IMPACT Study Report #1

RETURNING HOME

Evaluating the Impact of IOM's Reintegration Assistance for Migrants in the Horn of Africa

IOM
UN MIGRATION

Funded by the
European Union

IOM REGIONAL DATA HUB FOR THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

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Somali Research and Development Institute

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ABOUT THE IMPACT STUDY

The IMPACT Study is the impact evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative programme in the Horn of Africa. Launched in March 2020 and concluded in March 2023, the study focuses on Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan: the three countries in the region where the programme has the largest reintegration caseload. All the IMPACT Study reports, as well as additional resources such as technical annexes, datasets, data analysis scripts and dissemination material are accessible from the IMPACT Study webpage: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/impact-study.

ABOUT THE EU-IOM JOINT INITIATIVE FOR MIGRANT PROTECTION AND REINTEGRATION

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration was launched in December 2016 and is funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. The programme brings together 26 African countries of the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa regions, along with the European Union and IOM around the goal of ensuring that migration is safer, more informed and better governed for both migrants and their communities. In the Horn of Africa, the programme is implemented primarily in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. The programme enables migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way. It provides assistance to returning migrants to help them restart their lives in their countries of origin through an integrated approach to reintegration that supports both migrants and their communities, has the potential to complement local development, and mitigates some of the drivers of irregular migration. Also within the programme's areas of action is building the capacity of governments and other partners; migration data collection and analysis to support fact-based programming; as well as information and awareness-raising. Further information on the programme can be accessed at: www.migrationjointinitiative.org.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL DATA HUB

Established in 2018, the Regional Data Hub (RDH) for the East and Horn of Africa supports evidence-based, strategic and policy-level discussion on migration through a combination of initiatives. In particular, the RDH uses multiple tools and processes to investigate the migration narrative in the region and gain a more in-depth understanding of the actors, dynamics and risks of migration. These initiatives aim to fill existing gaps by strengthening the regional evidence base on migration, which will further improve policymaking and programming. The RDH strategy is in line with the objectives of the IOM Migration Data Strategy (MDS). Publications can be consulted at https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/regional-data-hub. The RDH is largely funded through the generous support of the European Union, under the terms of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (EU-IOM JI), the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and IOM's Migration Resource Allocation Committee (MiRAC).

CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR   Assisted voluntary return and reintegration

COVID-19   Coronavirus disease 2019

CBRP   Community-based reintegration project

CLS   COVID-19-linked shock

CRA   Complementary reintegration assistance

DID   Difference-in-difference

ECA   Emergency Cash Advance

FGD   Focus group discussion

HoA   Horn of Africa

IOM   International Organization for Migration

JI-HoA   EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa

KII   Key informant interview

MoMo   Mobile Money

RSI   Reintegration Sustainability Index

RSS   Reintegration Sustainability Survey

SIYB   Start and Improve Your Business

SNNPR   Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region

TVET   Technical and vocational education and training

UNHCR   United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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GLOSSARY[1]

Business training

Trainings aimed at enabling returnees start viable businesses, through provision of different interconnected training packages, which at times included also psychosocial support elements to them. Sometimes referred to as "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)" training.

Calibration group

Refers to a group of matched non-migrants (see definition below) who are demographically similar to and reside in the same or similar locations as the returnees assisted by the programme evaluated. The calibration group offered a standard against which the IMPACT study assessed the progress of migrant returnees towards reintegration.

Community-based Reintegration Projects

Community-level interventions that the programme evaluated undertook alongside individual-level reintegration assistance and structural-level initiatives, in line with IOM's Integrated Approach to Reintegration.[2]

Complementary Reintegration Assistance

Complementary reintegration assistance (CRA) was tailored to the needs of the returnee and constituted the principal form of support provided to them. The tailoring was achieved through a process of Reintegration Counselling, during which a case worker and the returnee defined a reintegration plan. In the context of the programme evaluated, most reintegration plans focused on the establishment of a microbusiness chosen by the returnee, for which IOM provided materials (in kind) or cash to acquire them. In fewer cases, the reintegration plan focused on assistance to further the returnee's education or other specific needs.

COVID-19-linked shock

The COVID-19 pandemic was exacerbated by other extreme events (most notably: desert locust infestations, flooding in parts of Somalia and the Sudan, and conflict, especially in southern Somalia) that affected the East and Horn of Africa region unevenly, at about the same time in 2020. As separating the effects of these co-occurring shocks from the shock caused by the pandemic, including the measures taken by governments to limit the spread of infection, is difficult, these shocks are collectively referred to as COVID-19-linked shock (CLS).

Emergency Cash Advance

The Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) initiative was introduced in Ethiopia in May 2020 to assist returnees who were waiting to receive microbusiness assistance to cope with the effects of the pandemic. ECA recipients received a cash lumpsum of 4,500 Ethiopian Birr (equivalent to circa 133 USD in May 2020) which was deducted from the budget of the individual (in kind) microbusiness assistance (see definition below) they were to receive. Returnees who had already received microbusiness assistance, as well as eligible returnees who declared not to need the ECA, received microbusiness assistance fully in kind.

Matched non-migrant

Matching is a statistical technique to reduce bias and enable a comparison of treated and untreated groups. In the IMPACT Study, non-migrants in the calibration group (see definition above) were matched with migrant returnees based on specific criteria (e.g. living in same community, age, gender, education, length of time in community, no plans to move). Matched non-migrants did not receive any form of assistance from the programme evaluated.

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1   Unless otherwise indicated, the definitions included in this glossary were derived from the discussions held with IOM staff in Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan and at the Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa.

2   See IOM (2019c: Module 3; 2023d) for a discussion on the role of community-based projects in reintegration and migration management. IOM (2023a, 2023b and 2023c) provide details on the projects implemented by the programme evaluated.

Microbusiness Assistance

Form of assistance targeting primarily the economic dimension of reintegration and entailing the establishment of an income-generating microenterprise based on a business plan defined as part of the Reintegration Counselling process, with the support of a trained case worker. IOM provided microbusiness assistance to returnees through different methods, which included:

- "Regular in kind" – IOM would procure business inputs and supply them directly to returnees.

- "Mobile Money (MoMo) in kind" – returnees would obtain quotes for the business inputs directly from merchants who, in turn, received a payment from IOM via mobile money.

- "Mobile Money (MoMo) cash" – returnees received microbusiness assistance in the form of a cash amount transferred directly to them via mobile money.

In the context of the programme evaluated, the "Regular in kind" modality was the only one available at the beginning of operations. This modality remained the only one available in Ethiopia throughout the implementation period of the programme (in this country, the value of the inputs transferred varied depending on the type of business chosen by the beneficiary and it could range from 1,110 USD for ruminant fattening businesses to 2,650 USD for construction businesses). In Somalia, "MoMo cash" was introduced in September 2020, with programme beneficiaries able to choose between this modality (a lumpsum payment of 2,000 USD) and "Regular in kind" (in kind transfer of inputs of similar value) although the latter became much less common. In the Sudan, "MoMo in kind" was introduced in September 2019 and "MoMo cash" in March 2020; both "Regular in kind" and "MoMo in kind" were discontinued after May 2019 and September 2020 respectively.[3]

Reception Assistance and General Reintegration Assistance

Reception Assistance was available to all returnees upon arrival and included meet and greet at the point of entry, temporary shelter, onward transportation to reach the final destination within the country of origin, pocket money, immediate medical and psychosocial assistance and other services.

Differently from Complementary Reintegration Assistance (see definition above), General Reintegration Assistance (GRA) was not specifically tailored to the needs of returnees, in the sense that all programme beneficiaries were eligible to receive the reintegration services falling in this category, irrespective of their level of vulnerability or specific needs. Examples of GRA services include the enrolment in national health insurance schemes and the participation in business trainings (see definition above).

For practical reasons, although they are distinct types of assistance, Reception Assistance and GRA are considered jointly in the context of the IMPACT study.

Reintegration

A process that enables individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and inclusion in civic life.[4]

Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI)

A multidimensional index used by IOM for measuring reintegration using multiple drivers and their related weights.

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3   In the Sudan, the programme budgeted circa 1,200 USD per individual microbusiness assistance recipient. However, the actual value (regardless of whether assistance was provided in cash or in kind) was affected by both high inflation and exchange rate regulation measures in force during the course of 2020 and 2021.

