



Needs and priorities of partners in the framework of the Marrakech Action Plan and the Rabat Process

Preparatory document for the Senior Officials' Meeting in Malabo, 17th-18th November 2021

Introduction

The Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process) has a ministerial mandate and includes several dimensions: political, technical and operational. Although the Dialogue is intergovernmental in nature and primarily aimed at national authorities, the Rabat Process is also a non-binding Dialogue and partners cite as its strength the "informal » or "safe space » for discussion that it provides.

Through its system of governance and regular consultations with partners, the Rabat Process offers equal opportunities for all– both African and European countries - to contribute to shaping the Dialogue and its agenda. As such, this document will look at the interests, priorities and needs of partners. It will identify - focusing on the needs of African partners - urgent issues featured in the Marrakesh Action Plan that have not been (sufficiently) addressed within the Dialogue to date. Finally, the paper will look at recommendations and priorities made by those reference countries having carried out activities to date, namely the Domain 3 (Chad, Switzerland) and Domain 5 (Cameroon, Togo) reference countries.

This document will be further elaborated based on results of discussions that will take place at the Senior Officials' Meeting in Malabo on 17th -18th November 2021.

Objectives

- i) Provide the next European chair of the Dialogue (Spain November 2021 - December 2022) and the Troika (outgoing chair - Equatorial Guinea, incoming chair – Spain and future chair) with a first overview of the priorities and interests of the partners relating to the Marrakech Action Plan;
- ii) Make suggestions on how to address these in the future.

Methodological issues

- This document has been developed through desk research (including internal ICMPD and external documents, data from the Joint Valletta Action Plan /JVAP database¹) and targeted exchanges with national focal points. It aims to highlight key needs and priorities and is not intended to be exhaustive.
- The activities of the reference countries² in Domains 3 and 5 of the Marrakesh Action Plan have also been taken into account in this document.

¹ <https://www.jvapfollowup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/JVAP-Brochure.pdf>

² <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/about/rabat-process/reference-countries>



- The data in the JVAP database represents what is being implemented - it does not identify gaps in domains where fewer programmes/initiatives are being implemented.

Observations and suggestions

Domain 1: Development benefits of migration and addressing root causes of irregular migration and the phenomenon of displaced persons

Activity selected/document produced for Domain 1	Action plan objectives covered
Technical workshop on diaspora remittances and sustainable development. Background paper; technical and policy recommendations (November 2019)	Objective 1: Maximising the positive impact of regular migration for development
Collection of Diaspora Engagement Practices	Objective 1
Webinar on integrating migration into development policies; supporting documents (maps) and outcome document (April 2021)	Objective 1
Thematic meeting : The root causes of irregular migration and recommendations (October 2018)	Objective 2: Achieve a common understanding of the root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement in the Rabat Process region
Production of an infographic : Untangling the Roots of Forced Displacement in the Lake Chad Basin.	Objective 2
Study : "Social immobility versus social mobility - The root causes of international emigration" (September 2019)	Objective 2
Briefing paper on drivers of irregular migration, produced in partnership with the Mixed Migration Centre/MMC (June 2021)	Objective 2

The Dialogue has worked extensively on Domain 1. Partners continue to evoke needs in relation to this domain in several respects (see below)

→ Lack of Lack of data and understanding about members of African diasporas

Action 1: "Identify and share good practices that enable countries to gain **better knowledge of the profiles of their diasporas**"

In order to develop appropriate and effective legislation and policies to enhance diaspora contribution to and engagement in country development, partners would like to better understand: *Who are their diaspora members? Where are they based? What are their needs? What are their skills? In which ways would they like to be involved and*

what are the opportunities and obstacles to be addressed in this regard? Data from African partner countries on their diaspora members either is still being collected, is incomplete, or is totally lacking.

The aim would be to strengthen diaspora policies and strategies. Diaspora strategies require differentiated actions that take into account the diversity of "profiles" within the diaspora. Experience has shown that governments have tried to target policies at sometimes ill-defined and broad diaspora groups, seeing engagement as an end in itself rather than as a means to achieve broader goals. Diaspora engagement strategies have - in the past - too rarely addressed engagement with high-level diaspora members.

Future recommendations

The Rabat Process could address this issue in the future in its capacity as a platform through which to share with all partners good practices and practical tools developed by certain countries. For example, the online diaspora surveys, mapping and consultations conducted by Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

→ Strategies promoting the contribution of diasporas to development

Action 1: "Identify and share good practices that enable countries to gain better knowledge of the profiles of their diasporas and to **adopt or to optimise strategies** that promote their economic, social and cultural potential for development, whilst also analysing the potential obstacles to the adoption and optimisation of these good practices."

