum seekers and irregular migrants. In 2008, the government approved funding to a Swedish Red Cross project aiming at supporting rejected asylum seekers from northern Iraq, Kosovo and Serbia.

2.4. Return in the United Kingdom

The British government offers a “voluntary return” scheme since 1999 implemented by IOM. The current *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme* (VARRP) is open to asylum seekers including those that are held in detention. Another programme is available for irregular migrants that have not claimed asylum, *Assisted Voluntary Return for Irregular Migrants* (AVRIM). The latter does not include re-integration assistance.

²⁴ Approximately 2.800 Euro for an individual and 7.100 Euro for a family.

VARRP offers advice, counselling and information about return, assistance in obtaining travel documents and payment of costs incurred, a flight home, a meet and greet service at airport on return, help with onward travel to final destination, a relocation cash grant of £ 500 per family member returning paid on departure at the UK airport, and in-kind re-integration assistance.

Re-integration assistance can include extra baggage allowance, up to three months temporary accommodation following return and payment of childcare fees for infants. Each returnee is offered help with small business set-up, schooling fees, vocational training, or job placements.²⁵

Recently the government has adopted a re-entry ban for those who have left “voluntarily” but at the public expense, including through VARRP. The returnee will be refused entry clearance to come to the UK for five years. Persons who are deported or removed will be subject to a ten year ban on re-entry and are not entitled to any return or re-integration assistance by the authorities.²⁶

IOM is the main implementing organisation in the United Kingdom. Various refugee agencies assist asylum seekers during the asylum procedure, some of which are also involved in pre-departure counselling, such as Choices, Safe Haven Yorkshire, and regional Refugee Services.

25 Refugee Council Information, *Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme*, April 2008.

26 Ibid.

3. Other Stakeholders Engaged in Return Programmes

3.1. International Organisation for Migration

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is an intergovernmental organisation, providing services and advice to governments on migration issues including return as well as promoting human and orderly migration²⁷. IOM has no legal protection mandate in relation to refugees and asylum seekers. One of IOM's many migration management services is the *Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)* programme, which is offered to migrants and governments. It includes assistance to those wishing to return voluntarily as well as rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants without any other option than to return to their country of origin.

In the area of return assistance IOM is the main partner of EU governments and European National Red Cross Societies that are involved in national return programmes. IOM is also a major partner in countries of return, having offices in a large number of countries²⁸.

IOM underlines the importance of the return counselling as a specific field which needs specialisation. The screening of persons requesting return assistance is considered important in order to support successful re-integration.

A major challenge for IOM is the fact that different host countries offer different amounts of cash grants and types of assistance for return and re-integration. It is difficult for a returning person to understand why she/he receives less than another person that has returned from another country. According to IOM's experiences, successful re-integration depends to a large extent on how much help a returnee receives for establishing a project. Another challenge is linked to the follow-up and monitoring of returnees, as not much funding is provided for this by governments. It is also difficult to keep in contact with the persons concerned when they are back in the country of return.

27 *Managing Migration for the Benefit of All: The International Organization for Migration in Brief* (Info sheet: IOM in Brief), March 2009.

28 430 field offices in over 100 countries, *ibid.*

3.2. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Rejected asylum-seekers do not, as a category, fall within the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). However, UNHCR may support governments, upon their request, in the return of *persons found not to be in need of international protection*, i.e.:

- Persons who have sought international protection and who after due consideration of their claims in fair procedures, are found neither to qualify for refugee status on the basis of criteria laid down in the 1951 Convention, nor to be in need of international protection in accordance with other international obligations or national law.²⁹

For example, as mentioned above, UNHCR has a tripartite agreement with the Swedish and Afghan governments on return to Afghanistan. Assistance is available for Afghans with pending applications for asylum who decide of their own free will to return and those who are found not to have protection needs or humanitarian reasons in accordance with the Swedish Aliens Act. The UNHCR Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries offers confidential counselling with the aim of assisting potential returnees in assessing whether return to Afghanistan is the right decision for the individual.

3.3. Danish Refugee Council

Among the major NGOs engaged in return assistance are the Refugee Councils in various European countries, such as the Danish Refugee Council. Their approach to return is based on the returnee's consensual compliance with the return.

The work of the Danish Refugee Council is rights-based, and it defends the right of individuals to seek asylum. The organisation acknowledges the right of governments to return rejected asylum seekers. However, a prerequisite is that any decision to return someone to their home country is made on the basis of a fair and efficient asylum procedure, since incorrect decisions – including decisions on premature return – can ultimately lead to renewed persecution of the persons concerned.

The Danish Refugee Council applies a holistic approach which encompasses all phases in the return process and has developed recommendations for the return and re-integration of rejected asylum seekers³⁰. They have a presence in the countries of return where they work.

²⁹ *Conclusion on the return of persons found not to be in need of international protection*, No. 96, Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, UNHCR, 2003.

³⁰ *Recommendations for the Return and Reintegration of Rejected Asylum Seekers: Lessons Learned from Return to Kosovo*, Danish Refugee Council, 2008.

3.4. Caritas

Caritas is a faith-based humanitarian organisation that is organised in independent national branches. Together with other NGOs, several national Caritas members active in the field of return assistance are organised in a network of *European Reintegration Support Organisations* (ERSO).

The ERSO network co-operates closely with partners in the countries of return and aims to improve the assistance for migrants (primarily rejected asylum seekers) during their “voluntary return” and re-integration process. They offer returnees impartial pre-departure counselling and information about re-integration possibilities as well as re-integration assistance and monitoring after return.

Caritas Europe, which is one of the seven regions of Caritas Internationalis, advocates for a rights-based approach to return.

3.5. Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte im Bereich Migration und der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit

Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte im Bereich Migration und der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (AGEF) is a German organisation working in the fields of migration and development co-operation. AGEF is focusing on skills and vocational training as well as various activities related to job creation and employment.

AGEF is involved in economical re-integration programmes in for example Afghanistan, northern Iraq and Kosovo targeting persons who are obliged to return to their country of origin.

AGEF has lead a project with partners from Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands aiming at developing tools for planning and implementation of integrated return in countries of return – “the CCM Training Project”.

4. European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Return Assistance

A majority of the surveyed European National Red Cross Societies are in contact with rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants who are obliged to return. Eleven National Societies are specifically targeting returnees through programmes or projects.³¹

The level of involvement, approaches and types of assistance offered varies between National Societies. Differences in approach are partly due to differences in asylum and return policies and practices of European governments. The presence and scope of activities of other stakeholders in a given country also influence the role of National Societies in providing assistance to vulnerable returnees.

National Societies, NGOs and authorities have all pointed out that *persons subject to enforced removal* may be particularly vulnerable. This group is seldom eligible for government support and is often returned under traumatic circumstances without means to support themselves upon arrival in the country of return.

Most National Societies offer pre-departure counselling and assistance. Two National Societies have been engaged in provision of assistance and monitoring of conditions during removal operations (the French Red Cross and the Red Cross of Luxembourg). Another two European National Societies provide support to persons after return to their respective country (the Croatian Red Cross and the Red Cross of Serbia).

Some National Societies, like the Swiss Red Cross and the German Red Cross, have several years of experience working with return assistance. Others have become involved more recently.

The Swedish Red Cross views return assistance as an extension of the support provided to asylum seekers during the asylum procedure. When an asylum seeker receives a negative decision, she/he may find her/himself in a particularly vulnerable situation, hence the engagement of Swedish Red Cross in providing counselling and assistance. Some other National Societies, like the Finish Red Cross, reason differently. The Finish Red Cross sees a risk of contradicting their commitment to the asylum seekers by an involvement in return assistance and believe that the public may have difficulties in understanding what can be perceived as a “double role”.

³¹ See Annex I: National Societies Engaged in Return Assistance.

4.1. Approaches to Return Assistance

National Societies engaged in return assistance provide counselling in order for the returnees to make an informed choice whether to return or not, and may also assist with travel and other documents, directly or through referral to IOM.

European governments are the main providers of funds for return programmes. Hence, National Societies are often affected by the decisions of governments as regards which nationalities are eligible for support.

Return counselling focuses on the current situation of the person concerned and the perspectives for return (situation in country and location of return, security, living conditions, health care services, educational system, labour market, etc). The return counsellor may also provide assistance to acquire financial means for re-integration or link with other organisations that are able to provide re-integration assistance.

IOM is the main external partner and is in most instances responsible for assistance provided to the returnee once she/he has arrived to country of return. AGEF is also cited as a partner providing re-integration support.

National Societies as well as IOM has pointed out that one challenge is to establish trust between the return programme and the beneficiary. In this regard, the return counsellor plays an important role in establishing a trustful relationship with the person seeking advice and assistance.