4   IOM (2019a).

Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS)

A survey that collects the indicators to generate the RSI. The RSS+ was an expansion with additional questions of the standard RSS survey for the purposes of the IMPACT study. The latest version of this instrument was further expanded by adding retrospective questions used to obtain baseline data together with endline data for all the original RSI indicators and some of the additional ones.

Remigration

In the context of the IMPACT study, remigration is intended as a further attempt at migration through regular or irregular means, by a migrant who has returned to their country of origin. The term does not imply that remigration is directed towards the same destination of the previous attempt.

Returnee

In the context of the IMPACT study, a returnee is intended as a migrant unable or unwilling to remain in a host or transit country who returned to their country of origin, receiving some form of assistance from IOM (either before or after return, or both). The returnees on which this study focuses were individuals in a situation of vulnerability and should not be considered as representative of the "general" returning migrant populations in any of the countries or regions mentioned in IMPACT study reports.

Sustainable reintegration

"Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity."[5]

Treated returnees / Untreated returnees

In the context of the IMPACT study, a treated returnee is a returnee who received Complementary Reintegration Assistance (CRA; see definition above) from the programme evaluated.

Untreated returnees are returnees who were registered beneficiaries of the programme but that, while due to receive CRA, had not received it by the time their survey interview was administered. The IMPACT Study used untreated returnees as a comparison group in Ethiopia, alongside a calibration group (see definition above).

Matched non-migrants (see definition above) inherit the "treated" or "untreated" label from the returnee they are matched with.

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5   IOM (2019a).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (JI-HoA) supports migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, in full respect of international human rights standards and in particular the principle of non-refoulement.

IOM commissioned an impact evaluation of the JI-HoA with a focus on the three countries with the largest reintegration caseloads: Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. The evaluation (IMPACT) has three core objectives:

1. To evaluate the impact of reintegration assistance provided by the JI-HoA to inform programming with a rich base of evidence;

2. To improve IOM's understanding of Sustainable Reintegration metrics;

3. To design a robust impact evaluation methodology that considers the specificities of the programme being evaluated, while also informing the definition of a standard for future impact evaluations of reintegration-focused programmes/projects.

This report presents a synthesis of the design and findings for IMPACT and draws together the work published across multiple evaluation reports.[6]

MIGRATION AND THE JI-HOA

IOM's assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes support migrants who wish to return to their country of origin due to unexpected circumstances or challenges they face along their migration journey. The JI-HoA, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, is a flagship programme that employs an integrated approach to assist returnees in their reintegration, covering economic, social and psychosocial aspects over an extended period. General Reintegration Assistance (GRA) services include reception assistance, temporary shelter, transportation, pocket money, immediate medical and psychosocial aid, and training sessions such as Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) and *Kaizen* training.

Complementary Reintegration Assistance (CRA) supplements GRA and is tailored to individual returnee needs, which are determined through Reintegration Counselling. CRA services encompass microbusiness assistance, medical referrals, educational aid, housing and technical and vocational education training (TVET).

Microbusiness assistance was the most common form of CRA and was initially provided only in kind. The programme has adapted its approach to address specific challenges such as providing Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ethiopia. In the Sudan and Somalia, cash-based approaches were introduced to streamline microbusiness assistance delivery and reduce waiting time.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

The evaluation of the JI-HoA reintegration programme faced multiple adaptations in its design due to practical and methodological challenges. First, since there were no precedents for evaluating a reintegration programme as large and complex as the JI-HoA, determining the best approach for assessing its multidimensional aspects and creating a counterfactual was challenging. Second, the COVID-19 pandemic, along with other shocks such as conflict and flooding, exacerbated logistical and access issues, particularly in sampling, as programme beneficiaries (returnees) entered continuously, disrupting the regular flow and making it difficult to estimate precise sample sizes.

To address these challenges and achieve the objectives of IMPACT, a hybrid, quasi-experimental evaluation design was developed. This design consists of three interrelated components:

- **Main Impact Evaluation:** The first component uses statistical modelling to assess the impact of the JI-HoA, utilizing primary survey data and programme information. This involved comparing the Reintegration Sustainability Index score of returnees with non-migrants living in the same or similar communities, at baseline and endline.

- **Natural Experiment:** The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is leveraged in this second component as a unique opportunity to evaluate the resilience of returnees, creating a natural experiment within the evaluation.

- **Qualitative Research:** This third component complements the other two by providing valuable qualitative insights into specific areas of inquiry.

THE IMPACT OF THE JI-HOA ASSISTANCE (OBJECTIVE 1)

The period covered by the evaluation was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in March 2020, including measures taken to control the spread of the virus. The situation was also exacerbated by other extreme events in the region, most notably desert locust infestations, flooding in parts of Somalia and the Sudan, and conflict. In all three countries, these shocks had a substantial effect on returnees' livelihoods due to the effects of control measures and associated market volatility and inflation. For example, more than 60 per cent of self-employed returnees had to close their businesses during lockdowns. Those who were most vulnerable before the pandemic were most susceptible to the shocks. The changes they were able to make to limit the harm were largely of a coping nature.

Overall, returnees' actions helped mitigate the COVID-linked shocks (CLS) impacts on well-being and to recover from these impacts, demonstrating resilience. In particular, returnees used family and social networks to help them through hardships. Additionally, while returnees deployed a range of survival responses, IOM assistance was still greatly appreciated. This gratitude highlights the important humanitarian and human rights rationale for providing such assistance, even in situations where sustainable reintegration is difficult to achieve.

Returnees saw the JI-HoA assistance as vital to enduring the shocks, lessening the deterioration of their well-being. The results of the statistical analysis were consistent with the returnees' qualitative testimony: the longer returnees had use of microbusiness assistance, the greater their ability to mitigate the initial fall.

ETHIOPIA

By the endline survey, treated returnees (those in receipt of JI-HoA assistance) perform just as well as non-migrants on the overall Reintegration Sustainability Index, and are slightly above the 0.66 threshold – highlighting an improvement of returnees' scores that converges with the non-migrants in their communities. Other cohorts of returnees improve from baseline to endline although untreated returnees (those who had not yet received JI-HoA assistance at the time of the endline interview) do not statistically converge with the non-migrants. This result supports the finding that the JI-HoA assistance in Ethiopia contributes significantly to increasing RSI scores over time.

SOMALIA

Both Libya and non-Libya returnee groups can be considered "reintegrated" against the 0.66 threshold at endline, and there is no statistically significant difference between the cohorts of returnees compared. Indeed, there is no statistical difference at either baseline or endline, suggesting that the additional UNHCR cash assistance provided to returnees from Libya did not play a detectable role in improving reintegration scores. Overall, returnee RSI scores increase significantly from baseline to endline, while matched non-migrant scores remain constant. At endline, returnees perform significantly better than matched non-migrants on the overall RSI and move above the 0.66 threshold.

THE SUDAN

There is an overall slight decline in RSI scores over time and returnees, suggesting no statistically significant effect of the JI-HoA assistance on the reintegration of returnees. Moreover, at both baseline and endline, returnees systematically record higher RSI scores than non-migrants, casting doubts on whether the latter group can provide appropriate calibration of sustainable reintegration outcomes in the specific context of this country. In this sense, the analysis raises more questions than it answers about the programme in the Sudan and why the evaluation results are so different to the other JI-HoA geographies included in the evaluation..

OVERALL

The IOM assistance was greatly appreciated and can be justified on humanitarian and human rights grounds. Achieving sustainable reintegration is however a more significant challenge, particularly given the conflicts, instability and natural disasters faced in each of the three HoA countries the IMPACT study covers. The statistical evidence suggests that the JI-HoA led to improvements in reintegration for returnees in both Ethiopia and Somalia, with microbusiness assistance (and sometimes with associated training) making a statistically attributable contribution. The natural experiment, operating alongside the main impact evaluation, has shed light on those analyses of attribution, suggesting additional factors that may be contributing.

JI-HoA country programmes have gone some way to addressing the impact of the CLS on returnees (for example, by introducing the Emergency Cash Advance initiative in Ethiopia). These and other findings suggest that country programmes were able to learn and prioritize vulnerable returnees, capacities they can draw on to achieve further and wider improvements.

Finally, no single modality (either cash-based or in kind) is intrinsically more effective for increasing long-term sustainable reintegration outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative that reintegration assistance continues to adapt and respond to the expressed and evolving needs of returnees.