African partners continue to request support to develop their national diaspora strategies and policies, or broader strategies linking migration and development. Cooperation actors working on these issues (such as ICMPD - with the support of Migration EU eXpertise/MIEUX Initiative; GIZ; SDC and IOM) often participate in the Dialogue and could be involved in this theme in the longer term. Indeed, as a regional dialogue on migration, the Rabat Process' added value lies in its capacity as a learning, sharing and networking platform.

→ Actions aimed at reduce remittance costs

Action 2: "**Contribute to reducing the costs of remittances** and to facilitating remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin, in particular by supporting innovative or existing initiatives using the potential offered by digitalisation...."

Reducing the costs of remittances remains of high importance and priority for the Dialogue's African partners (and beyond). According to some reports, it is more expensive to send money to Sub-Saharan Africa than to any other region in the world, due to the lack of competition among remittance operators. One reason for the high costs of remittances is the continuing lack of transparency about these costs and the prevalence of informal transfers. One Rabat Process country, Nigeria, received almost half of all remittances sent to sub-Saharan Africa in 2019, and the Ghana-Nigeria remittance corridor was one of the most expensive in sub-Saharan Africa in 2020³. Despite the inclusion of Action 2 in the Marrakech Action Plan, the Rabat Process did not directly address the issue of reducing remittance costs⁴.

³ World Bank Group, "COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens", April 2020.

⁴At the Abuja Technical Workshop on the use of remittances for sustainable development, these projects and initiatives cited the high cost of remittances as one of the barriers to fully maximising the benefits and outcomes of their projects/initiatives.

This is because reducing the cost of remittances is a priority of the Continental Agenda and other actors and processes - such as the Continental Dialogue on Migration and Mobility and the African Institute for Remittances (AIR) - are working on this issue. Indeed, AIR provides technical assistance and capacity building to African Union member states on remittances, and one of the objectives of the institute is to reduce the costs of remittances to and within Africa.

Future suggestion

The Rabat Process could create future opportunities for synergies with the Continental Dialogue and the work carried out by AIR (e.g. by including updates from these actors at relevant Rabat Process events on remittances).

→ Action to fight against climate change

“...the partners reiterate the commitments made in the Valletta framework (...) to **address environmental and climate change issues in the most affected regions**”

Preamble to Domain 1, Marrakesh Action Plan

Although in the Marrakech Action Plan climate change is only mentioned in the preamble of Domain 1, it is an area of major interest for African and European partners. In early 2019, a request was made by Burkina Faso to take into account the issue of climate change by organising a thematic meeting on migration and climate change. Burkina Faso has also separately requested support from the Rabat Process Secretariat to implement its national strategy for the development of eco-villages in areas with high migration flows caused by climate hazards.

In 2018, the Rabat Process produced an infographic aimed at "untangling" the root causes of forced displacement in the Lake Chad region⁵. The infographic analysed how the combination of several long-term structural root causes and rapid triggers such as conflict had led to severe humanitarian consequences in the region, with 2.3 million people displaced. The main structural causes included climate change and environmental degradation, leading to an increase in global temperature, changing rainfall patterns, deforestation, competition for resources, land degradation, desertification and, ultimately, the shrinking of Lake Chad by 90 % due to overuse of resources.

As this infographic illustrates, climate change is reshaping the map of the world's habitable areas and more people are displaced by 'natural' disasters than by conflicts and civil wars⁶.

In terms of factors in the decision to migrate, a recent study produced by the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) in partnership with the Rabat Process Secretariat clearly demonstrated that environmental factors play an important role in migration decisions - not so much as an isolated factor, but rather as a factor interacting primarily with and intensifying others. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the development of appropriate evidence-based policies, a workshop on the future of mixed migration focusing on the impact of climate change on migration will be organised in collaboration with the MMC in October⁷.

⁵ <https://www.rabat-process.org/en/activities/publications/infographic-root-causes-forced-displacement-lake-chad>

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/10_trends_shaping_migration.pdf

⁷ Workshop participants will gain an overview of the latest research on the effects of climate change on migration. They will be introduced to priority areas for migration policy development and planning, based on MMC's conceptual framework.

Future suggestions

The Rabat Process could continue to work on this topic in order to analyse and better understand the complex interactions between climate change-induced migration, conflict and crisis.