The Spanish Red Cross is implementing two *Assisted Voluntary Return Programmes* with the Spanish government as the main donor and the majority of the returnees coming from Latin America. It is also engaged in humanitarian assistance programmes for migrants in countries of origin and transit in West Africa (Mauritania and Senegal).

The Swedish Red Cross is piloting an information network project for return to northern Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo. In each country/region a focal point for return is appointed by the host National Society or by the International Federation to provide adequate and up-dated information on relevant conditions in the respective country of return. In a second phase beginning mid-2009, additional activities will be developed based on identified needs and available local capacities.

In 2008 the Swiss Red Cross started to offer return counselling to detained migrants. It is currently looking into the possibility of expanding its return counselling services to also include sustainable economic re-integration as a component to be offered to the returnees in co-operation with the private sector. A feasibility study will be ready by the end of 2009.

The Danish Red Cross is offering a comprehensive vocational training programme to Iraqi returnees in Denmark, prior to their return to Iraq.³²

National Societies providing return counselling usually refer returnees to available public websites, such as IOM and UNCHR, for information about countries of return. Only the Swedish Red Cross has direct contacts with National Societies or the International Federation in countries of return for this purpose through its information network project, which provides specific and return-related information.

A majority of European National Societies engaged in return assistance have a regular dialogue on return with their respective government through bi-lateral and other meetings, by commenting on government bills, and through sharing their own reports on relevant topics.

The Swiss Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the Spanish Red Cross and the German Red Cross have adopted policies guiding their support to returnees. The remaining National Societies apply the PERCO guide *Return: Policy and Practice*.³³

4.2. Return as an Area of International Co-operation

Few European National Societies working with return assistance have contacts with National Societies in the countries of return. Return assistance is usually part of a national refugee/asylum or migration programme, while relations with National Societies in other countries are handled by a department responsible for international co-operation. There is presently limited dialogue and co-operation on return between national and international co-operation departments of European National Societies. It is important to enhance such dialogue as return and migration is closely associated with international development.

Only one National Society, the Swiss Red Cross, has a comprehensive strategy for its return assistance that includes an agreement on the roles and responsibilities of the various departments, i.e. the Migration Department, the International Co-operation Department and the Cantonal Associations.

32 The Danish government signed a readmission agreement with the Iraqi government in May 2009. As a consequence, the Danish government closed the voluntary return project with immediate effect and the Iraqis that had chosen to take part in the project will no longer have the support described in this report.

33 *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008.

Three National Societies have experience of providing assistance in both the host country and the country of return and in co-operating in a programmatic way with National Societies in countries of return. The Swedish Red Cross, the Luxembourg Red Cross and the Spanish Red Cross have implemented or are implementing re-integration or return projects in countries of return. The projects are usually developed by or in consultation with the international co-operation department of the respective National Society.

5. National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Countries of Return

5.1. Feasibility Assessments in Countries of Return

The project aimed to assess the capacity and interest of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in three countries of return and to identify capacity-building needs.

It was agreed that the following selection criteria should be used:

- The number of potential returnees present in EU Member States
- Realistic return opportunities
- The capacity of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in each country

The identification of countries where feasibility assessments would be undertaken proved, however, to be a major challenge. It turned out to be difficult to find relevant countries that fully satisfied all three criteria. Several countries of return were considered, but could not be selected. The limited capacity of the National Society concerned was often the main reason why a country had to be discarded.

The project finally visited Kosovo, Mali and Jordan (return to Iraq) to carry out the feasibility assessments.³⁴

A majority of the potential returnees in the European Union come from countries that have had internal conflicts and where the security situation is still of serious concern (for example Iraq). The infrastructure and provision of public services such as health and education are usually weak, employment opportunities few, property rights often an issue, and hence the prospects for sustainable return are poor.

Needless to say, National Societies are not unaffected by such situations. The local population will have suffered from the instability and insecurity, and may be in need of assistance from the international community and their own government as well as from the National Society concerned. In most cases the National Society depends on outside funding as the capacity in-country to fund programmes and activities is limited.

³⁴ See Annex II: Summary of Feasibility Assessments.

Another scenario is countries with adverse economic conditions, pressures from poverty, environmental degradation or scarcity of natural resources (as is the case in Mali and Kosovo). People lack prospects for work, a sustainable income and access to basic health and education facilities, driving them to migrate as a strategy for their own and their family's survival.

The priorities of National Societies in countries of return therefore do not necessarily include assisting returning migrants from European or other countries, as these may not be seen as vulnerable relative to the local population.

The overall situation in a country is usually also reflected in the capacities of the National Society. Scarce local resources and dependency on outside funding limits its ability to address identified needs and to develop additional programmes.

5.2. Persons Returning and Perceptions of Vulnerabilities

A person returning to her/his country of origin may at first impression not be perceived as a vulnerable person, but rather a person having benefited from living in another country to avoid internal conflicts or economical hardship. Such was the view of many actors met with during the feasibility assessments (both internal and external to International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement).

One tends to overlook that the returnee may have gone through hardship when fleeing or migrating. She/he may have to restart more or less from nothing upon return and depending on how long the period of absence has been she/he may have to re-integrate into a new environment and culture. Children returning may have been born in the host country and have to learn a completely new language and adjust to a different education curriculum. Return can be a traumatic experience with loss of prospects for the future.

As previously mentioned, persons subject to enforced removal are by most actors considered as a particularly vulnerable group. They usually have had to leave whatever belongings or savings they may have had behind in the host country. They may have been detained for shorter or longer periods. Psychologically, many of them may be in a bad state.

5.3. Challenges with Return Assistance

It is difficult to prescribe any one remedy as the context varies from one country to another, as does the individual situation of a person in terms of coping mechanisms as well as social networks in the country of return. Return assistance provided by the National Society in a country of return has to be defined taking into account the local context as well as the capacities and resources of the National Society.

Numbers is a challenge when planning return assistance in countries of return. Returnees usually do not arrive in big numbers at one time, except for enforced removal flights, which are often announced at a short notice. The needs of the returnees will also vary on a case-by-case basis.

Reliable information on the country and location of return is difficult to access and most European National Societies providing return counselling refers to second hand sources such as websites of other organisations.

Follow-up and monitoring of the situation after return is also pointed out as a challenge. In return programmes with a business start up or employment component the returnee may be followed over a period of six months to one year. In reality, it is not always possible to keep track of the returnee for practical reasons (distance, insecurity and/or lack of communication means). Evidently, there is a need for additional research to better understand what happens when people return and if the return is sustainable.

To avoid creating situations of envy and hostility between the local population and those returning, all return assistance programmes in countries of return should also take into account the humanitarian needs of the receiving community.

Return assistance provided or funded by EU Member States is often time-limited and restricted to certain nationalities. European National Societies wishing to develop joint projects on return together with National Societies in countries of return may find it difficult to access the necessary resources given the present funding structure for return assistance.

6. Role of the International Federation and the ICRC in Relation to Migration and Return

Migration is receiving increased attention from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement following statutory meetings in 2007 as well as regional conferences (such as the European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Istanbul in 2007). In mid-2008 the Secretary General of the International Federation appointed a Special Representative on Migration. A comprehensive *Policy on Migration* was recently adopted by the Federation's Governing Board.

Two of the International Federation's Zone Offices have established migration co-ordination positions (the Europe Zone Office and the West and Central Africa Zone Office). They are currently working on what strategies to apply in the zones, taking into account the realities of the different regions.

The Zone Offices consider that they may play one or several of the following roles in relation to migration work, including return assistance:

- Knowledge-sharing, including through web-based newsletters and tools
- Linking and bringing partners together
- Supporting resource mobilization through joint funding
- Giving advice on the situation and capacities of National Societies in the respective zone
- Developing common advocacy positions
- Negotiating and assisting in bridging the gap between domestic and international work
- Co-ordinating between National Societies in host and transit countries and countries of return

The ICRC has appointed a focal point for migration at its headquarters. In the field, some of its offices are involved in return assistance through projects or by including returnees in their ongoing programmes in conflict areas, when they fit within vulnerability criteria applicable to the general population. In West Africa, the ICRC will support projects with National Societies (Mali and Niger) to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable persons having been expelled from neighbouring countries and who are stranded in conflict or tensed areas. In northern Iraq, returnees have been able to access ICRC micro-credit programmes.

It needs to be further discussed if and how the ICRC may play a role in the provision of return assistance in countries of conflict.

7. A Best Practice Model

From the lessons learned to date from various organisations involved in return assistance activities certain components for a successful return and re-integration programme can be distinguished.

