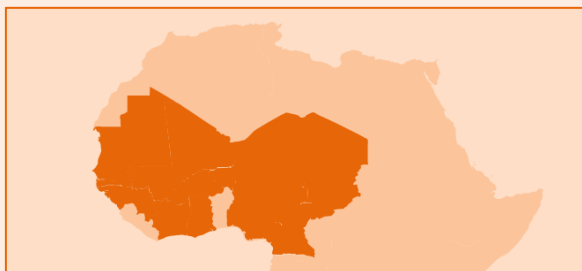


## SUCCESS STORY

# Strengthening the management and governance of migration and the sustainable reintegration of returning migrants (EU-IOM JI)



### EU Trust Fund for Africa - Sahel & Lake Chad



**COUNTRY:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia



**EUTF PARTNER:**  
IOM



**BUDGET:**  
EUR 195.1M



From **08/2016**  
to **02/2023**

### Objective of the project

To support the protection, return and reintegration of stranded migrants.

### Key successes

- > Economic and psychological support provided to 67,000 returnees.
- > 12 out of 13 countries in the SLC window adopted Standard Operating Procedures.
- > 130,000 people benefited from community strengthening investment.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative<sup>1</sup> (JI) was launched in response to the 2015–2016 migration crisis, when thousands of migrants lost their lives on their way to Europe and North Africa. Funded by the EUTF and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)<sup>2</sup>, its goals were to strengthen migration management, collect migration data, protect migrants along key migration routes, and enable safe and dignified voluntary return and sustainable reintegration of returnees with psychological and economic support. Working with governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), IOM helped returnees restart their lives. The JI implemented activities in 26 African countries through early 2023. In Sahel and the Lake Chad region, the JI operated in 13 countries from 2016 until 2022.<sup>3</sup>

### How did the EUTF help?

**One of the JI's key achievements was its support to African partner countries to adopt Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) which facilitate the return and reintegration process of migrants, and to define the roles and responsibilities of involved actors.** These SOPs were adopted by 12 countries out of 13<sup>4</sup> in the Sahel and Lake Chad region. The SOPs were tailored to each national context after extensive consultation with respective government bodies. In addition, more than 4,000 government employees<sup>5</sup> were trained to carry out sustainable migrant reintegration and national policy implementation. The programme also established 20 monitoring points across the partner

countries to track migrant numbers, providing valuable data on migration flows, and thereby informing governments' decision-making.<sup>6</sup>

**The adoption of the SOPs facilitated tangible changes in migration management.** Several countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and The Gambia, built dedicated airport facilities, and ensured coordination between six ministries, including the health ministry and the ministry in charge of civil documentation, to address the returnees' main needs upon arrival. In Mali, official welcomed migrants returning from Libya and Niger, upon landing, according to a standardised protocol and transported them directly to reception centres constructed with IOM support. In Nigeria, the government committed to migration issues at both federal and state levels and resources were allocated to the transportation of returning citizens and reintegration programmes. Similarly, initiatives in Burkina Faso and Senegal included returned migrants in national employment policy schemes intended to promote youth economic opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

**Psychological support and economic reintegration activities reached over 67,000 returnees.** Economic support included trainings for returnees to start their own income-generating activities. Half of the surveyed beneficiaries reported being able to cover at least 'most of their personal needs' and 42% were satisfied with their economic situation after receiving the economic assistance.



Economic support was combined with psychosocial reintegration assistance for returnees to help address stigma, shame and negative migration experiences. Feedback showed that these activities had a positive impact on returnees' mental well-being, as 76% of them declared that they observed a reduction in stress-related feelings.<sup>8</sup>

**The project also aimed to support host communities by investing in sustainable infrastructure in Burkina Faso and Niger.** These two migration transit countries were the only ones to be targeted by this activity. In Niger, for instance, the JI upgraded water systems and health centres, helped improve service provision in host communities, and contributed to preventing tensions with returnees. Investments were made after community consultations to address population needs. The long-lasting nature of the investments made local leaders confident that these benefits would endure beyond the project's lifespan. The final evaluation estimated that 130,000 people benefited from these investments in both countries.<sup>9</sup>

## Keys to success

**Effective collaboration with partner governments and ongoing projects:** The project successfully navigated the complex processes of preparing migration policy with different government organs over an extended period, sustaining policy implementation throughout the duration of the project. Productive partnerships and coordination with local projects established solid groundwork for a robust referral network to assist returnees in matters, such as economic reintegration within the area served by the initiative.

**Reintegration through community support:** The project facilitated the reintegration process of migrants by supporting host communities and providing quality services to returnees to avoid tensions that may arise from competition for limited resources.

**Room for innovation and learning across country contexts:** IOM's coordination teams at the country level identified and shared good practices. For example, cash-based interventions for reintegration proved highly effective in Mali, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This motivated replication of this approach in Senegal, demonstrating how the project cultivated learning between countries. The communication between country teams allowed innovative solutions to emerge and spread effectively.

## Building on success

**Building on the EU-IOM JI's experience:** The Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (MPRR-SSA)<sup>10</sup> aims to continue the JI's activities. In contrast to the JI, community-based reintegration, capacity-building, awareness-raising, and data collection and analysis were not (or were very marginally) included by the MPRR for West Africa<sup>11</sup> (MPRR-WA). Instead, the new programme focuses on the protection of stranded migrants, assisted voluntary return, post-arrival assistance, and individual reintegration support.

**Better integration with national systems:** For future programming, national systems in charge of reintegration support could be more utilised, as stronger alignment of referral structures with government-led coordination bodies improve sustainability and accommodate long-term needs.

**Matching labour offer and demand:** Some trainings provided employment opportunities for graduate students, although closer follow-up is needed to help more trainees secure jobs. A good understanding of evolving labour market needs and deepened collaboration with the private sector could help ensure training relevance. Investments are also often needed to modernise teaching methods, upgrade centre equipment, and expand rural access.

<sup>1</sup> EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

<sup>2</sup> IOM was the lead implementation partner through its country offices. However, it involved local authorities and NGOs to better navigate local contexts.

<sup>3</sup> Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and The Gambia.

<sup>4</sup> In Guinea Bissau, the process was delayed due to political instability.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Drury, Lamine Kane, 'EU-IOM JI Regional Final Evaluation Report – The Sahel and Lake Chad Region', December 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> The MPRR-SSA started its implementation in August 2022 and is meant to continue until March 2025, with funding provided through the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). It has a smaller budget of €144.5M.

<sup>11</sup> The MPRR-WA covers the same countries as the EU-IOM Joint Initiative, apart from Guinea-Bissau, which was not included, and with the addition of Sierra Leone.



**EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa**

### Disclaimer

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