In the Sahel context, the Rabat Process could serve as a platform for the exchange of practices between national administrations, international donors and rural communities. African practices, which have ensured and still ensure the production and reproduction of natural resources, could be explored. Further study on how women and children are disproportionately affected by migration and climate change could also be conducted.

The policy paper and scenario-building exercise on environmental change being conducted by the MMC in cooperation with the Secretariat will provide food for thought on how this topic can be explored with the Dialogue.

Domain 3: Protection and Asylum

Activity selected/document produced for Domain 3	Action plan objectives covered
<p>Round table "Protection and asylum: risks, care and durable solutions, in particular for unaccompanied minors", Geneva, 13th October 2021 and</p> <p>Virtual Round Table "Asylum procedure for unaccompanied minors (UAM)", via zoom, 7th July 2021 (Reference country-led activities, Switzerland and Chad)</p>	<p>These round tables addressed the issue of protection of unaccompanied minors in a comprehensive manner, in three parts corresponding to the three stages of UAM' migration journeys: "reception"; "on the road" and "durable solutions".</p> <p>Objectives: exchange of knowledge and good practices; capacity building.</p> <p>In the medium to long term: raising Rabat Process partners' awareness of the importance of protection and asylum issues in order to promote future activities in relation to Domain 3.</p>

Domain 4: Prevention of and fight against irregular migration, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

Activity selected/document produced for Domain 4	Action plan objectives covered
<p>Thematic meeting on cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination in the field of border management (July 2019)</p>	<p>Objective 7: Build the capacities of public institutions with competency in the areas of integrated border management, and the prevention and fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings</p>

<p>Guide <i>Some Good Practices in Implementing Border Management Projects</i>, inspired and developed on the basis of discussions at the Thematic Meeting (July 2019)</p>	<p>Objective 7</p>
<p>Workshop on the fight against migrant smuggling and the Niamey Declaration; Good Practice Guide and Recommendations (October 2019)</p>	<p>Objectives 7 and Objective 8: Improve the protection of migrants and persons in need of international protection who have been smuggled, and victims of trafficking in human beings</p>
<p>Study: "Anti-Trafficking Gaps, Needs and Transferrable Practices in the ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania"</p>	<p>Objectives 7 and 8</p>

The Rabat Process has addressed the issues of trafficking in human beings (THB) and smuggling of migrants to some extent, and links have been established with partners in the Niamey Declaration on Trafficking and THB. However, requests for support from African partners on multiple needs related to THB and migrant smuggling continue⁸. As part of the Rabat Process' "Anti-Trafficking Gaps, Needs and Transferrable Practices in the ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania" in partnership with the ICMPD's Anti-Trafficking Programme, interviews and consultations were held with government officials in Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia and Senegal. The information and comments gathered highlighted many challenges, detailed below. Some, such as lack of funding, can be better addressed through other processes and in other fora, while others, such as the need for improved cooperation and partnerships, would benefit from further discussion with the Dialogue. The following language from the Marrakech Action Plan remains highly relevant:

"The added value of the Rabat Process lies, inter alia, in **its ability to connect the actors concerned by these two phenomena**, in order to promote mutual learning and to improve cooperation."

Preamble to domain 4 of the Marrakesh Action Plan

→ **Cooperation, coordination communication on migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings**

There are too few formal cooperation agreements to combat THB and similar practices among the Rabat Process partner countries. Countries face challenges in addressing the transnational dimension of THB, with criminal networks operating across different countries and regions. Often, criminal justice responses to THB are limited by the transnational nature of the phenomenon, hence the need for enhanced cooperation in prosecution.

Communication between ECOWAS countries and beyond (countries of exploitation in Europe, Gulf States, etc.) is also often poor or ineffective. With regard to victims of trafficking, the lack of information between countries of origin and destination can lead to poor preparation, referral and limited or inadequate victim protection services. As one Ivorian stakeholder (interviewed in the framework of the Rabat Process evaluation) stated: "*Fully operational international cooperation remains a challenge... Information sharing among countries is mainly through informal channels at an individual level*".

Information sharing for joint prosecution of THB cases is also complicated. The lack of a reliable system of information sharing between countries within ECOWAS is a major challenge and limits this practice, and makes it too time consuming.

⁸ For example Niger and Burkina Faso

Often, the challenge of effective communication between stakeholders stems from the constant change (due to rotation or departure) in the training of officials in combating THB and migrant smuggling. The process of building trust and good relations with partners is therefore long and subject to frequent disruption. Nigeria has developed good practices to counter such problems: in order to promote staff retention within the National Immigration Service, a structured recruitment process - that includes training, development and mentoring of new recruits - and that targets women, has been put in place. The country is now seeking support to develop a coherent gender-sensitive career progression framework within the Nigerian Immigration Service.⁹

Future suggestions

The Rabat Process could use its capacity as a regional migration platform to support regional cooperation and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements among its partners.