Such a programme should include:

- Legal and return counselling in the host country on an individual case basis that looks at the specific situation of the individual
- Reliable information on the situation in the country of return specific to the individual and her/his case
- Assistance to obtain relevant documents prior to return, including support for travel costs and health/medical assistance
- Vocational or other skills training in the host country or in the country of return, preferably combined with job matching or business start-up courses
- Arrival and initial re-integration support, including legal advice, assistance with registration procedures, advice on how to access basic services in the country of return, psycho-social support, accommodation for an initial period and basic humanitarian support on a needs basis (in the individual case or for a group of returnees)
- Monitoring and follow-up in the country of return

When applying this *best practice model* to the present situation among European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, a picture emerges which indicates that a more comprehensive and holistic approach would be needed for National Societies to realize their ambition to better protect and assist returnees and to contribute to sustainable return in safety and dignity (see Table 1).

Table 1: Best Practice and Current Roles of European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Best Practice Model	Current Roles of European National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Legal and return counselling in the host country on an individual case basis that looks at the specific situation of the individual.	Return counselling provided by nine European National Societies, usually with referral to IOM or other return assistance programmes offered through the government.
Reliable information on the situation in the country of return specific to the individual and her/his case.	<p>One European National Society offers specific case-by-case information in co-operation with Red Cross/Red Crescent partners in countries of return.</p> <p>Five European National Societies offer referrals to other organisations/websites.</p>
Assistance to obtain relevant documents prior to return, including support for travel costs and health/medical assistance.	Assistance to obtain relevant documents and health/medical services is offered by seven European National Societies
Arrival and initial re-integration support including legal advice, assistance with registration procedures, advice on how to access basic services in the country of return, psycho-social support, accommodation for an initial period and basic humanitarian support on a needs basis (in the individual case or for a group of returnees).	<p>One European National Society offers specific case-by-case assistance in co-operation with Red Cross/Red Crescent partners in countries of return.</p> <p>Six European National Societies offer referral to other organisations.</p> <p>Two European National Societies offer assistance <i>or</i> referral to other organisations.</p>
Vocational or other skills training in the host country or in the country of return, preferably combined with job matching or business start-up courses.	<p>One European National Societies offers vocational training opportunities in the host country.</p> <p>Three European National Societies offer referral to other organisations in host and/or the country of return.</p>
Monitoring and follow-up in the country of return.	One European National Society monitors living conditions after return in co-operation with Red Cross/Red Crescent partners in countries of return.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Return assistance programmes and projects have been developed based on varying realities and practices in different countries. At the same time, the EU Return Directive provides for common standards and procedures and encourages governments to provide for enhanced return assistance and counselling and to engage in the exchange and promotion of best practices.³⁵

Different local authorities and institutions share responsibilities for implementing national return policies. Practices vary between the actors involved, but also within authorities and institutions, from one geographical area to another in the same country. Relevant data and information on return is not easily accessible in host countries and countries of return.

Return assistance is a relatively new area of engagement for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The *European Red Cross Return Initiative* project has served to give a better understanding of the current roles of European National Societies, their approaches and challenges.

Still, the perceptions of why, how and what services should be offered varies between National Societies as well as within National Societies. Services provided by asylum/refugee departments in the host country National Societies are extended to National Societies in countries of return, hence entering the area of international co-operation.

The project has also helped to open up a dialogue between National Societies as well as with other components of the Movement, through feasibility assessments in countries of return and discussions with the International Federation and the ICRC, at headquarter and zone/field level. This dialogue needs to continue and to embrace the knowledge and the experiences of the different stakeholders, while at the same time recognizing the need for piloting new approaches.

It is important to recall that the starting point for Red Cross and Red Crescent action in favour of returnees is the additional vulnerability caused by return to persons who are already in a vulnerable situation. As affirmed by the International Federation's *Policy on Migration*, National Societies are only concerned with the returnees' own needs and interests, and must at all times maintain their impartiality, neutrality and independence.³⁶

35 Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, Official Journal of the European Union, L 348, 24.12.2008

36 *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008; *Policy on Migration*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009.

Return assistance projects need to be in line with humanitarian standards, international co-operation modalities and practices as defined by the Movement, including the Seville Agreement.³⁷

Recommendations

To Governments and EU Institutions

- Governments must ensure that return only take place in safe and dignified conditions, in full respect for the human rights and dignity of those affected. The principle of *non-refoulement* must be respected at all times.
- Governments and EU institutions should increase efforts to support vulnerable returnees and provide adequate resources for the development of actions in line with best practices, rather than focusing on coercive acts.
- Co-operation and co-ordination among governments should be enhanced in order to facilitate the establishment of durable return and re-integration programmes in countries of return, thus minimizing the need for ad hoc assistance projects.
- Better knowledge on the situation and fate of those that have returned is needed in order to ensure the development of qualitative, relevant and durable return assistance programmes, and to verify the accuracy of return decisions.
- Return assistance programmes should facilitate economical as well as social re-integration. An integrated approach should be adopted, involving humanitarian as well as development actors.
- Governments should support needs-based return assistance for all nationalities and categories of returnees, i.e. both those returning in compliance with an obligation to return and those who are subject to enforced removal. Programmes should be open to all persons returning to a particular country, irrespective of in which host country they are residing.
- Governments should offer skills and vocational training in the host country for rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants while they are waiting to return to their country of origin.

³⁷ Agreement on the organization of the international activities of the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (The Seville Agreement), Resolution 6, Council of Delegates, 1997.

- Governments should, in close consultation with other stakeholders³⁸, develop common minimum standards for return assistance, with a baseline of approaches, conditions and financial assistance provided to returnees.
- Funding instruments should support the development and implementation of joint return assistance projects targeting individuals returning from several host countries to a specific country of return.
- Governments and EU institutions should facilitate co-operation and dialogue between all stakeholders involved at all levels in the return process and support exchange and promotion of best practices, aiming at enhanced return assistance (in line with the Return Directive). At the national level, the appointment of a focal point on return assistance could be one way of supporting improved co-operation and co-ordination.

To the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Overall

- Assisting migrants in return should be part of an integrated approach that addresses the needs and vulnerabilities of all persons negatively affected by migration, in line with the principles of the International Federation's *Policy on Migration*.
- Development of additional return assistance activities should continue towards the best practice model, in order for National Societies to better protect and assist returnees. Continued and intensified co-operation and co-ordination between National Societies in host countries as well as with National Societies in countries of return are important elements of a comprehensive best practice model.³⁹
- Current programmes for organisational development, which aim at strengthening overall capacities of National Societies, must continue as they contribute towards improving National Societies' abilities to engage in new areas of work, for example return assistance.
- The roles of the different components of the Movement in relation to return assistance should be further elaborated and clarified based on practical experiences.

³⁸ Including concerned National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and relevant NGOs.

³⁹ See Chapter 7: A Best Practice Model.

- National Societies must assert the right of *access* to all returnees in need, irrespective of their status. The provision of services must be organised in such a way that all in need of assistance and protection can access them, including persons in detention.⁴⁰
- Stringent programming conditions should be elaborated for situations where National Societies provide humanitarian assistance and monitor conditions *during* removal operations (in accordance with the *Policy on Migration*).
- Vulnerability and capacity assessments should be carried out jointly by National Societies in host countries and countries of return, taking into account the humanitarian needs of the receiving community.
- Further meetings to enhance dialogue, mutual understanding and awareness about the situation of returnees, their needs and vulnerabilities and how to best support sustainable return should be held within the Movement, involving all National Societies concerned.
- Dialogue and co-operation between national (asylum/refugee/migration) and international departments of National Societies are essential and should be further developed.

Capacity-Building and Tools

- National Societies in host countries and countries of return, in co-ordination with the International Federation, should support each other in building the capacities needed to better protect and assist returnees (e.g. through staff exchange and mentor programmes), recognizing that capacity-building is a joint responsibility.
- National Societies engaged in return assistance should, based on the International Federation's *Policy on Migration*, develop more detailed guidelines taking into account regional and local needs and constraints.
- A toolbox on return assistance that provides practical guidance should be developed. Such a toolbox could include advice on how to apply the Movement's Fundamental Principles in practice when assisting returnees, which methods to use (e.g. regarding counselling) and how to apply relevant provisions of international refugee and human rights law as well as regional and national policies related to migration and return.

⁴⁰ *Return: Policy and Practice - A guide for European National Red Cross Red Crescent Societies*, PERCO, 2008; see also *The Istanbul Commitments*, 7th European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, 2007; *Together for Humanity*, Resolution 1, 30th International Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, 2007.

