



**Processus de Rabat**

Dialogue Euro-Africain sur la  
Migration et le Développement

Action des pays référents

## **Thematic meeting on voluntary return and reintegration**

***Return counsellors, a profession at the centre of return and reintegration assistance***

***PROSPECT Project - Strengthening the Provision of Support for Reintegration of Vulnerable Persons, including Victims of Trafficking, returning to Nigeria***

**Yaoundé, 25-26 April 2023**

# Context

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- *Revised Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Action Plan (2018 - 2030) ;*
- *2021 : EU strategy for voluntary return and reintegration;*
- *EU TIP strategy (2021-2025) ;*
- *2022: Cadiz Political Declaration and Action Plan (Area 5, Objective 10, Action 29);*
- Recognition of the **specific needs** of return migrants, **existing frameworks** and **referral mechanisms** in the country of origin are at the heart of successful R&R policies and programmes.

# Findings

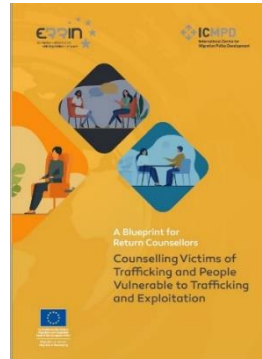
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1. **Information sharing is inadequate** between the pre departure and post arrival actors;
2. Need for **harmonisation of approaches** between return counsellors;
3. Strengthen **complementarities** between different reintegration programmes/projects.

# PROSPECT Project

- Strengthening **the Governance Framework** on Reintegration in Nigeria ;
- Improve **the visibility of specific services** for vulnerable returnees (including victims of trafficking);
- **Strengthen the capacity** of actors (pre and post) to cater for return migrants; and
- **Strengthen operational cooperation** between pre- departure and post-arrival actors.

# To date



2021

2023-

2020

2022

- Thematic Group meetings on R&R in Nigeria
- Capacity building sessions between pre- and post-arrival actors
- 1 blueprint for Return Counsellors on TIP
- 1 capacity assessment of NCFRMI
- 1 mapping of Services - ongoing

## Case Study - Returning Victim of Trafficking (2019)

- Profile: **widow**, mother of 3 children, **promised to work as** a domestic worker (nanny) in a family based in the UK;
- Once in the UK, **passport confiscated, forced to work** day and night, **movements controlled**;
- Works for several years **without receiving salary**, withheld by the employer (savings);
- After 8 years, **falls ill**; his employer asks him to return to Nigeria;
- Enrolment in an R&R programme; **the return counsellor suspects trafficking case**;
- The victim does **not dare to confide** (legal status? Fear of the reaction of her employers? Lack of confidence in the authorities?)
- Eager to return to back to Nigeria and see her children again;
- **The couple refuses to return her salary** on the grounds that it is thanks to them that **she will benefit from the R&R programme**;
- Upon arrival, Reintegration partner (RP) in Nigeria discovers **the extent** of her ordeal
- She is informed by the RP of her status as a victim and the rights she could have exercised (filing a complaint, reflection period, compensation, etc.);
- Refuses to pursue the case in the face of pressure;
- Today: has exhausted all its resources; her health has deteriorated

## Return counsellors (RC)

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- Responsibility of States to provide protection to persons on their territory
- Human rights standards framework
  - 2000: UN Protocol on TIP
  - 2008: EC Return Directive (Art. 5 on non-refoulement and Art. 6.4 on the return decision)
  - 2011: EC Directive on TIP

### Duties of the RC :

- Professional from an administration/NGO/IO
- Provides information to returning migrants
- Interventions **in different contexts** (place of residence, legal/administrative status)

## Vulnerability factors

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- Challenges of victim identification;
- Distrust vis-à-vis host country authorities;
- Perceived failure of the migration project;
- Commission of offences for the benefit of the criminal network;
- Exploitation of the international protection system by criminal networks of traffickers;
- Oaths/rituals to guarantee repayment of a debt
- Health status
- Best interests of the child



## Return counsellors (RCs)

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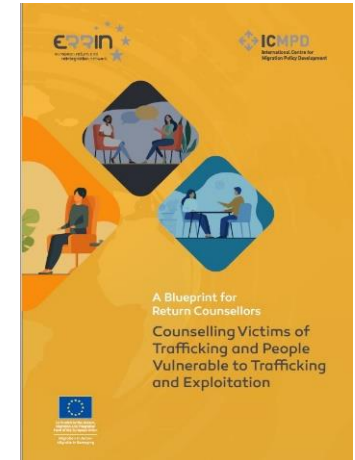
As part of the pre-return process, RCs can :

- Detecting/identifying previously unidentified victims of trafficking;
- Meet with people who have already been identified and assisted under national anti-trafficking schemes;
- Meet with people who **fear being trafficked back to their home country** (grounds for subsidiary protection),
- Meet people who may have **been involved in criminal proceedings** against their traffickers in the country of return or in another EU country

# The Blueprint for RCs

## Objectives:

1. Improve the knowledge of RCs and other first line responders on trafficking;
2. Strengthen skills for conducting risk and needs assessments of victims prior to return;
3. Improve communication and coordination practices between pre- and post-arrival actors



## The Blueprint for RCs

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- Profile of traffickers, Profile of victims
- Experience of vulnerabilities prior to trafficking

Different phases:

### *Pre-return*

- Making contact
- Basic therapeutic principles (security, rapport)
- Building trust
- Vulnerability, risk and needs assessment

# The Blueprint for RCs

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## *Pre-return (continued)*

- Operational partnership protocols with reintegration partners in countries of destination and origin
- Risk and needs assessment (children, adults, women with children, cultural mediation)
- Preparation of the reintegration plan with the consent of the returnee

## *Back*

- Coordination of the return

## *Post-return*

- Reintegration in the country of origin
- Case reintegration monitoring and reporting



**Thank you for your kind attention !**

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