Furthermore, the Rabat Process provides an appropriate platform for sharing lessons learned and good practices from bilateral or multilateral projects aimed at strengthening cooperation and coordination. For example, lessons learned from the bilateral project between Niger and Nigeria could be shared. This project aims to establish a coordination mechanism to strengthen the fight against THB and the referral of victims between Niger and Nigeria.

At the same time, lessons learned from the programme "Support to the fight against trafficking in persons in the Gulf of Guinea countries" implemented in Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Ghana could be shared through the Dialogue. This programme aims to establish effective coordination mechanisms at the national level and to support transnational networks of anti-trafficking professionals in order to improve communication and harmonise practices in victim assistance.¹⁰

According to the partners, there are urgent needs - so far insufficiently addressed by the Rabat Process - in the following areas:

→ Capacity building on migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings

Objective 7: **"Build the capacities** of public institutions with competency in the areas of integrated border management, and the **prevention and fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings."**

Among the needs, the lack of training of diplomatic staff on THB was highlighted. Due to the cross-border and/or inter-regional nature of many trafficking cases, embassies and consular authorities could be more aware of and involved in the fight against trafficking, providing assistance to victims and/or information to persons vulnerable to trafficking. This is essential, as they are usually the first point of contact for victim referrals in transnational THB cases.

⁹A project funded by Denmark, implemented by ICMPD, will start in 2021. Objective: To contribute to the development of a career progression framework and gender equality policy. The project will assist the National Immigration Service in drafting key policy documents, staff guidelines, training programmes and operational guidelines, which will form the basis for the development of an effective, competent and higher performing workforce, ready to meet the complex challenges of an increasingly difficult working environment.

¹⁰ ALTP Project to support the fight against human trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea countries implemented by Expertise France <https://www.expertisefrance.fr/web/guest/fiche-projet?id=726413>

Training of law enforcement personnel is also necessary, and a request for support from the Rabat Process has recently been made by Niger, one of the reference countries for Domain 4, in this regard. This is to support the national project "Awareness raising and information for women and children victims of trafficking and object of trafficking", which essentially includes awareness raising and training activities (the latter targeting in particular magistrates and judicial police officers on prosecution procedures). This project corresponds to the Rabat Process' action plan and would respond to the recommendations of the assessment on "Gaps, needs and practices in the fight against trafficking in ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania" produced by ICMPD for the Rabat Process partners in 2020.

It is envisaged to support the project with the funding of 2 training sessions: in Dosso near the border (training of prosecutors, police, gendarmerie and national guard officers, National Agency for the Fight against Trafficking in Persons) and in Zinder (training of different types of judges). Indeed, despite a comprehensive legal framework (the most compliant in the West African region with the International Protocols), few cases of THB and migrant smuggling are investigated and prosecuted in Niger, mainly due to the lack of capacity of law enforcement agencies to build a solid case against traffickers. The proposed training would help to fill this gap.

→ **Capacity building in integrated border management**

Despite the success of the Thematic Meeting on Border Management (Madrid, July 2019), this is also an area where African partners have expressed urgent needs¹¹. The needs identified include both technical (equipment, border posts, security) and non-technical (protection of migrants, human rights at the border) aspects of border management. If the Rabat Process is not the appropriate format to address equipment needs, support to non-technical aspects of border management can be addressed. For example, the Rabat Process could have an impact through the sharing of practices among countries on the development of integrated border management policies, as well as ongoing or future operational initiatives in the region and the analysis of their results.

Communication and coordination problems related to border management echo those described above on HET and smuggling of migrants (i.e. lack of agreements on coordination and gaps in information sharing, challenges related to data collection) and could be improved through better regional cooperation.

Future suggestions

As mentioned above, the Rabat Process could use its capacity as a regional platform on migration to support regional cooperation and promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation among its partners on the issue of integrated border management.

The Dialogue can add value by facilitating the sharing of lessons and highlighting the benefits of bilateral or regional cooperation, re-emphasising key initiatives such as GAR-SI SAHEL (Groupe d'Action Rapide - Surveillance et Intervention au Sahel) aimed at joint border surveillance and combating cross-border crime. At the same time, the success of the Joint Investigation Teams - which have proven to be an effective and efficient cooperation tool among national investigation agencies in the fight against cross-border crime - could be re-emphasised.