Towards Best Practice on Return Assistance

- All activities must be carried out in accordance with the *Policy on Migration* and the PERCO guide *Return: Policy and Practice*.
- Work with return assistance for destitute migrants should be further developed, more National Societies engaged and experiences shared among National Societies.
- National Societies in host countries should enhance the dialogue and co-operation with National Societies in countries of return.
- Co-operation between National Societies in host countries and countries of return should include monitoring of conditions after return in order to assert the fate of the returnees concerned, to gain better knowledge on how to support sustainable return and re-integration, and to inform advocacy.
- Information networks and databases on conditions in countries of return should be co-ordinated and shared among National Societies providing return counselling services in order to allow for accurate and up-date information on the situation in the locality of return, thereby contributing towards a well informed choice on return for the individual.
- Networks should be established and meetings of National Society return counsellors organised, supported by the International Federation, in order to facilitate exchange of experiences and best practice, capacity-building and development of common understanding.
- Co-operation and contacts with other stakeholders, such as UNCHR, IOM, NGOs and NGO networks on return, should be reinforced, respecting Movement policies and principles concerning external co-operation.

Joint and Co-ordinated Advocacy

- Joint advocacy, informed by conditions in countries of return and taking into account the above recommendations to governments and EU institutions, should be further developed and pursued in a co-ordinated way to ensure greater impact.
- National Societies should, in particular, follow-up on the implementation of the EU Return Directive and related asylum and migration legislation, and develop joint advocacy positions and strategies, targeting relevant decision-makers and opinion leaders at all levels.

- The capacity for joint monitoring and influencing EU policy-making should be further enhanced. The Red Cross/EU Office should be strengthened to play such a role in co-operation with National Societies and the International Federation.

The Way Forward

- The partners of the *European Red Cross Return Initiative* and the PERCO Working Group on Return should provide continued leadership and facilitate networking and mutual support between National Societies.
- This report and its recommendations should be widely disseminated within the Movement and, as appropriate, shared with external stakeholders. As a follow-up of the *Istanbul Commitments* adopted by the 7th. European Regional Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference, the recommendations should be presented to the next European Regional Conference, to be held in 2010.
- A joint focal point should be appointed to ensure that the momentum gained from the ERCRI project continues. The role of the focal point should be to facilitate sharing of experiences and best practices, contribute to development of practical tools, development of information on return assistance, and networking with other stakeholders for learning purposes. The focal point could also play a co-ordinating role for pilot projects on return. She/he should work in close co-operation with the PERCO Working Group on Return as well as other stakeholders within and outside the Movement.
- Joint pilot projects should be developed for return to Kosovo, Iraq and possibly a few other countries/regions of return, in co-operation between involved National Societies and the International Federation. Such projects should be well documented for learning purposes. The model of Operational Alliances could be tested, with one National Society acting as focal point on behalf of other host country National Societies vis-à-vis the National Society in the concerned country of return.

Annex I

National Societies Engaged in Return Assistance

This is an overview of return assistance activities in eleven European National Red Cross Societies. The data presented below was collected in 2008.

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Belgian Red Cross – Flemish	Migrants and asylum seekers who are unwilling or unable to remain in Belgium and wish to return to their country of origin.	<p>Return counselling: Information on practical return modalities and on possible sustainable return projects available in country of origin + referral to NGO in charge of project; Assisting the client to make a well considered decision on applying for “voluntary return” or not.</p> <p>Case file preparation: Obtaining travel documents and liaison with air companies for medical cases.</p> <p>Country of origin information provided through referrals to available websites.</p> <p>No advocacy in the area of return.</p>	<p>Manage reception and repatriation centres.</p> <p>Restoring Family Links.</p> <p>Legal assistance for asylum seekers.</p> <p>Integration activities.</p> <p>Monitoring of treatment in airport waiting zones.</p>	<p>BRC-Flemish is a partner to IOM <i>Reab</i> programme that is funded by Belgium Government.</p> <p><i>Co-operation</i> with Caritas Belgium.</p> <p>Financed with own means and a service fee from IOM of EUR 50 per departed person.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Belgian Red Cross – French	Asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, recognized refugees and irregular migrants who are unwilling or unable to remain in Belgium and wish to return to their country of origin.	<p>Return counselling: Information on practical return modalities and on possible sustainable return projects available in country of origin + referral to NGO in charge of project; Assisting the client to make a well considered decision on applying for “voluntary return” or not.</p> <p>Case file preparation: Administrative file for <i>Reab</i> and another one for the Re-integration Fund. Assist in obtaining travel documents.</p> <p>Social worker may accompany returnee to the airport if requested.</p> <p>Country of origin information provided through referrals to available websites.</p> <p>No advocacy at present, but as result of a current study on “voluntary return” advocacy may emerge from the conclusions.</p>	<p>Manage asylum centres.</p> <p>Restoring Family Links</p> <p>Legal assistance for asylum seekers</p> <p>Integration activities</p> <p>Awareness raising for social workers on return as an option for rejected asylum seekers</p> <p>Develops a position on return of rejected asylum seekers</p> <p>Co-operates with International department for projects with countries of return.</p> <p>Sensitization project on risks with migration with the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Congo.</p>	<p>BRC-Flemish is a partner to IOM <i>Reab</i> programme that is funded by Belgium Government.</p> <p>Co-operation with Caritas Belgium, CIRE for returnees to Russia, Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen and others.</p> <p>Return activities financed with own means and a service fee from IOM of EUR 50 per departed person.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Bulgarian Red Cross	Asylum seekers, irregular migrants, rejected asylum seekers, detained migrants, refugees, returnees and trafficking victims.	No specific programme targeting returnees but provide assistance when necessary in detention facilities. Advocacy and lobbying activities on situation of rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants through Bulgarian Refugee Center, where Bulgarian Red Cross plays an active role.	Manage migrant detention facilities. Counselling. Humanitarian assistance. Provide information on country of origin. Restoring Family Links. Assistance with money transfers and foreign embassies and missions to obtain travel documents.	Caritas Bulgaria offers assistance to migrants and asylum seekers. Helsinki Committee provides legal assistance and runs a detention programme. The Centre for Assistance to Victims of Torture. MoU with Ministry of Interior for assistance to detained migrants and detention facilities.

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Croatian Red Cross	People returning from displacement within the region and victims of trafficking.	Humanitarian assistance (food, clothes and medical assistance) Referral to relevant organisations and authorities in country. Psychosocial support Community Mobilization Advocacy based on Federation policies and resolutions. Promotion of the need for rejected asylum seekers to be informed about their rights and conditions including access to pre-departure counselling.	Visits to detention centres. Restoring family links. Legal advice. Integration assistance. Assists asylum seekers in asylum centres.	UNHCR IOM The Croatian Law Centre The Centre for Peace Study Agreements with the Ministry of Interior to support asylum seekers in centres, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare for assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking, Ministry of Human Rights for combating and preventing trafficking.

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Danish Red Cross	Rejected asylum seekers.	<p>Pre-departure counselling.</p> <p>Accommodation, food and clothes prior to departure. Assistance with packing personal belongings.</p> <p>Health care and medical supplies for three months in country of return.</p> <p>Vocational skills training and job-placements through co-operating partners.</p> <p>Departure centres for rejected asylum seekers</p> <p>Escorts if requested by the returnee to the country of origin.</p> <p>Country of origin information through referrals to available websites.</p> <p>Regular dialogue with government, stressing not to return too many to a specific country as well as allow time for prepared and co-ordinated return activities.</p>	<p>Manage reception and accommodation centres for asylum seekers.</p> <p>Integration activities.</p> <p>Vocational skills training.</p> <p>Initiated dialogue and potential co-operation with International Department of the Danish Red Cross on return activities and reception services in countries of return.</p>	<p>Agreement on co-operation with AGEF in countries of return but has not yet been put into practice.</p> <p>Danish Government funds Danish Red Cross asylum centres.</p> <p>Specific project on Return to Iraq with Ministry of Immigration where the Danish Red Cross is responsible for vocational skills training component.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
French Red Cross	Rejected asylum seekers and irregular and regular migrants that return to their country of origin	<p>Return counselling on possibilities for “voluntary return” through ANAEM.</p> <p>Psychological assistance.</p> <p>Material assistance for specific groups</p> <p>Monitoring of treatment in airport waiting zones including assistance and advice on return.</p> <p>Monitoring of migrants subject to enforced removal.</p> <p>Country of origin information if needed.</p>	<p>Legal assistance.</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance.</p>	<p>ANAEM (L’Agence Nationale de l’Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations)</p> <p>No specific funding for from the French Government but global budget support may be allocated to return assistance.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
German Red Cross	Rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants and other vulnerable persons who are obliged to return to their country of origin, irrespective of whether the persons concerned comply with the obligation to return or are subject to enforced removal.	<p>Return counselling: Analysis of the current residence situation and perspectives for return. Information about the situation in country of return. Assistance with travel arrangements and administrative procedures. Assistance to acquire financial means and qualification measures (different training course, start-up business support, and medial care).</p> <p>Escort if needed to the airport in Germany</p> <p>Re-integration activities in co-operation with other organisations where possible</p> <p>Country of origin information provided usually come from IOM and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees</p> <p>Advocacy with government on receiving refugees, grant human rights to irregular migrants, residence permit to those who have stayed for long periods in Germany, guarantee return in dignity, avoiding detention.</p>	<p>Restoring family links.</p> <p>Legal advice</p> <p>Integration activities.</p>	<p>NGOs at federal level such as Arbeiterwohlfahrt Nürnberg, Die Rummelsberger, Caritas.</p> <p>Funding from European Refugee Fund, IOM-funding, from State, Federal Land and local authorities.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Luxembourg Red Cross	Everyone subject to enforced removal	<p>Return counselling and information on “assisted voluntary return”.</p> <p>Assistance with contacts in country of return.</p> <p>Monitoring of enforced removal on government chartered flights.</p>	<p>Restoring family links.</p> <p>Legal advice to asylum seekers.</p> <p>Integration assistance.</p> <p>Psychosocial support in detention centres.</p>	Co-operation with NGOs through Letzebeurger Fluchlingsrot.