LESSONS ON IMPROVING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION METRICS (OBJECTIVE 2)

The Reintegration Sustainability Index was initially designed for the multidimensional measurement of sustainable reintegration, but throughout this evaluation, three distinct use cases are identified: (1) as a global scoring index, (2) to support service delivery and (3) for monitoring and evaluation. The IMPACT Study draws out lessons for improving several aspects of the index, including:

- To enhance its effectiveness, there may be a need to either incorporate additional variables beyond the RSI or adjust IOM's programming to better address the non-economic aspects of reintegration, such as social and psychosocial dimensions.

- There is also uncertainty about the relevance of certain RSI indicators, particularly those linked to specific country contexts, migration experiences and the subjective perceptions of returnees. This uncertainty may undervalue the assistance provided by IOM.

- The Reintegration Sustainability Index score threshold used by the JI-HoA (0.5) has no empirical justification and may misrepresent the share of returnees having attained sustainable reintegration. Rather than relying on a single threshold, a range of reintegration scales may provide a more nuanced and accurate assessment of reintegration outcomes.

- The weights assigned to RSI indicators may not have a noticeable effect on the overall assessment and could potentially be removed. This approach would treat all indicators equally and offer a more straightforward interpretation of individual RSI indicators.

LESSONS ON EVALUATING REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES (OBJECTIVE 3)

Use of Retrospective Data

Evaluating migrant populations can be challenging, and sometimes, due to various constraints, retrospective data is the only option, as in the case of IMPACT. Ensuring the reliability of retrospective data is crucial not only for the current evaluation but also for future ones, given the resource limitations and unpredictable contexts of reintegration programmes. Developing methods to validate and analyse retrospective data accurately is essential for assessing programme impact effectively in such situations. The empirical evidence provides some reassurance to the use of retrospective data in this evaluation, and certainly remains too mixed to rule out retrospective measurement altogether.

Non-Migrant Calibration

The challenge of selecting a standard counterfactual comparison to returnees is considerable, as by simply migrating (and returning) they are by nature different to the non-migrant population; and returnees not receiving assistance may be expected to be different to those who did. In this case we used the innovative approach of a calibration group of demographically matched non-migrants. This conceptualizes sustainable reintegration as equalizing of returnees to the local population.

The contrast between the Sudan and Ethiopia/Somalia underscores the importance of considering both the migration experience and the local context when constructing a relevant non-migrant calibration group, as these factors play a significant role in shaping reintegration outcomes.

Natural Experiments

Natural experiments offer distinct advantages for evaluating reintegration programmes:

- By observing how programmes perform under stress, especially in the context of significant shocks, natural experiments offer insights into programme effectiveness.

- Natural experiments offer a more people-centred and holistic view of how events influence individuals and communities.

- Natural experiments can shed light not only on programmes but also on conventional evaluation methods.

- Natural experiments are well-suited for dynamic and unpredictable contexts. They are responsive to natural and social events beyond programme control, making them adaptable.

The natural experiment approach can be a valuable addition to evaluation and research, either as a standalone piece or part of a larger evaluation. The challenge is having the mindset and operational capacity to be able to deploy the skills and resources in response to a shock or extreme event.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of recommendations are provided at the end of the report based on the evidence presented.

Programme-Specific

RECOMMENDATION 1: Continue to provide assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance to stranded migrants in Africa as an important humanitarian and development initiative that saves lives, reduces vulnerabilities and improves post-return well-being.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Support programme managers to make better use of programme data to evaluate, adapt and improve delivery of assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 3: In future programming, focus on what has proved effective in this evaluation and address areas that haven't responded well to the current JI-HoA configuration, particularly the psychosocial and social aspects.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve reintegration planning to take better account of the debt dimension and its impact on sustainable reintegration.

RECOMMENDATION 5: As part of future programme design, programme managers should develop mechanisms that draw on returnee networks to improve communication with and among returnees, including those currently unreachable and those living with disability.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Programme managers should expand local and community-based projects to support returnee innovation, integration with host communities and durable job creation.

Methodological

RECOMMENDATION 7: The RSI, or an evolved version of the RSI, should continue to be used to measure multidimensional sustainable reintegration. The focus should be on prioritizing its purpose for IOM programming and evaluation, rather than as a global index comparing countries.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Revise the RSI around a reduced set of indicators and produce an equally weighted additive index.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Donors and IOM should allocate additional and more responsive funding within monitoring and evaluation workstreams, so as to exploit extreme events as tests of programme design and implementation.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Panel observations of returnees (and matched non-migrants, if utilized) are highly recommended over repeated cross-sectional sampling.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Retrospective data can provide a practical and cost-effective option for studying returnees, but with some improvements.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The assessment of reintegration should include a plurality of methods, particularly given the variability of returnees' experiences (and the non-objectivity of reintegration outcome measures).

RECOMMENDATION 13: A calibration group consisting of matched non-migrants can form a useful reference cohort in many, but not all contexts.

1. WHY THIS STUDY?

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) is a comprehensive and humane approach to helping migrants (very often in a vulnerable situation) to sustainably reintegrate in their countries of origin. Return is a complex issue because many migrants face difficulties in finding jobs, accessing education and health care, recovering from challenging experiences and rebuilding their lives in their home countries. The scale of migration is extensive, with millions of people worldwide seeking better opportunities or refuge in other nations. The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimates that there were around 281 million international migrants in 2020 (around 3.6% of the global population);[7] that is, more than 128 million than in 1990, and threefold times the estimate for 1970. In the East and Horn of Africa region, the numbers have similarly grown, with an 80 per cent increase over the last 20 years – reaching an estimated at 6.2 million by the mid-2020s. In 2020 migration reduced following the COVID-19 pandemic but started to increase again with the lifting of travel restrictions. By 2021, migrants requesting IOM assistance to voluntarily return to their country of origin increased by 17 per cent from 2020 to 2021, with 5,295 migrants being assisted to return to the East and Horn of Africa.[8]

Table 1. Migrants assisted to return to East and Horn of Africa

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of migrants	6 312	5 372	7 118	3 773	5 295

Source: IOM (2022a).

To facilitate sustainable reintegration, organizations such as IOM help returnees rebuild their lives, find employment and contribute to their communities – and in doing so, help ensure a successful transition and reintegration for those who have chosen to return. The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (henceforth JI-HoA)[9] focuses on those stranded along the main migration routes in Africa who have decided to return to their countries of origin.

Launched in March 2017,[10] the JI-HoA assists migrants who decide to return to their countries of origin to do so in a safe and dignified way, in full respect of international human rights standards and in particular the principle of non-refoulement.[11] The JI-HoA is the first AVRR initiative that attempts a systematic operationalization of the Integrated Approach to Reintegration,[12] and therefore contains several elements of innovation when compared with more "traditional" return and reintegration programmes. The initiative provides migrants with economic, social and psychosocial assistance to support them as a first step in what is an often lengthy and non-linear process of reintegration (see chapter 3 for full details).

The JI-HoA, and by extension this evaluation, is also distinctive in other ways. First, the programme is primarily about South-South return and is targeted towards migrants stranded in Africa and en route but who most

7   IOM (2022b) and UN DESA (2020).

8   IOM (2022a).

9   The JI-HoA is one regional programme of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration funded from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). Alongside the JI-HoA, similar programmes were established in North Africa (JI-NA) and in the Sahel and Lake Chad area (JI-SLC).

10   Although officially launched at this time, the IOM Regional Office for the East and Horn of Africa indicates that the programme had minimal personnel until early 2018.

11   IOM (2019a) defines the principle of non-refoulement as "The prohibition for States to extradite, deport, expel or otherwise return a person to a country where his or her life or freedom would be threatened, or where there are substantial grounds for believing that he or she would risk being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, or would be in danger of being subjected to enforced disappearance, or of suffering another irreparable harm".

12   IOM (2019c).

often did not make it to their intended destinations. This group is a different target population to traditional assisted voluntary return (AVR) programmes that generally focus on migrants who do not have the right to stay in the destination country – primarily in Europe. Therefore, the migrants' experiences of this programme are different to those from traditional assisted voluntary return that is facilitated from a destination country in Europe. This is both the first AVRR impact evaluation and the first of such a population of South–South returnees, most of whom have experienced some form of significant vulnerability or abuse during their migration journey. Second, the JI-HoA and evaluation covers both AVRR and voluntary humanitarian returns (VHR), with a large number of returnees from Libya. The latter is a new terminology applied to a programme developed especially for the Libya context and used to highlight the humanitarian nature of this operation.