The Rabat Process could serve as a springboard for partners to launch bilateral initiatives on capacity building, such as peer-to-peer training of personnel on combating THB, smuggling of migrants and integrated border management.

¹¹ For example : Côte d'Ivoire

The Dialogue could also pave the way for reflections on ways to reduce the turnover of trained staff, by sharing lessons learned from the above-mentioned initiative in the Nigerian Immigration Service.

→ **Border communities : a new actor to consider**

One area where support has been requested from African partners, and which was not included in the Marrakech Action Plan, is the need to strengthen the capacity of border agencies to engage with local/border communities. Border agencies in African countries often operate with little basic infrastructure and equipment in remote areas where national borders are sometimes poorly demarcated and risks of attack remain. Border communities generally have intimate knowledge of the terrain and may have access to information about criminal groups and their activities.

They may also be vulnerable to influence or recruitment by these criminal groups. Border communities can also contribute to the identification and (re)integration of vulnerable migrants, including victims of THB.

It is therefore essential to discuss the issue of border communities in order to better understand the nature, vulnerabilities and potential of these communities. Border agencies can raise awareness among border communities on the positive effects of border management on development and security, while avoiding extremely strict border management, which can increase the vulnerability of communities, as they depend on open borders for trade and human mobility as essential elements of food and income security.

Future suggestions

The Rabat Process could promote the good practices already developed by African partners in engaging and cooperating with border communities - including the contribution of border communities in combating cross-border crime and identifying victims of THB. This could serve as a source of inspiration for other partners.

→ **Protection of victims of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings**

Objective 8: "Improve the **protection** of migrants and persons in need of international protection who have been **smuggled, and victims of trafficking in human beings.**"

One of the main problems in providing sufficient and holistic support to trafficked persons is the lack of resources. The assessment conducted by the Rabat Process noted that several ECOWAS Member States do not have established national systems for the provision of social services. While a regional migration dialogue such as the Rabat Process is not the appropriate or most effective forum to address such needs, the Dialogue is equipped to address other issues. For example, the lack of a victim-centred approach has been recognised by ECOWAS states as a challenge to adequately addressing identified victims. These challenges may lead to the identification of victims of THB or the identification and prosecution of criminals. It may also lead to victims refusing to cooperate with the authorities or HET prosecutors, testify in court, etc.

Future suggestions

The Rabat Process could explore the possibility of supporting regional training on THB and migrant smuggling to address the needs described above. The Dialogue could also facilitate peer-learning exchanges among partners - for example, in West Africa.

In the context of the Dialogue, the importance of a victim-centred approach to the prosecution of THB should be emphasised. The Rabat Process partners could have the opportunity to reflect together on innovative ways for authorities to work with victims of THB throughout the criminal justice process and overcome barriers such as trauma, lack of trust, language.

→ Particular challenges raised by the issue of smuggling of migrants

Action 15: "Improve the detection capabilities of national authorities with regard to **smuggling of migrants...**"

Trafficking in human beings (THB) and migrant smuggling (SoM) are often confused but distinct concepts.

There are generally fewer projects and programmes to combat SoM than to combat THB and, in general, the prevention and combating of SoM has not been a priority for several Dialogue partners until recently. No SoM prevention programme is directly promoted or supported by ECOWAS¹², for example, while the prevention of THB and irregular migration is strongly addressed.

In contrast to the existing ECOWAS network of national THB focal points, there is no such national coordination to fight against SoM. Although it has institutional structures to address irregular migration and to promote the prevention and combating of SoM, ECOWAS does not have enforcement mechanisms on this issue.

Legislation and policy on THB are also much more developed than those on SoM in West Africa. All but one of the ECOWAS member states have signed and ratified the UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants. However, progress in introducing adequate national laws has been slow and operationalising a response to the SoM through institutional frameworks and enforcement mechanisms faces many obstacles.

Future suggestions

One of the recommendations of the "Workshop on Combating Migrant Smuggling" (Abidjan 2019) was to further discuss "**the possibilities of linking anti-smuggling activities with anti-trafficking activities and their institutional frameworks**". This should be kept in mind in the future. The Rabat Process could be used to raise awareness among partners of the link between anti-trafficking and anti-smuggling measures and to promote programmes that address both phenomena in an appropriately segmented manner (including in terms of geographical concentration).

→ Raising awareness of the risks of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings

Action 18: "Facilitate the sharing of good practices in relation to **awareness-raising** and information on the risks of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings..."