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Spanish Red Cross	<p>Regular or irregular migrants that wish to return “voluntarily”.</p> <p>Mainly irregular migrants and vulnerable persons demand the service.</p> <p>Regular migrants that are lacking employment and wish to return (receiving the whole unemployment benefit they are entitled to in two steps; before departure and upon arrival plus travel costs).</p>	<p>Return counselling.</p> <p>Travel arrangements, pocket money during journey and administrative procedures in Spain.</p> <p>Case file preparations including social and medical reports if any, travel documents.</p> <p>Health escorts if needed by Spanish Red Cross health volunteers accompanying</p> <p>Pre-departure assistance through providing or referring to shelter and access to food. Accompany to hospital or health facilities in country of return, if needed.</p> <p>Business start up support (pilot activity planned for in the future).</p> <p>Advocacy with government to avoid specific requirements for returnees.</p>	<p>Manage reception centres.</p> <p>Humanitarian assistance and social mediation at Madrid airport transit zone for asylum seekers and detention centres in the Canary Islands.</p> <p>Integration and labour integration activities</p> <p>Psycho-social support.</p> <p>Restoring Family Links.</p> <p>Legal advice.</p> <p>Website on migration legal and social counselling on individual basis.</p>	<p>IOM, Spanish Refugee Council, MDPL (Movimiento por la Paz) and ACCEM (Catholic Commission for Migrants) and various networks in Spain.</p> <p>Most of budget allocated for migrant and refugee services are funded by government, regional and local authorities.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Swiss Red Cross	<p>Asylum seekers whose procedure is pending. Rejected asylum seekers with a deadline for departure including those in detention.</p> <p>Those granted temporary asylum</p> <p>Irregular migrants</p> <p>Those in need of protection and recognized refugees.</p>	<p>Return counselling on a) perspectives for return and b) on return including: Analysis of the current situation and perspectives for return. Information about the situation in country of return. Assistance with travel arrangements and administrative procedures in Switzerland including medical assistance. Assistance to acquire financial means and qualification measures (different training course, start-up business support).</p> <p>Case file preparation: Preparation and supply of the relevant information and assistance needed for clients to return in safety and dignity.</p> <p>Country of return information on request with IOM, International Social Services, other National Societies, diaspora networks and persons that have returned as sources.</p>	<p>Manage reception centres.</p> <p>Welfare assistance.</p> <p>Integration assistance.</p> <p>Tracing and restoring family links.</p>	<p>IOM and International Social Services.</p> <p>Caritas and HEKS.</p> <p>Government and cantons are funding the major part of the activities.</p> <p>Swiss Red Cross own funding for return counselling in detention centres (8 cantons) and to irregular migrants (5 cantons). Those groups are excluded from government return funding.</p> <p>Sponsoring actions from companies, foundations etc.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Swiss Red Cross (cont.)		<p>Escort if needed to the airport in Switzerland.</p> <p>Re-integration activities in co-operation with other organisations where possible. Individual financial aid from government and Swiss Red Cross funds.</p> <p>Regular and confidential dialogue with cantonal and national authorities. Share also best practices, project experiences and humanitarian concerns. Authorities are members of pilot projects for new target groups. Internal dialogue with the International Department including a strategy for return assistance specifying roles and responsibilities within Swiss Red Cross.</p>		

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Swedish Red Cross	<p>Rejected asylum seekers, irregular migrants and vulnerable returnees that are obliged to return to their country of origin.</p> <p>Unaccompanied children.</p>	<p>Specialised return counselling for returnees to Kosovo, northern Iraq and Serbia (basic counselling is available for all other returnees).</p> <p>Information and a database on the situation in the country of return for Kosovo, northern Iraq and Serbia.</p> <p>Co-operation with National Societies, the International Federation and/or the ICRC in Kosovo, northern Iraq and Serbia.</p> <p>Referrals in country of return (Northern Iraq, Kosovo and Serbia) to authorities, vocational training institutions, public services etc.</p> <p>Limited assistance on a case-by-case basis in Kosovo, northern Iraq and Serbia.</p>	<p>Legal assistance.</p> <p>Restoring family links.</p> <p>Psychosocial support.</p> <p>Integration and recreational activities.</p> <p>Monitoring of detention centres and detention visits.</p>	<p>Co-operation with the International Federation and National Societies in countries of return.</p> <p>Dialogue with the Swedish Migration Board and the Ministry of Justice.</p> <p>Current return information project funded by the Ministry of Justice as a pilot project for two years.</p>

	Target groups	Return Activities	Other related activities	Co-operation and funding of activities
Red Cross of Serbia	Persons returning to Serbia.	<p>Ad hoc assistance including:</p> <p>Counselling and referral to authorities and services.</p> <p>Re-integration activities: Identifying obstacles hindering integration.</p> <p>Kindergartens and pre-schooling for children returning to Serbia without sufficient language skills or knowledge about the country.</p>		<p>The Red Cross of Serbia is a member of the Serbian Refugee Council.</p> <p>Several international organisations including UNHCR and NGOs are present in Serbia.</p> <p>Co-operates closely with the government.</p> <p>Co-operation on return with National Red Cross Societies of Luxembourg and Sweden.</p>

Annex II

Summary of Feasibility Assessments

1. Kosovo⁴¹

1.1. General Introduction

The political focus has been on the status of Kosovo, until the independence declaration in February 2008. The new government is facing high poverty levels, lack of social services and health facilities and high unemployment rates. The official unemployment figure is 42%, but the actual figure is estimated to be around 50%. The majority of unemployed are youth (NB: 60% of the population is under the age of 26 years). The informal sector is providing some jobs. Remittances from family members and relatives in the diaspora are essential for the survival of many Kosovars. A rough figure of Kosovars outside the country is 500.000. Switzerland, Germany and Sweden are the main host countries for asylum seekers from Kosovo.

The challenges for sustainable re-integration are many as Kosovo is among the poorest countries in Europe. Remittances from the diaspora (mainly Germany and Switzerland) account for about 30% of GDP, according to CIA, the World Fact Book-Kosovo. The main challenges for return are employment opportunities, housing, access to social and health services. Families with children coming back after many years abroad may not speak the local language and are used to a different curriculum than the one offered in the Kosovo school system. Returnees from minority groups are facing security risks and may not have access to social networks as most of the Kosovo Albanians have.

The situation for minorities is still a concern, in particular for Kosovo Serbs, Roma, and Albanians in Serb majority areas, according to UNHCR's *Position on the Continued International Protection Needs of Individuals from Kosovo* (2006).

There are certain projects in place for persons returning "voluntary", but hardly any provisions are made for persons that have been subject to enforced removal to Kosovo.

1.2. International Federation

The International Federation has a long time presence in Kosovo and was there even before the conflict in 1999. The Federation Office in Kosovo considers return a priority area. The International Federation and the Red Cross of Kosova (RCK) work with the Swedish Red Cross on a return assistance project that will enable them to acquire knowledge, skills and build capacities. A return project officer is engaged by the Federation Office.

⁴¹ Feasibility assessment undertaken in October 2008.

1.3. Red Cross of Kosova (RCK)

The Red Cross of Kosova has 26 branches throughout the country except for the four municipalities where the Red Cross of Kosovo and Metohija (part of the Red Cross of Serbia) is active. The RCK has eight staff members. Each branch has a branch secretary. There are some 5.000 volunteers. The Red Cross of Kosova is engaged in the Swedish Red Cross return project to Kosovo.

1.4. International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The International Organisation for Migration is present in Kosovo since 1999. It has assisted the return of 192.670 individuals until September 2008, primarily from European countries. The majority returned in 1999 and 2000 (174.572 persons according to IOM statistics). Generally, IOM provide assistance to obtain travel documents, arrange flight bookings, reception at the airport and transportation to the final destination in Kosovo. For some returnees IOM provides employment assistance services. Other returnees receive medical service and housing, including housing equipment. The assistance provided depends on the host government.