IOM commissioned Itad[13] to carry out an impact evaluation of the JI-HoA with a focus on the three countries with the largest caseloads: Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan. This initiative, hereafter referred to as IMPACT,[14] began in March 2020 with the objectives of evaluating the impact of the JI-HoA programme and enhancing the understanding of sustainable reintegration metrics, while also establishing a methodological standard for conducting impact evaluations on return and reintegration programmes.

This report presents a synthesis of the design and findings for IMPACT, and draws together the work published in:[15]

• IMPACT Study Country reports for Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan;

• IMPACT Study Report #2: COVID-19, Returnees and IOM in the Horn of Africa: A Natural Experiment-based evaluation;

• IMPACT Study Report #3: Evaluability Review and Deep Dive Assessment of Community-based Reintegration Projects (CBRPs);

• IMPACT Study Report #4: The Challenge of Measuring Sustainable Reintegration Outcomes: Lessons from the IMPACT study and recommendations for the revision of the Reintegration Sustainability Index;

• IMPACT Study Report #5: Using Natural Experiments in Crises: Lessons for evaluation.

This report describes approaches to measuring sustainable reintegration (chapter 2); the EU-IOM Joint Initiative and programme overview (chapter 3); the design and methods for IMPACT (chapter 4); findings on the impact of the assistance (chapter 5); lessons on improving the measurement of reintegration (chapter 6); lessons for evaluations of reintegration programmes (chapter 7); conclusions and recommendations (chapters 8 and chapter 9).

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13   Working in partnership with Statistics for Sustainable Development, Applied Ecology Research, JaRco (Ethiopia), Sayara (the Sudan and Somalia), LEEN (the Sudan), SORDI and Dansom (both Somalia).

14   The full title of IMPACT is the Impact Evaluation of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative Programme for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa region.

15   For all reports: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/impact-study.

2. MEASURING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

There is no universally agreed way to measure sustainable reintegration. The term is also relatively new to migration policy, having been legitimized through the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and replacing the problematic notion of sustainable return.[16] Accurately defining and measuring concepts such as sustainable reintegration is extremely challenging and requires multiple parameters. In this section, different approaches and frameworks are discussed, focusing on IOM's Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI) and its associated survey instrument, the Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS).

2.1 DEFINING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

IOM's definition of sustainable reintegration builds on research by Koser and Kuschminder (2015),[17] and sets out three dimensions: (1) economic reintegration whereby an individual is able to sustain a livelihood and is not in a situation of economic vulnerability; (2) social reintegration whereby the returnee can access public services and infrastructure, including access to health, education, housing, justice and social protection schemes, for example, at the local community level; and (3) psychosocial reintegration, which refers to a reinsertion of a returnee into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbours) and civil society structures (associations, self-help groups, other organizations and civic life generally). This also includes the re-engagement with the values, ways of living, language, moral principles and traditions of the country of origin. IOM defines sustainable reintegration as:[18]

> *Sustainable reintegration is when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.*

This definition is non-linear, recognizing that mobility is often a necessary coping strategy and as such, sustainable reintegration does not rule out remigration. Furthermore, addressing reintegration requires a holistic and needs-based response at the individual, community and structural levels. At the *individual level,* reintegration assistance should be tailored to the returnee's specific needs and reflect individual migratory experiences, capacities, vulnerability factors[19] and the circumstances of return. The *community level* encompasses initiatives that respond to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of communities to which migrants return, including returnee families and the non-migrant population. The *structural level* initiatives promote good governance of migration through engagement with local and national authorities and stakeholders and supports continuity of assistance through adequate local public services.

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16 Marino and Lietaert (2022).

17 Koser and Kuschminder (2015).

18 IOM (2019c); based on the Glossary on Migration (IOM 2019a) and originally IOM (2017).

19 To identify vulnerability factors, IOM uses its Determinants of Migrant vulnerability Model (DOMV) that looks at risks and protective factors at the individual, household/family, community and structural levels. The DOMV introduces IOM's programmatic approach to protecting and assisting migrants vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse, which is equally used in the context of return and reintegration (IOM 2019b: 5–8).

2.2 THE REINTEGRATION SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

The RSI is a collection of indicators used to estimate the level of reintegration. In 2017, IOM commissioned Samuel Hall[20] to develop a comprehensive framework towards reintegration sustainability in the context of return.[21] This study designed 29 individual indicators, grouped into three dimensions: economic, social and psychosocial. These indicators only focus on the time when the returnee arrives at their country of origin and do not explore experiences before migration, decision-making factors during migration or experiences in the country of destination. Samuel Hall (2017a) also proposed a set of 25 community indicators to provide context to the individual indicators, as the community is an important dimension for reintegration, as highlighted in IOM's definition. Community indicators provide key insights for reintegration programming in the field of AVRR and can be used to establish baseline information to contextualize findings and inform particular interventions in particular contexts. Samuel Hall (2017a; 2017b) then developed a global methodology for weighting these indicators to derive dimensional (economic, social and psychosocial) and composite scores of reintegration. The methodology provides a system of weighting that is standardized at the global level,[22] but can also be tailored to the country context – the latter of which has not been taken up by IOM yet. In 2018, IOM adopted the RSI indicators developed by Samuel Hall for implementation into the RSS and rolled them out across the organization (hence it is referred to as the "institutional RSI" for this study). Following the roll-out, different applications and evaluations using the revised RSS data have emerged. For instance, in 2020, a study analysing reintegration outcomes and how these were influenced by a returnee mentorship initiative was conducted in three pilot countries (Guinea, Morocco and Senegal).[23] In addition, drawing from the RSS and its underlying definition of sustainable reintegration, IOM developed the Returnee Longitudinal Survey,[24] which monitors sustainable reintegration outcomes based on the economic, social and psychosocial self-assessed conditions of returnees, in addition to understanding the demographic profiles as well as assessing their living conditions. So far, the Returnee Longitudinal Survey has been used to better understand the demographic profiles, living conditions and reintegration processes of returnees in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq and Pakistan.

The RSI uses a standard set of indicators with the original weights developed in 2017. IMPACT makes use of the institutional RSI composite scores and RSS datasets to evaluate the JI-HoA. The impact evaluation design also makes use of an enhanced RSS tool with additional questions (named the RSS+), contemporaneous endline and retrospective baseline scores, as well as the innovative testing of comparison groups of non-migrants. The impact evaluation is further complemented by a natural experiment and qualitative research. This approach is detailed in Chapter 4.

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20   This was funded under the Mediterranean Sustainable Reintegration (MEASURE) project, by the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

21   Samuel Hall (2017a; 2017b).

22   According to Samuel Hall (2017b), the selection of RSI indicators and their associated weights, was determined through a combination of principal components analysis (PCA) and expert appraisal, with adjustments made based on the incorporation of qualitative data. This analysis was conducted using data from a sample of 290 returnees interviewed across Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Senegal and Somalia.

23   Samuel Hall, University of Sussex (2020).

24   The Returnee Longitudinal Survey was developed under IOM's project "Displacement Tracking Matrix Regional Evidence for Migration Analysis and Policy (DTM REMAP)" (funded by the European Union).

3. MIGRATION AND THE JI-HOA

This chapter provides an overview of the migratory routes taken by beneficiaries of the JI-HoA programme. It also describes how the JI-HoA was implemented and summarizes the key programme data.

3.1 MIGRATION ROUTES

The key migration routes taken by migrants assisted by the JI-HoA are grouped into four categories: Northern (European), Northern (African), Eastern, and Southern. The Northern (European) category includes returnees who reached Europe. Returnees on the Northern (African) route were often attempting to make the migration to Europe, but only reached parts of Northern Africa. On the Eastern route, returnees were typically trying to reach the Middle East, through Somalia and Djibouti. Finally, migrants on the Southern route were typically directed to South Africa (Figure 1).

The JI-HoA was targeted at migrants stranded within Africa. Only a small number of beneficiaries had returned from Europe (this caseload was assisted on an exceptional basis).