A final aspect within Domain 4 of the Marrakesh Action Plan that could be given more attention is awareness raising. Requests for support have been made by African partners such as Burkina Faso (for awareness raising campaigns on trafficking and irregular migration targeting communities in areas of high child mobility). Also choosing to target

¹² ECOWAS Commission's Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) Unit coordinates a network of National Focal Points on THB in each of the Member States.

child mobility, Côte d'Ivoire requested support to develop a national pedagogical information and awareness-raising strategy through which secondary school teachers would inform and sensitize students about the risks and dangers of irregular migration.

Campaigns in other partner countries such as Morocco and Senegal have also included the training of teachers as part of awareness and information campaigns¹³. In Nigeria, THB has been integrated into the school curriculum as a subject in junior and senior secondary schools as well as in teacher training colleges, in order to counteract the rising trend of trafficking cases involving schoolchildren.

One of the main shortcomings is the lack of monitoring of the impact of these awareness-raising campaigns. The Workshop on Combating Migrant Smuggling and the Niamey Declaration recommended to "Strengthen awareness-raising efforts on the risks of irregular migration and smuggling of migrants (...) and put in place a coherent evaluation system to measure the impact of awareness-raising campaigns".

This recommendation is all the more relevant as several sources¹⁴ cast doubt on the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns as a means of deterring potential migrants from irregular migration. For example, MMC data shows that migrants are aware of the risks even before they start their journey, but that knowledge of the risks does not really influence migrants' decision-making. When asked along the way whether they would have acted differently knowing what they now know, the majority of migrants replied in the negative. This included interviews with migrants who had even experienced violence or abuse during their journey.

That said, awareness-raising activities on irregular migration can still be useful to address other issues, for example to reduce the stigma against returnees in their home communities, especially when the return was involuntary, or to combat the stigma attached to the psychosocial support services that are sometimes offered to them but which they do not take up.

Future suggestions

Any work on raising awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration, THB and smuggling of migration should encourage partners to jointly reflect on the following:

- **Creativity/innovation:** making information and awareness-raising strategies towards migrants creative in order to bring about a change in the perception of the risks involved during the journey. Lessons learned from African partner countries that have experimented with different techniques can be shared. It is possible to draw, for example, on the experience of Ghana, where awareness-raising messages focused on what a migrant generally stands to lose when embarking on the journey (an "opportunity/cost" approach) rather than on the potential risks.
- **Targeting:** to better understand what drives people to migrate and what messages are likely to resonate best with prospective migrants. Ensure that messages are child and gender sensitive. Use of perception surveys for example. Lessons from Guinea-Conakry could be shared, where numerous studies and evaluations have been conducted to better profile target groups and study their access to information and the impact of

¹³EU-funded programme 2020-2022 in Morocco and Senegal. Includes personalised information, training of secondary school minors and their educators.

¹⁴ For example, the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) and UNU-MERIT

past awareness-raising activities. This has been particularly useful in deconstructing stereotypes about Guinean migrants and better understanding the decision to migrate.

- **Monitoring:** using behaviour change monitoring techniques, conducting baseline and end line surveys.
- **Influential local voices:** It is important to establish partnerships with influential local voices to convey prevention messages. The Rabat Process could help share the results of African partners such as Senegal and Guinea, where an EU-funded TV and web series on youth and migration was broadcast. Another example is from Ghana, where an awareness-raising campaign used a famous singer as a goodwill ambassador to perform songs aimed at discouraging irregular migration and explaining the harsh reality faced by migrants in Europe.

Domain 5: Return, readmission and reintegration (RRR)

There were few Dialogue activities on Domain 5: due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the planned technical workshop on return, readmission and reintegration had to be condensed into a two-hour webinar (see below). Domain 5 is supported by Cameroon and Togo, the reference countries on return, reintegration and readmission. The reference countries play a particular role in the definition of priorities and the implementation of actions in line with the objectives of the Dialogue's strategic framework. They contribute to the overall coordination of activities related to their respective areas, share lessons learned and good practices, and facilitate the sharing of expertise and information for future Rabat Process activities.