1.5. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

According to UNHCR's *Position on the Continued International Protection Needs of Individuals from Kosovo* (2006), UNCHR considers Kosovo Serbs, Roma and Albanians at risk in situations where these groups constitute a minority. They should therefore be given international protection and any return of these minorities should be purely voluntary. UNHCR estimates that the situation for the Roma group has improved, but that Kosovo Serbs are worse off.

UNHCR has registered the return of some 50-60 persons from minority groups each year. To their knowledge most of these returnees leave the country again as they have limited access to social services, education and faces difficulties with the local administration.

1.6. Kosovo Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior was established in August 2006 and started its work in January 2007. The Ministry is the focal point for all matters relevant to migration management, including establishing working relations with host countries. The Ministry of Interior is the responsible ministry in the government for readmission of persons returning to Kosovo. The Ministry is also the focal point for the Kosovo Re-integration Strategy and Plan of Action. It estimates that Kosovo will be able to receive 5.000 returning persons per year. The Ministry of Interior estimates that 35.000 persons are to return from Germany only, of which some 20.000 are from minority groups.

1.7. Agjensioni i Përkrahjes së Punësimit në Kosovë (APPK)

APPK is a local NGO that initially started as an AGEF subsidiary in 2000. It still maintains close co-operation with AGEF (Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte).

APPK is assisting with employment promotion and re-integration through counselling, training, employment matching and business start up support. It has assisted 9.000 returnees with economical re-integration, mainly from Germany, Switzerland and Denmark. The success rate is high for those that have been assisted by APPK. Some 75-80% are still employed or run their own business.

1.8 Danish Refugee Council

The Danish Refugee Council has implemented a return assistance programme for rejected asylum seekers from Denmark to Kosovo from 2006 to October 2008. The programme has offered return counselling in Denmark, a return package including food and non-food items, re-integration support such as income generation activities, support for reconstruction of housing, special language training for children and support in accessing local authorities. Since May 2007 the assistance also includes medical and psycho-social support. Initially, the programme was primarily offered to “voluntary” returnees, but was later on opened up also to those that were forcibly removed to Kosovo.

1.9. URA – “the Bridge” (Kosovo Social Return Support Network Project)

URA was established in April 2007. It provides counselling, assistance for registration with authorities, social and psychological support to returnees from any country in the EU irrespective of their status. URA also has a transit centre in central Pristina with possibility to accommodate some 12-18 persons. Since URA started it has assisted some 700 returnees of which 95% came from Germany. In their experience, those subject to enforced removal were the most vulnerable as they did not receive any financial assistance. The survival of URA depends on external funding.

1.10. Conclusions

There are few actors in Kosovo working on return assistance. Assistance is primarily given through bilateral projects between a host country government and IOM (possibly with the involvement of APPK). The target group is returnees from that particular host country. Some receive substantial return and re-integration packages, others receive a ticket to their original home location in Kosovo and those that are removed by force usually receive nothing.

Most returnees have a social network in Kosovo, but not all. Registration with the authorities in Kosovo can be a challenge for the returnee and her/his family. Housing is yet another challenge. The socio-economical re-integration, access to health services and education as well as re-integration of children having grown up in Europe with another language are others.

2. Mali⁴²

2.1. General Introduction

Migration has a long history in Mali. It is considered a natural phenomenon as well as a tradition. Mali is a land-locked country in the Sahel-region and among the poorest countries in the world (according to World Bank as well as UNDP Human Development Index). Migration therefore became a strategy for livelihood and survival to many Malians. Primarily they migrate to neighbouring countries in West Africa and to the Maghreb countries⁴³.

It is not unusual that a family takes all their savings to help a family member to travel to Europe. If the person has to return, it is connected with loss of honour and trauma.

Transfers from migrants represent an important source of revenue for many families. A figure from 2004 suggests that the equivalent of EUR 180 million is sent to Mali every year. In some regions, more than 50% of households receive transfers from abroad.

Mali is also a destination country and a transit country for refugees and other migrants towards North Africa and Europe taking the road through the Sahel desert.

2.2. Mali Red Cross (MRC)

The Mali Red Cross (MRC) is a well-functioning National Society. The branches of MRC are active and have a good dialogue with their communities. Some branches have an administrator, but not all. MRC has as main partners the Spanish, the Swiss and the Danish Red Cross Societies, the International Federation and the ICRC.

MRC has been active in various fora on migration in the region and in Mali. Following the out-break of conflict in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, MRC was active in providing humanitarian assistance and first aid to Malian returnees from Côte d'Ivoire. The National Society is less and less associated with reception since the responsibility was transferred to the Civil Protection Authority in 2002/3.

The MRC is planning two projects on return, one in the north-west close to the border with Algeria and another one in the south-east by the border to Mauritania.

The project in the north-west, funded by the ICRC, includes humanitarian assistance (food and shelter), first aid, the possibility for the returnee to call her/his family, a sensitization component on HIV/AIDS and transportation to the nearest town.

MRC is seeking to develop a partnership with the Algerian Red Crescent in the area of return and in particular the branch close by at the border with Mali to share information on return flows.

⁴² Feasibility assessment undertaken in February 2009.

⁴³ Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

2.3. ICRC

The ICRC has a small structure in Mali mainly due to the conflict situation in the northern and north western parts of Mali. That is also the reason why they are engaging, together with the MRC, in a project for vulnerable person being expelled from primarily Algeria and who are stranded in a conflict /tensed area. A similar project is being discussed in Niger with the Niger Red Cross.

2.4. International Federation

The International Federation, through its Zone Office in Senegal, gives assistance to the Mali Red Cross in capacity-building, disaster management, health, etc. A migration co-ordinator has recently been appointed in the Zone Office and is available to assist the Mali Red Cross.

2.5. Centre for Migration Information and Management (CIGEM)

The Centre for Migration Information and Management was inaugurated in October 2008. The Centre is a joint project of the Malian Government and the European Commission, focusing on the phenomenon of migration. The aim of CIGEM is to assist the Malian government to define a migration policy addressing the concerns of potential migrants, returning migrants and migrants residing outside Mali. The Centre takes an innovative and holistic approach by supporting co-ordination, implementation and planning of actions in the fields of vocational training, the labour market and migration.

The actions of CIGEM are guided by a steering group that is currently giving priority to return and re-integration assistance. CIGEM is undertaking a mapping survey of the reception facilities to allow for a better co-ordination and improvement of available facilities and assistance provided. The Centre may also assist in strengthening capacities of the actors involved in return and re-integration.

2.6. Malian Government

The Ministry of Malians Abroad is responsible for migration issues. The operational part of the Ministry is the General Delegation for Malians Abroad (la Delegation Generale des Maliens de l'Exterieur). The General Delegation was established in 2000 and is responsible for the office of reception and orientation at the airport in Bamako and in Gao.

The claiming of assets left in the host country is an important issue. For example, returnees having lived and worked in France for several years and contributed to the social services in France are unable to access their contributions or have them repaid. The Malian authorities assist in claiming assets, but could not give any example of successful cases.

The Civil Protection is responsible for reception of returnees arriving at the airport in Bamako.

2.7. International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The International Organisation for Migration has a small office in Mali with four staff members. The office was initially established in 2004 to work with victims of trafficking and return from Côte d'Ivoire. It was closed down in 2006, but reopened again in 2008.

Presently IOM assist “voluntary” returnees from Morocco and Libya. Some 500 returnees have been assisted since the end of 2007. Returnees can receive assistance for income-generating projects (in-kind assistance), but the amount provided is limited, between EUR 460-770.

2.8. Agence Nationale de l'Accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations (ANAEM)

ANAEM is the French agency for migration. It is responsible for “assisted voluntary return” from France. The returnee can receive a business start-up grant up to EUR 7000. ANAEM collaborates with local organisations responsible for assessing the business projects, for purchase of material and for follow-up of the projects during the first year. Skills development may also be a part of such a project. In 2007, ANAEM assisted some 150 returnees who all received a start-up grant.

2.9. Local Organisations

A large number of local NGOs are engaged in migration issues.⁴⁴

AIDE (Association des Initiatives de Developpement) was created in 2002 and has experience from working with re-integration, “assisted voluntary return” for migrants stranded in Mali and sensitization campaigns to warn about the risks with migration.

ARTD (Association Retour, Travail, Dignité) was established in 2005 by Malians being expelled from Morocco. It has received land for agricultural projects from the Malian government, but is in need of additional resources to use the plots for re-integration projects.

AME (Association des Maliens Expulses) was originally created in 1996. It was revived in 2006 and entered into a partnership with CIMADE (a French NGO). All members of AME have been expelled themselves (from Europe or Africa). The Secretary General of AME had lived 14 years in France when returned to Mali: “When you are sent back, you do not know where to go and you are completely disoriented”. AME is present at the airport and aims to assist expelled persons with shelter (maximum three days), food and psychological/moral support. In co-operation with CIMADE, AME is also helping returnees to get access to assets left behind in France.