In both Somalia and Sudan, the vast majority of returnees assisted under the JI-HoA (73.4% and 99.7% respectively) had attempted to migrate via the Northern Africa route, whereas in Ethiopia the most common were the Eastern (58.0%) and the Southern (31.7%) routes (Figure 2). It is a well-documented fact that migrants experience abuses, violence and distressing experiences (including detention) along all three routes.[25]

Across all countries and routes, most returnees were male, with Somalia having the highest proportion of male returnees (Figure 3). As expected, most returnees are adults (18 years or older); with mean ages of 21.1 years in Ethiopia, 22.6 in Somalia and 29.2 in the Sudan.

Figure 1. Routes taken by JI-HoA returnees

Eastern Route
Djibouti   Yemen
Iraq
Somalia

Northern (Africa) Route
Algeria   Libya   South Sudan
Chad   Morocco   Sudan (the)
Egypt   Niger (the)   Tunisia

Northern (Europe) Route
Austria   Finland   Norway
Belgium   Germany   Sweden
Denmark   Netherlands (Kingdom of the)   Switzerland
                                            United Kingdom

Southern Route
Kenya   South Africa   Zimbabwe
Malawi   United Republic of Tanzania
Mozambique   Zambia

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25   See https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/route-based-research.

Figure 2. Migrant countries and routes
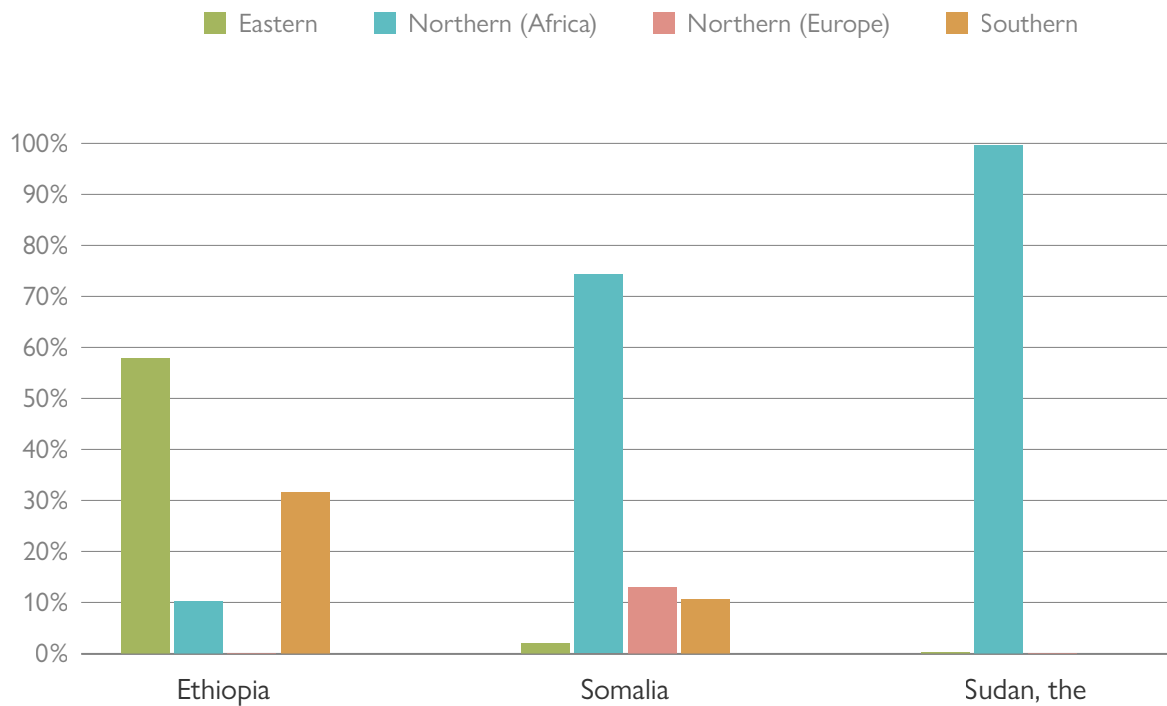
Figure 3. Returnee demographics
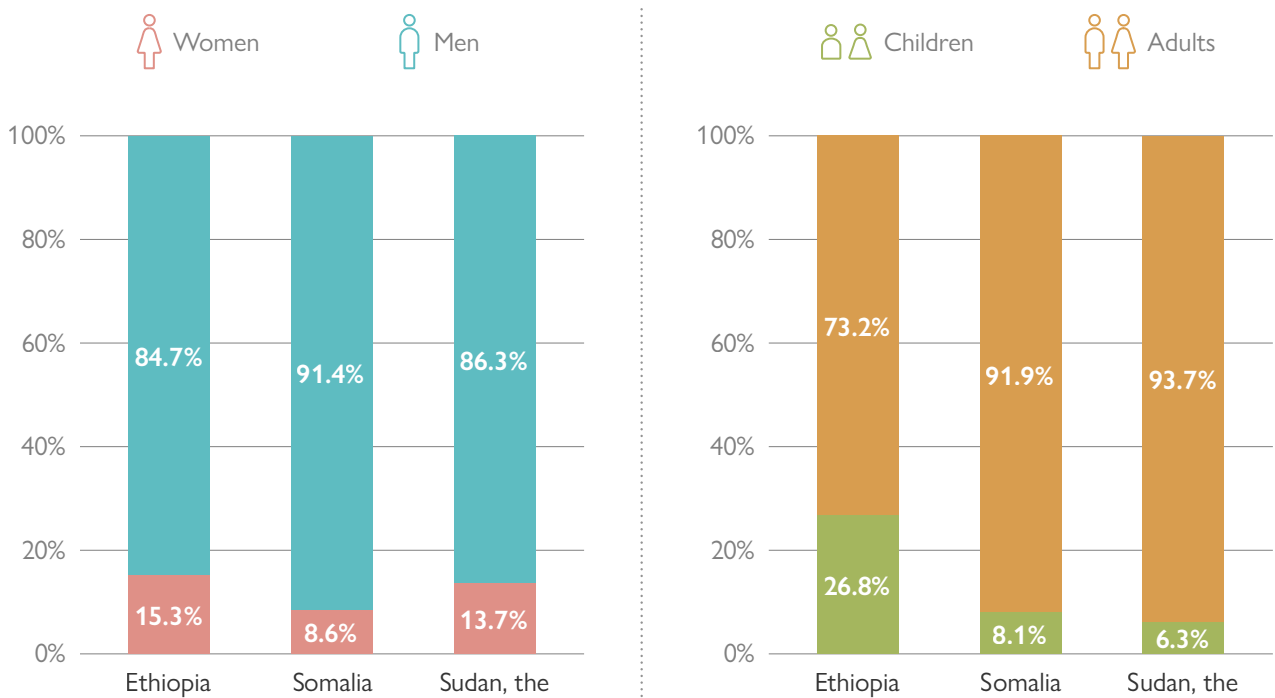
3.2 APPROACH OF THE JI-HOA TO RETURN AND REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE

IOM's AVRR programmes provide assistance to migrants whose journeys and life circumstances have taken a different direction from what they expected – and who want or need to return to their country of origin but are unable to do so independently. Funded under the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, the JI-HoA is a flagship programme for IOM. Returnees can face many challenges when returning to their countries of origin. They may also be affected by the migration experience, which can include torture, violence, time spent in detention centres, gender-based violence and trafficking.[26] Those returning to their families may face discrimination and feelings of shame at having returned "empty-handed," while others may feel accepted and supported by family members. The integrated approach of the JI-HoA facilitates the voluntary return of vulnerable migrants (in respect of international human rights standards and in particular the principle of non-refoulement) and provides them with a range of services covering the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration. Importantly, these services are provided over a longer period and aim at supporting the returnee during the non-linear process of reintegration.

To assist migrants in their reintegration, JI-HoA beneficiaries receive General Reintegration Assistance (GRA) services such as reception assistance upon arrival, temporary accommodation, onward transportation to reach the final destination within the country of origin, pocket money, immediate medical and psychosocial assistance, and trainings or group sessions to prepare for reintegrating in the country and community of return, such as the "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)" training and the *Kaizen* training.[27] As a result of the vulnerability screenings, General Reintegration Assistance services are then supplemented by Complementary Reintegration Assistance (CRA): 63.9 per cent of all returnees in Ethiopia were eligible for some form of CRA (though by the fourth year, a new programme policy established that all returnees in Ethiopia were eligible to CRA); in Somalia, 79.7 per cent

were; while in the Sudan all returnees were deemed eligible to CRA by policy.