Activity selected/document produced for Domain 5	Action plan objectives covered
<p>Webinar on "voluntary return and reintegration", via zoom, 21st January 2021</p> <p>Outcome document presenting the main challenges and good practices identified for the successful integration of returning migrants. This document outlined key factors for the success of voluntary return and reintegration programmes, such as a multi-stakeholder approach and strong coordination between host and origin countries; development of host communities, effective referral of migrants to relevant authorities and support for socio-economic reintegration; awareness raising and creation of enabling conditions for returning migrants.</p> <p>(activity led by the reference countries, Cameroon and Togo, in collaboration with France during their Chairmanship of the Rabat Process)</p>	<p>The webinar addressed the main challenges faced by returning migrants as well as good practices to facilitate a better integration of this category of migrants in the framework of voluntary return and reintegration programmes.</p> <p>Objective 10: Encourage programmes that ensure the safe return and sustainable reintegration of migrants, in full respect of their rights and dignity</p>

Objective 9: "Strengthen the capacities of the competent authorities in order to improve and ensure the **identification processes** and the issuing of travel documents".

The issue of readmission was not addressed and Objective 9 was not mentioned. African partner countries have needs, especially in the area of identification. This challenge is even more marked in countries that have not yet

established national identification systems and registers. Action 21 of the Marrakech Plan of Action ("Promote the use of innovative identification techniques...") remains relevant.

Reintegration: a continuing African priority

Notwithstanding the above, the main priority of Rabat Process partners clearly remains reintegration. This was corroborated in a recent "Study on Return, Readmission and Reintegration Programmes in Africa"¹⁵ - carried out for the Continental Dialogue - which provided key information from some African partners (Morocco, Guinea, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo) on needs and priorities related to Domain 5.

In several of the African partner countries covered by the abovementioned study, reintegration programmes with strong coordination practices can be noted. At the same time, there is an overarching lack of mechanisms to encourage such coordination among stakeholders (and lack of accountability on initiatives to government).

Communication and reporting therefore remain a priority. National orientation and reintegration platforms (such as "Tounesna" in Tunisia) or inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms (such as in Cameroon - working groups and sub-committees, each with clearly defined terms of reference) have proven to be effective solutions.

Action 23: "Strengthen assisted return programmes and promote actions aimed at accompanying and **including all returned migrants in development policies and programmes at local level**".

→ Links with local development and other policies

The above-mentioned RRR study recommends that reintegration programmes be tailor-made and locally driven. They should take into account the needs of the communities to which migrants return: a one-size-fits-all approach to reintegration programmes is therefore not appropriate, as it does not take into account local needs or geographical specificities. Furthermore, special attention should be paid to avoid reintegration initiatives causing tensions in communities hosting returning migrants (due to potential imbalances between the support received by returnees and community members).

Most importantly, reintegration should be aligned and integrated into national local development strategies, which is corroborated in Action 23 of the Marrakesh Action Plan. Togo, for example, highlighted that integrating vocational and economic reintegration needs into the design and implementation of national policies and programmes remains a challenge. In Cameroon, development actors such as the Ministry of Agriculture noted that, although they do not have specific considerations for returnees in place at present, they recognise the relevance their programmes may have for returnees, and welcomed partnerships with key ministries focusing on migration. Creating such links leads to new opportunities.

Linking reintegration with development and migration policy areas - such as diaspora policies - should become systematic, but articulation with other policy areas should be ensured. For example, employment, social security and health policies: these tend to focus on those in formal employment and therefore do not protect a significant number of people working in the informal sector. Most returnees will fall into this category.

→ A holistic approach to reintegration and the importance of psychosocial support

Overall, a growing body of evidence supporting the reintegration of return migrants in Africa - from North Africa to West Africa¹⁶ - confirms the need to address reintegration needs in a holistic manner. Efforts should be centred

¹⁵ Study conducted from June 2020 to February 2021 for the AU-EU Continental Dialogue on Migration and Mobility, commissioned by ICMPD to Samuel Hall Ltd.

¹⁶ CIF/OIT (2019) https://sure.itcilo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Report_Comparaison_Maroc_et_Tunisie_Rev_1.pdf

on a dual approach of local economic development and an individual economic approach focused on employment, while also addressing the social and psychosocial needs that are essential to sustaining reintegration gains.

Psychosocial support can help to reassure returnees, building their confidence, sense of belonging and security at home (while avoiding possible further departures to uncertain horizons), all of which can help make reintegration initiatives more sustainable. However, countries require systematic identification of the psychosocial needs of returnees, but few (Nigeria and The Gambia being among the few exceptions) screen for psychological support needs on arrival.

Some partner countries have adopted innovative techniques to address the psychological support needs of returnees. One example is the training of returnee "mentors" to support newly returned migrants, implemented in three Rabat Process partner countries, namely Guinea, Morocco and Senegal. This peer-to-peer approach has been found to deliver results¹⁷ and is a cost-effective and more sustainable approach for African partners.