44 *Les Questions migratoires au Mali*, Omar Merabet and Francis Gendreau, January 2007.

2.10. Conclusions

A general consensus among all stakeholders is that the number of persons returning to Mali is increasing. The recently established Centre for Migration Information and Management is giving priority to return issues. Enforced removals from Europe are increasing, but not openly discussed. The majority of returnees arrive by land. There are many small, local organisations involved in return, but with limited resources. Co-ordination is important and a platform is now offered through CIGEM.

The Mali Government is active and seeks to develop policies and strategies for migration, including return. The issue of migration is strongly interlinked with development and development co-operation. Job creation, health and education are priorities in the Mali Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Re-integration schemes are primarily offered through the *Assisted Voluntary Return* programmes of IOM and ANAEM. There are other schemes as well linked to development projects.

Migration towards Europe receives much attention, but concerns a rather small portion of migrants from Mali and the West Africa region. The south-south migration is much more important, but attracts less media attention in Europe.

The Mali Red Cross is already involved in return assistance primarily through pilot projects for humanitarian assistance and first aid activities, which is well in line with the mandate of the organisation. The MRC could consider developing such activities in Bamako in co-operation with the local associations, to reinforce their activities.

European National Societies should consider supporting projects related to migration and return with the Mali Red Cross and other African National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

3. Iraq⁴⁵

3.1. General Introduction

The security situation has improved, but is still fragile. In most of the central governorates there are ongoing violence and human rights violations. UNHCR therefore believes that all asylum seekers from these areas continue to need international protection and should not be sent back.⁴⁶

45 Feasibility assessment carried out through a mission to Amman, Jordan in March 2009 due to the security situation in Iraq.

46 Revised *UNHCR Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Iraqi Asylum-Seekers* were issued in April 2009.

2009 is considered a transition year. The foreign troops will be withdrawn from Iraq and national elections will be held towards the end of the year. Few Iraqis that have taken refuge in neighbouring countries return, but rather wait and see how the situation will evolve. None of the international agencies present in Amman encourage return to Iraq.

Public services and infrastructure have been seriously affected in Iraq. Shelter, employment, access to basic health services and education and property rights are among the key issues to resolve to enable sustainable return to Iraq.

Most international actors with activities in Iraq have their management structure in Amman and do management “by remote control” (with locally employed staff in Iraq). UNHCR has a presence in Baghdad, but has not been followed by other UN organisations yet. A few embassies are open in Baghdad, but work under strict security rules.

There is little permanent return taking place from Jordan and Syria, but a lot of movement back and forth being reported. Although the security situation has improved, the Iraqis are not fully confident to go back yet. The head of family move back to look after property (if accessible) or to collect allocations.

3.2. International Federation, Jordan Red Crescent and European National Societies in Jordan

The International Federation currently has three offices in Amman; the Zone Office, the Jordan Delegation and the Iraqi Delegation. The French Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross and the German Red Cross also have representations in Jordan.

The International Federation delegations provide assistance to “externally displaced”⁴⁷ Iraqis in the region primarily through health clinics, including psycho-social support, and the provision of food and non-food items. The Federation also supports capacity-building of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

The Jordan Red Crescent (JRC) runs a hospital that is open to everybody at a low fee. It is engaged in the support to the Iraqi refugees through health clinics and is also making their first aid and vocational training centres available to them.

3.3. ICRC

The ICRC is present in Iraq since 1980. It provides relief assistance, support to hospitals and primary health care centres, physical rehabilitation activities, water and sanitation, livelihood support, and undertakes visits to detention centres, disseminates international humanitarian law (IHL) and helps to restore family links.

⁴⁷ Definition of Iraqi refugees commonly used in Syria and Jordan

The ICRC co-operates with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society in relief distributions and in the field of restoring family links. The ICRC is also supporting the capacity- building and restructuring process in IRCS.

3.4. Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS)

The Iraqi Red Crescent Society is going through a period of change. A transitional board is currently reviewing IRCS statutes and structure as well as planning for a General Assembly.

Property rights and basic social services are areas of concern if large numbers of Iraqis will return in the near future. Some persons have been away for many years and others only a few, hence their needs are different.

The IRCS is willing to cooperate with European National Societies in the area of return. Presently, the Swedish Red Cross is piloting a project on return to northern Iraq with the IRCS. The IRCS President stressed that voluntary return to Iraq should be the preferred option.

3.5. European Community Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO)

In 2009 ECHO is maintaining funding at a similar level as previous years. If the situation remains stable, it will reduce funds in 2010.

According to ECHO, the number of refugees in neighbouring countries is less than what was originally estimated, only 310.000 registered since 2006 (50.000 in Jordan and 220.000 in Syria). Some are returning probably because they lack resources to stay, in particular Iraqis in Syria.

3.6. International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

The International Organisation for Migration started its programmes in Iraq in 2003. In addition to the *Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR)* programme, IOM supports capacity- building in migration and border management for the Iraqi Government, programmes for internally displaced persons, security awareness training, etc. Currently they have some 150 staff members.

Since 2003, some 7000 returnees have benefited from the AVR programme. Most have returned to northern Iraq, but the programme is now expanding also to other areas. The absorption capacity in Iraq is limited and it is important that not too big numbers are returning at the same time. The AVR conditions offered by different European countries vary. According to the needs of those returning, shelter is the number one priority, work number two and access to basic services, such as health and education, number three.

3.7. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Although the general security situation has improved, the Iraqis sense of security has not changed that much. Human rights abuses and abductions are still going on. UNHCR therefore remains cautious about the situation.

There is not much available in terms of protection and assistance for those returning at present. The main challenges for return, seen by UNHCR, are related to rule of law issues (property restitution), where will people live – what has happened to their former neighbourhood and what assistance is available. A certain group of Iraqis, mainly from minority groups, will not be able to return. UNHCR are assisting with resettlement. The large majority though will have to return when the situation allows.

3.8. Danish Refugee Council

The Danish Refugee Council has its main programme in northern Iraq. It works with protection, livelihoods, shelter, capacity-building and food distributions. The programme started in 2003 and has expanded in 2007/08. Internally displaced and host communities are the target groups. Vocational training is offered as part of the livelihoods programme in co-operation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

3.9. Conclusions

While security has improved, the situation remains fragile, in particular in the central governorates where violence and human rights violations are still ongoing. 2009 is considered a transition year: Few are returning from neighbouring countries, preferring to wait and see how the situation evolves.

The organisations in Amman recommend that return assistance should include also those returning from southern countries. The importance of including local communities and not single out returnees was also highlighted. There is an expectation on returnees from Europe to bring back something – return programmes help them to return with some dignity.

People met with in Amman generally did not understand the situation of asylum seekers in Europe and why the Movement should provide assistance to those returning to Iraq. European National Societies have an important advocacy role in this respect.

Annex III

Three Pilot Projects

1. Danish Red Cross⁴⁸

1.1. Vision of the Danish Red Cross Asylum Work

- To provide asylum seekers in Denmark with a safe, meaningful and dignified waiting time and support asylum seekers in a realistic understanding of their situation in order to prepare for the future in the best possible way

1.2. Project Background

- Large number of rejected Iraqi asylum seekers
- Years of living in asylum centres
- No access to work
- Risks of losing skills and resources
- Opportunities for preparing future job situation

1.3. Perspectives

The Returnee's Perspective

- Experiences
- Skills and competences
- Motivation
- Empowerment

A Co-ordinated Effort

- Co-ordination between prepared-return activities in Denmark and re-integration activities in the country of return

A Holistic Approach

- Taking into consideration all areas of the asylum work, such as Health department, Psycho-social department, School department, Adult education department and Children's department

⁴⁸ The Danish government signed a readmission agreement with the Iraqi government in May 2009. As a consequence, the Danish government closed the voluntary return project with immediate effect and the Iraqis that had chosen to take part in the project will no longer have the support described in this report.