CRA can include the following services: microbusiness; medical referrals; educational assistance for the returnee and/or their children; housing; technical and vocational education training (TVET). CRA is tailored to the needs of the returnee and constitutes the main form of assistance provided by the programme to individual beneficiaries. The tailoring is achieved through a process called Reintegration Counselling, during which a case worker from IOM or from one of its implementing partners and the returnee define a reintegration plan. Reflecting the predominantly economic nature of migration from the East and Horn of Africa region, the majority of reintegration plans focus on the establishment of a microbusiness chosen by the returnee (henceforth "microbusiness assistance") for which IOM provides materials (in kind) or cash to acquire them.

There have been adaptations to the original JI-HoA approach. In Ethiopia for example, the Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) initiative was introduced to help returnees cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. An amount was to be deducted from the microbusiness assistance, which meant that it was not available to returnees who had already received it, regardless of their need. In the Sudan, in-kind assistance, under which IOM procures the materials and supplies them to returnees, was proving increasingly difficult to implement in the country's unstable macroeconomic situation, as well as because of the logistical challenges it created. "MoMo in kind" was introduced in September 2019 to reduce waiting times for microbusiness assistance. In this approach, returnees obtain quotes for material from merchants who, in turn, receive payment via mobile money. "MoMo cash" (returnees receive microbusiness assistance in the form of a cash amount transferred directly to them via mobile money) was introduced in March 2020. This modality initially only targeted very vulnerable returnees who may not have been able to manage a microbusiness, but the measure was later expanded to replace both "Regular in kind" and

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26 Evidence documented by IOM suggests that returnees in the HoA region may indeed suffer from having gone through very challenging experiences. Recent research conducted among beneficiaries of the JI-HoA highlights this in detail (IOM, 2023e).

27 Similar to the SYIB training but with additional psychosocial content.

"MoMo in kind" given the challenging socioeconomic conditions, which were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. A fully cash-based modality for the delivery of microbusiness assistance was introduced in Somalia in September 2020.

3.3 DELIVERY OF JI-HOA ASSISTANCE

The most common type of CRA across all three countries was the assistance to establish a microbusinesses, received by 76.9 per cent of adult principal applicant returnees in Ethiopia, 81.6 per cent in Somalia, and 95.4 per cent in the Sudan (Figure 4).

In addition to the microbusiness assistance, a significant proportion of returnees received trainings related to it. In Ethiopia, *Kaizen* was the most commonly received form of assistance after microbusiness assistance, with just under 40 per cent of Ethiopian adult beneficiaries taking part in this training. In Somalia and the Sudan,

the equivalent training was SIYB: 39.1 per cent of adult returnees received this additional training in Somalia and 21.4 per cent in the Sudan.

In the Sudan, all microbusiness assistance was provided directly to individuals. However, in Ethiopia and Somalia, microbusiness assistance was provided both to individuals and to groups of returnees. In both countries, individual assistance was the preferred option, chosen by 79.2 per cent of microbusiness assistance recipients in Ethiopia and 86.3 per cent in Somalia.

Microbusiness assistance was also delivered to returnees by different means. All returnees in Ethiopia who received microbusiness assistance received it in kind. In Somalia, 70.7 per cent of returnees received assistance in kind, with the remainder receiving a cash transfer instead of materials. In the Sudan, three options were used: "MoMo cash" (73.1%), "Regular in kind" (11.6%) and "MoMo in kind" (15.3%).

Figure 4. Percentage of adult principal applicant returnees who received key types of assistance
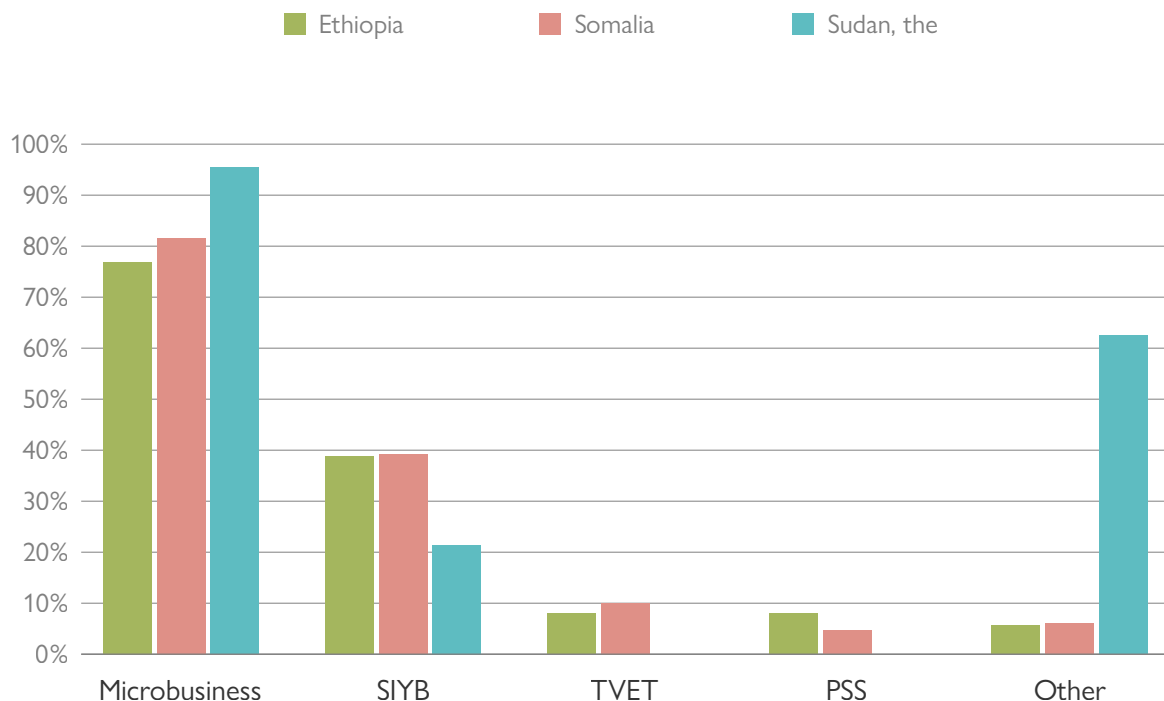
Note: "Other" includes medical, health insurance, education and housing assistance. The spike in the Sudan is due to the JI-HoA programme providing a one-year subscription to the national health insurance scheme to all returnees requesting it.

4. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

This chapter provides an overview of the design and methods used to conduct the evaluation. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, to underscore the robustness and limitations of the approach before presenting the findings. Second, to present some of the key methodological innovations and challenges around measuring sustainable reintegration, which are further developed as lessons for future evaluative studies in chapter 6 and chapter 7.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, it sets out the study objectives and evaluation questions, followed by the details of the three components of the evaluation design. Study objectives and questions

The three objectives of the study are:[28]

1. To **evaluate the impact of reintegration assistance** provided by the JI-HoA to inform programming with a rich base of evidence;

2. To **improve IOM's understanding of Sustainable Reintegration metrics;**

3. To design a robust impact evaluation methodology that considers the specificities of the programme being evaluated, while also **informing the definition of a standard for future impact evaluations of reintegration-focused programmes/projects.**

During the design period, these objectives were translated into evaluation questions, with more detailed subquestions (Table 2).

Table 2. Reported impacts of the CLS among returnees by area

Q1: What is the impact of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative (HoA) on the sustainable reintegration of the assisted migrant returnees? (Objective 1)	Q2: How can sustainable reintegration metrics be improved? (Objective 2)	Q3: How can we effectively evaluate the impact of reintegration programmes in the future and what are the methodological requirements to do so? (Objective 3)
1a. Have changes in programme implementation, such as the transition to mobile money, affected outcomes of reintegration assistance and, if so, how?	2a. Does the current AVRR data chain collect sufficient information to assess "sustainable reintegration"?	3a. As definitions of reintegration often reference the non-migrant residents as a comparison, how can this cohort be meaningfully included in the data chain and contribute to an understanding of sustainable reintegration?
1b. How has delay in providing assistance to returnees affected/impacted on their reintegration?	2b. Does the RSI appropriately capture local context, and provide the empirical basis for appropriate programme intervention decisions, including opportunities for analysis of drivers of reintegration and drivers of remigration, and determine which of those can be affected by AVRR programme implementation?	3b. Is there evidence to support the W model theory,[29] and what are the implications for evaluative methodologies assessing the effects of reintegration assistance?
1c. How has the EU-IOM Joint Initiative (HoA) adapted the assistance provided to meet changes in context and what has the impact of these changes been on the reintegration of returnees?		