In terms of job creation, African partners have highlighted several priorities and needs, including awareness raising to address employers' reluctance and mistrust to recruit returnees, and the need for specific policies for the reintegration of returnees into the labour market. In Nigeria, the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency (SMEDAN), which traditionally focuses on the employment of Nigerians, has introduced specific support to returnees for the development of small business projects.

This has been complemented by the availability of psychosocial support for returnees and activities to promote social inclusion, including 'graduation ceremonies' for returnees upon completion of their training, in partnership with community leaders and representatives. This approach has been very successful according to SMEDAN and can serve as an example of good practice, despite the lack of detailed studies on the impact of this programme.

→ **Monitoring and evaluation systems for reintegration programmes**

A major challenge facing partners, which could be addressed in the Dialogue, is the lack of comprehensive data on return migration resulting from a lack of feasible and effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. The inability to demonstrate results calls into question the impact and sustainability of reintegration programmes. Improved M&E would help African partners to better demonstrate the results of initiatives and to mobilise additional resources (donors, private sector investments) to strengthen their reintegration capacities.

In order to monitor effective reintegration, a medium- to long-term perspective is needed to see how the returnee's initial plans evolve and/or whether there is another decision to migrate. One of the challenges here is to maintain contact with the returnee after arrival and initial contacts with RRR initiatives. Good practices have been developed by Rabat Process partners. For example, in The Gambia, reintegration operators ask returnees to provide three contact numbers upon arrival (e.g. parents and an uncle). If they are unable to reach a beneficiary, returnees on the same charter flight can be contacted, as they often form networks (e.g. a WhatsApp group). This approach has significantly reduced the number of unreachable returnees¹⁸.

Another successful practice implemented in Mali with IOM support is the "enrolment contract" to explain the scope of reintegration assistance and inform potential beneficiaries that such support comes with conditions and obligations. By signing it, returnees commit to providing accurate personal information and to staying in contact with IOM. Some of IOM's NGO partners in Côte d'Ivoire have introduced a similar "letter of commitment", which

¹⁷ <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/resources/mentoring-returnees-study-reintegration-outcomes-through-comparative-lens>

¹⁸ Reported by IOM Gambia

helps to initiate a conversation and common understanding among beneficiaries and to give them a greater sense of responsibility.

Future suggestions

Future activities under the Rabat Process could address readmission, as little attention has been paid to this issue so far. Activities allowing partners to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to improve identification processes and related travel documents would be particularly beneficial, highlighting innovative practices where possible.

Partner countries that have successfully created links between reintegration and local development policies or programmes should be invited to share their experiences in the hope that these will be of benefit to others.

The importance of providing psychosocial support to returnees, in order to accompany them throughout their migration journey and increase the chances of sustainable reintegration, should not be overlooked and should be taken into account in the future strategic frameworks of the Rabat Process, and addressed in the Dialogue meetings.

Finally, the Rabat Process could serve as a platform for exchanging ideas on how to improve the monitoring and evaluation of reintegration programmes - and the lessons learned could feed into other Dialogues and fora. Countries such as Guinea, Senegal and Morocco could be invited to share ideas on the use of peer mentoring and psychosocial support for returnees, providing advice to other partner countries interested in replicating such programmes. Other such innovative practices could be highlighted.

Conclusions and future food for thought

As described in the introduction, this paper seeks to highlight some of the urgent needs of Rabat Process partners, including the reference countries with regard to the Marrakech Action Plan, and not to provide a comprehensive overview or an exhaustive list. The choice to focus in particular on the needs and interests of African partners was intended to ensure equal opportunities for sharing.

Clearly, the Rabat Process is driven by European and African needs, and priorities differ from country to country, but even more so from region to region of the Dialogue. For both European and African interests, the priority needs of the Rabat Process will continue to be addressed through frequent consultations.

Moreover, with the possibility of a new policy agenda and action plan for the Dialogue on the horizon, future reports could take a more comprehensive approach and build on priorities not only identified by Rabat Process partners, but highlighted as crucial by other European and African migration actors, including academics, civil society and think tanks. Indeed, the evolving nature of migration brings new challenges and the Rabat Process must remain a flexible Dialogue, able to adapt to these issues.

Key issues that could be explored for inclusion in future Rabat Process programmes include, inter alia: the urbanisation of migration and the increasing role of local authorities in migration management; evidence-based migration policy-making; demography and its influence on migration trends; technology, digitalisation and migration, including the issue of metadata and artificial intelligence; and analysis of the determinants and root causes of migration.