1.4. Activities

- Skills auditing and individual plan of action
- Vocational courses, e.g. English or IT courses.
- Specific vocational courses, e.g. "Start Your Own Business" or craftsmanship
- External, certified courses, at e.g. technical schools or universities

1.5. Participants

- 22 have signed a project agreement
- 3 have returned
- All are single men in their twenties or thirties

1.6. Barriers

- Lack of interest in return
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of trust towards authorities and also towards many other organisations
- Lack of holistic approach upon return in the coordinated effort

1.7. Recommendations

- Combine all three perspectives of the returnee's perspective, a co-ordinated effort and a holistic approach in more co-operation between here and there

2. Swedish Red Cross

2.1. Experiences in the Field of Return

- Return counselling on an ad hoc basis for many years
- Return project in co-operation with the Red Cross Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2003–2005
- European Open Forum on Return, 2006

2.2. Project Background

- Number of individuals who are obliged to return is high and is likely to increase
- A big part comes from northern Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo
- An increasing number of rejected asylum seekers choose to remain in Sweden with no legal status
- Plausible risk for a severe humanitarian situation upon return
- Very limited resources to provide assistance in Sweden and in the country of return

2.3. Objectives

- The *Information Network for Return to Northern Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo* is a Swedish Red Cross project in co-operation with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Iraq and Serbia and with the International Federation in Kosovo

Overall Objective

- To contribute to return in safety and dignity for rejected asylum seekers

Project Objectives

- To develop an efficient system of information-gathering
- To provide pre-departure counselling
- To give additional support to especially vulnerable returnees
- To monitor living conditions after return
- To initiate and develop further activities, which aim to facilitate re-integration in the country of return

2.4. Statistics

Period 15.09.2008-15.02.2009:

- Northern Iraq: 43 cases
- Serbia: 13 cases
- Kosovo: 27 cases
- Total: 262 persons of which 77 have returned
- Other countries/regions: 42 cases (mainly southern and central Iraq)

2.5. Additional Support and Monitoring

- Assistance in contacting different authorities and other organisations, psycho-social support, special care for disabled persons, food, etc.

Persons followed-up (15):

- None had suffered persecution or felt they had been threatened in any way
- Disappointing from a re-integration perspective was that only one had a job, some were entirely dependent on relatives' goodwill and some lived under hard conditions

2.6. How to Facilitate Re-integration

Northern Iraq

- Money
- Jobs
- Housing
- Youth activities
- Legal advice
- Support to disabled persons
- Psycho-social support
- Sport activities
- Educational training for young people

Kosovo

- Money, jobs
- Housing/temporary shelter
- Legal advice
- Medical care
- Psycho-social support/psychotherapy
- Educational training for young people
- Support for single women who are rejected by the community
- Prevent alienation in the local society

3. Swiss Red Cross

3.1. Background

The Swiss Red Cross is active in the field of return due to:

- Different resolutions within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement
- Its Strategy 012 – Integration: The Swiss Red Cross offers return and re-integration assistance to those people whose re-integration in Switzerland is not possible

3.2. Return Activities

- Return counselling and assistance since 1996 (without commitment, confidentially, empowerment, etc.)
- Guide “Return in Safety and with Dignity“, 2000
- Advocacy for human dignity of returnees and a comprehensive, sustainable, humanitarian return policy
- Commitment to establish European and global Red Cross/Red Crescent-return network

- Humanitarian duty to step into the gap when the government does not provide any assistance
- Implement pilot projects with our own funds: Project results and experience demonstrate the urgent need for action, with the objective in the medium term to hand over the funding of the activities to the public authorities

3.3. Pilot Projects

- Since 2005 the Swiss Red Cross (in five cantons) has opened the return counselling and assistance to irregular migrants in Switzerland regardless of their status because they are excluded from the governmental return counselling and assistance
- Since April 2008 the Swiss Red Cross has been running a national project on detention in six cantons (by end of 2009 two more cantons), monitoring conditions and providing return counselling and assistance to all detained rejected asylum seekers and migrants regardless of their status

3.4. Facilitation of Sustainable Economic Re-integration of Returnees

Feasibility study (final report by the end of 2009), expected outcome:

- Recommendations and a plan of action to facilitate sustainable economic re-integration of returnees in the mid- to long-term
- Create sustainable economic projects of returnees with financial, technical and material support from committed Swiss enterprises
- Services to all recently returned people and those who have returned some time ago regardless of their status, such as stock procurement/logistics, internet platform/know-how transfer, sponsorship, funding opportunities, etc.

3.5. Co-operation between National and International Departments

- Existence of a comprehensive strategy paper on return (roles and activities) since 2003
- Ad hoc co-operation in individual cases, e.g. Pakistan, Togo, Sierra Leone
- Since 2007 regular exchange of updates on recent developments as well as experiences and opinions

3.6. Main Partners

Federal Office for Migration:

- Since 1996 implementation of governmental return counselling/assistance
- Member of steering group for pilot projects
- Regular dialogue on humanitarian concerns and advocacy on migration policy, etc.
- Formalisation of co-operation through pledge at European Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference in Istanbul, 2007

International Organisation for Migration:

- Information on countries of return
- Return and re-integration assistance in countries of return
- Member of steering group for pilot projects

International Social Service:

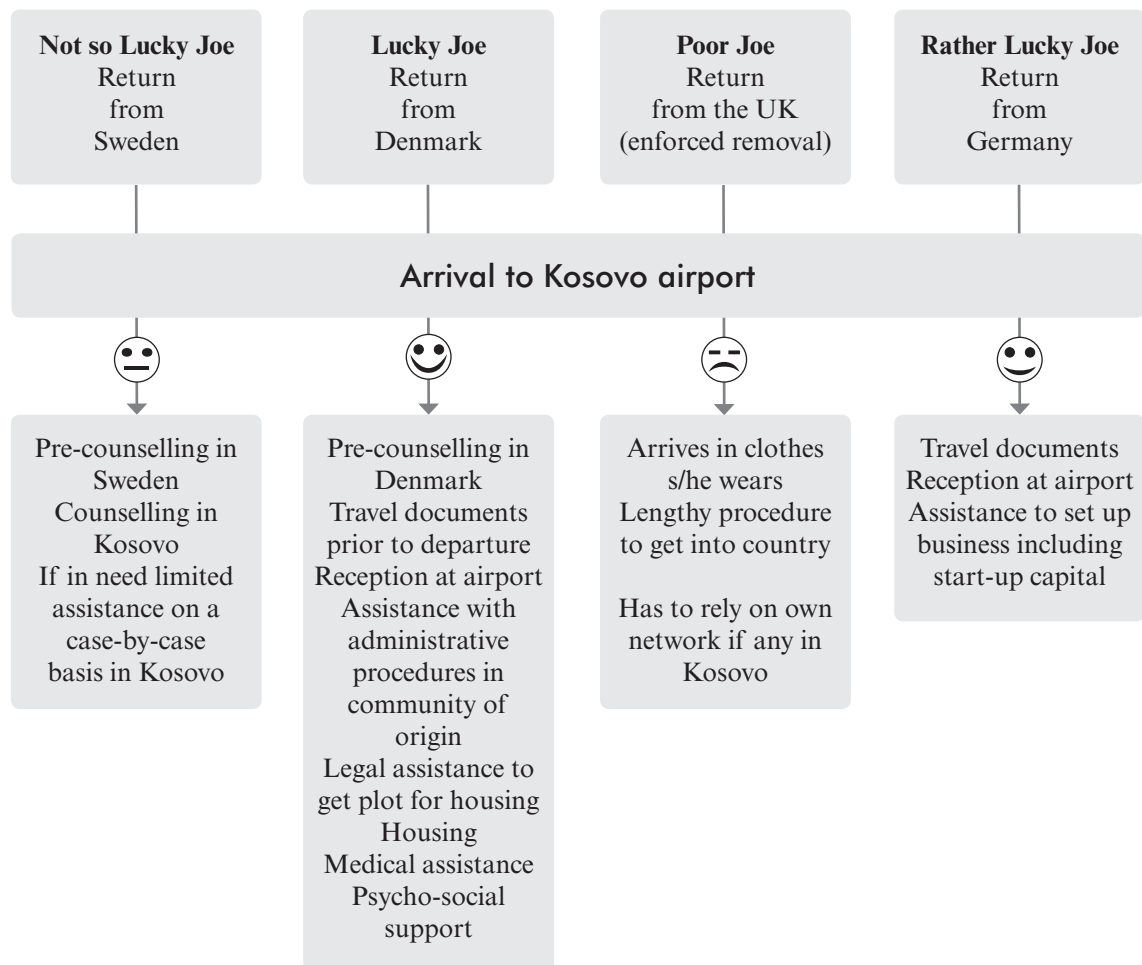
- Funds for re-integration projects of returnees

3.7. Challenges

- Funding opportunities for pilot projects
- Assistance as well as services for sustainable social and economic re-integration of returnees and monitoring of their re-integration process
- Establishing a global Red Cross/Red Crescent-return network
- Partnerships between National Societies of host and countries of return
- Co-operation between Swiss Red Cross national and international departments

Annex IV

Returning to Kosovo – What it Could Look Like



ERCRI project October 2008

Swedish Red Cross, head office
P.O. Box 17563 | SE-118 91 Stockholm | Visiting address: Hornsgatan 54
Phone: +46 (0) 8-452 46 00 | Fax +46 (0) 8-452 46 01
E-mail: info@redcross.se | Visit our website: www.redcross.se