Source: IOM (2020a: 26).

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28   The three objectives of the IMPACT Study were defined in its Terms of Reference: p. 29–30 of the IOM Request for Proposals for Services for Conduction of a Study to Evaluate the Impact of the Reintegration Assistance Provided under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative in the HoA Region.

29   The W-model hypothesizes that returnees experience shocks at different levels and at different steps of the process that impede that capacity to cope with return and reintegration – and that the model can be used to identify key moments that shape returnees' experiences of reintegration. See Section 7.3.

The evaluation has had to adapt the design many times during implementation, for practical and methodological reasons. First, no precedent exists for conducting impact evaluations of a reintegration programme of the size and complexity of the JI-HoA – so there were few examples on the best way to assess the multidimensional aspects of reintegration, as well as on how to create a counterfactual (Box 1). Second, the COVID-19 pandemic and co-occurring shocks such as conflict and flooding exacerbated the existing logistical and access challenges to reaching returnees. Sampling was a particular challenge as programme beneficiaries (returnees) were entering the programme continuously – with the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupting the regularity of returnee flows. The combination of a continual (unknown) flow of returnees and the disruption of the pandemic severely limited the ability to provide precise sample size estimates.

To meet the purpose and objectives of IMPACT, a hybrid, quasi-experimental evaluation design was developed to take advantage of the strengths of different methodological options while addressing their weaknesses. This design has three interrelated **components:**

1. A **main impact evaluation** component where statistical modelling of impact of the JI-HoA uses primary survey and programme data;

2. A **natural experiment** component making use of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to "test" the resilience of returnees;

3. A **qualitative research** component that complemented the above by providing insights around specific areas of enquiry.

The remainder of this chapter summarizes each of these components.

4.1 MAIN IMPACT EVALUATION (COMPONENT 1)

The main impact evaluation (component 1) focuses on testing the validity of different ways of measuring reintegration, to consider "before and after" changes, and to compare with a group of non-migrant residents (a type of "with-and-without" comparison). This provides a way to understand the impacts on returnees that can be reasonably attributed to the programme. IMPACT uses the same RSI calculation as the institutional RSI, as well as the same approach for the separate economic, psychosocial and social RSI scores. IMPACT however uses an enhanced survey instrument (the RSS+), which has additional questions to give additional data, but this does not alter the RSI computation methodology. Both contemporary endline and a recall (retrospective) baseline are enumerated at the same time. This single data collection event is referred to as the endline/retro-baseline (see section 7.1 for a discussion on the reliability of retrospective data collection).

Prior to the baseline, returnees are already different from their non-migrant counterparts as a result of their migration-return experience. Hence, constructing a standard counterfactual or comparison group is not possible. Instead, the study uses a comparison *within communities;* that is, non-migrant residents; referred to as a calibration group (Box 1), a group of non-migrant residents comprised of demographically similar respondents residing in the same community as the returnees. The calibration group offers a standard against which the evaluation can assess (or calibrate) the progress of migrant returnees towards reintegration. This is based on the assumption that a key aspect of sustainable reintegration is for returnees to become similar in their rights and access to services, and in their economic situation/access to livelihoods as the local community.[30] Where possible, intra-returnee calibration cohorts are used by identifying different groupings of returnees (also assisted under JI-HoA) and characterizing their differing experiences of

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30   There are limitations to this approach: "The assumptions underpinning this are that returnees are not comparable to their host community but the host community does provide an example of integrated residents. The threshold is placed at the community level instead of the individual level, making it more objective. In concrete terms, as the differences between the community members and the returnee disappear (equal access to services, productive assets, and opportunities), the closer the returnee is moving towards sustainable reintegration. This does not mean that the calibration group allows us to determine whether reintegration has been successful. Still, it does provide an example of what some of the more intangible aspects of integration look like." (Malakooti and Zwick, 2022: 21).

reintegration (for example the timing of return, and the timing and method of assistance provided). This allows IMPACT to better understand outcome-level changes, such as what aspects of the intervention is working and for whom.

BOX 1. COUNTERFACTUALS, COMPARISONS AND CALIBRATIONS

One of the key features of a standard quasi-experimental evaluation is the use of a counterfactual.[a] In such designs, there is a treatment exposed group and a non-treatment (or control) group that is drawn from a population deemed to be similar to the treatment group. In controlled situations, or where there are few external factors that can influence the control group, one can assume that the only difference between the treatment and non-treatment groups is participation in the intervention. Control groups therefore serve as a comparison against which to benchmark the effects experienced by the treatment group.

In this case, the returnees who received assistance are the treatment group, and a comparison (not a strict control) is made against matched non-migrants. Constructing a valid comparison group in this case was challenging as the migration experience changes people, and returnees, by definition, will no longer be comparable to their home community. Even within the population of returnees, a valid comparison would mean that assisted returnees and non-assisted returnees need to have the same profile, return at approximately the same time, and return to a similar location.

To model JI-HoA impact, IMPACT uses a calibration group of non-migrant resident respondents. The term calibration group is used here when referring to the non-migrant respondents because they are not considered a standard comparison group (in the sense that they cannot be considered equal in all aspects except for treatment exposure). In line with this definition, IMPACT's design measures the success of reintegration of returnees by calibrating (comparing) their characteristics against relevant non-migrant residents. The non-migrant group offers a standard against which the progress of migrant returnees towards reintegration can be assessed.

A number of other approaches to constructing this non-migrant resident calibration cohort were considered during the inception period.[b] The non-migrant resident matching approach was agreed to be the only viable methodology in this context.

The Natural Experiment component of the IMPACT study (discussed in section 4.2) employed an internal comparison to test the added value of the JI-HoA assistance to returnees confronting the COVID-linked shock (CLS). The waiting time to receive microbusiness assistance varied considerably: some received it only a few months after returning; others waited for a year, and in some cases several years to receive it. Some returnees had yet to receive the assistance when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out and the first control measures were imposed around the beginning of April 2020. This variation meant that returnees had a longer or shorter time to put the JI-HoA economic reintegration assistance to use – mainly in establishing a viable microbusiness that might offer some protection during the CLS while others would have faced the shocks without that support. The natural experiment's models tested whether the length of time a returnee had use of microbusiness assistance contributed to their resilience to the CLS: mitigating the decline in well-being at *the worst point* or increasing recovery in well-being to the time of interview.

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a   Randomized control trials randomly assign the treatment (or intervention) to the two groups, thereby avoiding potential selection bias. Quasi-experimental designs do not randomly assign but use techniques to mimic a statistically valid comparison group.

b   Details of which can be found in the IMPACT Study Methodological Report (IOM, 2020a).

4.1.1 IOM's returnee monitoring data[31]

The EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub developed an institutional Monitoring and Evaluation package[32] for return and reintegration programmes, aiming at harmonizing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities across these programmes globally. As part of this package, a set of M&E surveys were designed to assess the performance of (and returnees' satisfaction with) AVRR, reintegration assistance and community-based reintegration projects (CBRPs) as well as capacity-building interventions. The key survey instruments were:

1. AVR programme monitoring survey
2. AVR programme satisfaction survey
3. Reintegration Assistance programme monitoring survey
4. Reintegration Assistance programme satisfaction survey
5. Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS)
6. Community-based Reintegration programme monitoring surveys.[33]

As globally standardized M&E instruments, country missions could mainly add questions to capture specific issues of interest but cannot change or remove the questions in the original questionnaires that feed directly into programme-specific reporting indicators or global reporting indicators. Survey data were used for programme reporting and accountability, providing a means of verification at both outcome and output level results in the JI-HoA logframe. Data were also analysed at a country level to identify issues and inform programme decision-making.

Alongside the survey instruments, the JI-HoA programme also made use of vulnerability screening tools to identify migrant returnees' immediate needs, for example medical or psychosocial care or potential protection issues. This information was not part of the formal M&E architecture and was used both to assess immediate needs and in some cases to assess the eligibility for CRA.[34] In addition, other non-survey based programme monitoring data were collected and maintained by the JI-HoA throughout the time a returnee was part of the programme. This included demographic and personal information about the nature of return, as well data about their stage in the reintegration process and the types of reintegration they have received and when.

BOX 2. DATA STORAGE AND MANAGEMENT

Returnees are registered in IOM's case management system, the Migrant Management Operational System Application (MiMOSA), by the offices in host countries. This generates a case number that identifies all individuals in a family and a unique identifier number for each individual returnee. Case and individual numbers are used in all subsequent data collection.

A number of different platforms are used for data storage and management. The MiMOSA application provides a tool for tracking cases and has additional functionality such as calculation of reintegration scores. However, organizational reporting through this platform is complicated and hence, country offices manage offline excel databases for M&E purposes. Significant efforts have been made at country and regional level to clean and validate data on MiMOSA and in a central data warehouse.

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31 This section refers to the use of programme data by Component 1. Section 4.2.1 discusses the use of IOM's data by Component 2.

32 See https://returnandreintegration.iom.int/en/resources/guideline/monitoring-and-evaluation-tools-return-and-reintegration-programmes.

33 As globally standardized M&E instruments, country missions can add questions to capture specific issues of interest but cannot change or remove the questions in the original questionnaires that feed directly into programme-specific reporting indicators or global reporting indicators. These adjustments include: (1) Combining the separate components on monitoring and satisfaction of the AVRR programming, reducing the duplication of metadata collection; and (2) adaptations of the questionnaires following consultations, although this is limited for the RSS given the need to compute the RSI score.

34 However, this study found that the vulnerability assessment did not affect the likelihood (or otherwise) of receiving CRA (in particular, microbusiness assistance).

During the inception phase, IMPACT reviewed relevant alternative frameworks, approaches and indicators and identified several differences from the IOM RSI framework.[35] Based on the literature review and the systematic review of frameworks, IMPACT identified a series of questions that capture important elements of the reintegration process that, if added to the pre-existing framework, would strengthen IOM's measurement of reintegration, as well as meeting the purposes of the evaluation. This resulted in the formation of the RSS+. Many of the questions added to the RSS+ were taken from the existing AVRR and reintegration assistance surveys, which provides the added benefit of bypassing data chain issues. Non-survey, programme monitoring data was also used by IMPACT for disaggregating the analysis, with further details provided in the individual country reports.

4.1.2 Target population and sampling strategy

The sampling strategy for this component was driven by the identified returnee cohorts of interest within the returnee population (as per the inclusion criteria) and the flux of assisted returnees during the IMPACT period. The sample includes cohorts of interest that emerged during the IMPACT period and were not anticipated at the outset. The sampling design had to be flexible throughout the evaluation period and respond to the changes and challenges encountered. Table 2 presents the number of returnees included in the programme data for each of the three JI-HoA countries, as well as the numbers of those who were included in the RSS sampling frame and who completed an RSS survey.

The criteria for inclusion in the RSS sample frame were:

* The returnee has a valid individual MiMOSA number;[36]
* The returnee is an adult (aged 18 years or older);
* The returnee is the principal applicant;
* The returnee arrived between 1 July 2018 and 1 July 2021;
* The returnee is in receipt of microbusiness assistance.

Table 3 summarizes the numbers of returnees in each country, the completion of returnee RSS interviews, and the number of matched non-migrants. The table shows that Ethiopia had by far the largest number of returnees, but that returnees in Somalia and the Sudan were more likely to be included in the sample frame after screening, using the inclusion criteria below and complete an RSS interview.

Table 3. Returnee numbers, as of September 2022

	ETHIOPIA	SOMALIA	SUDAN (THE)
Total number of returnees (Universe)	9 945	1 025	5 871
Returnees meeting inclusion criteria in the RSS Sample Frame (see above)	3 078	840	1 938
Returnees who have completed any RSS[37]	1 008	225	685
Returnees who have completed the RSS+ retro endline	778	173	617
Matched non-migrants who have completed the RSS+ retro endline	280	89	373
Minimum sample size required	414	409	391

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35   IOM (2020a) sets out the design and methodology work undertaken during the inception phase of the IMPACT Study and includes a detailed account of the review of the RSS done at that stage.

36   This is the unique identifier used by IOM to track returnees and the services they receive in the institutional case management system (MiMOSA: Migrant Management Operational System Application).

37   Including baseline only, endline only, and endline/retro-baseline. Returnees who completed more than one of these surveys are counted only once here.

In Ethiopia, the total of 778 returnee RSS+ retro-endline enumerations surpasses the minimum sample size of 414.[38] However, the non-migrant enumerations fell short with 280 completed retro endline matched RSS+ enumerations. Overall, and since some strata were oversampled, there is a shortfall of 142 endline/retro-baseline non-migrant enumerations matched to treated returnees.

In Somalia, the total of 173 returnee RSS+ retro endline enumerations did not meet the minimum sample size of 409. The non-migrant enumerations also fell short of the minimum sample with 89 completed retro-baseline-endline RSS+ enumerations. Overall, there is a shortfall of 320 endline/retro-baseline non-migrant enumerations matched to treated returnees.

In the Sudan, the total of 617 returnee RSS+ retro endline enumerations surpasses the minimum sample size of 391. However, the non-migrant enumerations fell just short of the minimum sample size with 371 completed retro-baseline-endline RSS+ enumerations. Overall, there is a shortfall of 64 endline/retro-baseline non-migrant enumerations matched to treated returnees as some strata were oversampled.

Full details of the sampling process, results and implications are provided in the individual country reports.[39] Although all three countries ultimately fell short of the required sample size, the Sudan and Ethiopia are considered to be robust for the purpose of assessing the impacts on returnees, but the findings for Somalia need to be caveated. Additionally, the calibration assessments using non-migrant enumeration provide an estimation that is useful for comparison purposes but do still fall short of expected statistical standards, and so should be interpreted with care.

4.1.3 Methods of analysis

Recognizing the inherent difficulties in the measurement of complex concepts such as reintegration, where no single measure is widely accepted, multiple analytical frameworks for measuring reintegration are used.

This approach has enabled comparing and contrasting findings, build on the strengths and mitigate for weaknesses of the different approaches. The following frameworks are used:

1. **The standard IOM Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI).** The RSI is reliably calculated for returnees but was not designed for use with non-migrants. Some questions may not have been entirely relevant for non-migrant residents or could result in answers not qualitatively comparable with that of the returnees. See Section 2.2 and Chapter 6 for details.

2. **Predicting the degree of similarity to non-migrant residents.** This analysis determines the level of similarity between returnee and non-migrant resident populations using the RSI indicators as an indicator of the degree the returnees' profile has become more similar to that of the non-migrants between retro-baseline and endline.

3. **Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause (MIMIC) modelling.** This is a statistical modelling approach in which multiple proxy variables representing multiple related yet different proxies or dimensions of reintegration (multiple indicators) are optimized in relation to a set of reintegration drivers (multiple causes). The multiple indicators used in this report are perception of reintegration, feeling able to stay and feeling part of the community. The multiple cause indicators used in this modelling are the RSI indicators.

4. **Drivers of respondents' perceptions of good levels of reintegration.** Returnees' and non-migrants' self-perceptions of degree of reintegration are the single outcome variable for which the modelling tests which and to what degree the RSI indicators are determinants of self-perception of high levels of integration.

The last three methods of analysis (2–4) were developed by IMPACT and are not viewed as alternative approaches to measuring reintegration to IOM's institutional RSI,

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38   The minimum sample size calculated for returnees and non-migrants alike was 473 per analytical domain. This calculation is based on the minimum sample size needed to detect a binary distribution with a minimum observable treatment effect of 7 per cent centred around a 0.5 binary frequency. A finite population factor derived from the total number of eligible returnees recorded in the Ethiopia monitoring data (N=3,078) was used to modify this minimum sample size downwards to 414.

39   The IMPACT Study Country reports for Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan are available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/impact-study.

but rather as three ways to validate the RSI. This is presented in detail in the three country reports.

4.2 NATURAL EXPERIMENT (COMPONENT 2)[40]

Natural experiments use unplanned changes, either internal to the programme or external, such as extreme events, to test important hypotheses. These changes can be exploited as fortuitous interventions that could not be implemented deliberately for ethical or practical reasons. IMPACT's design incorporates a natural experiment using the COVID-19 pandemic with analysis of internal programme changes. This includes exploiting delays in receiving assistance and changes in assistance delivery modalities (for example, from in-kind provisions towards cash-based options), to better understand the impact of IOM's assistance on returnees' well-being.

The natural experiment component of IMPACT focuses on:

1. The effects of the COVID-linked shock (CLS) on returnees;

2. Returnee resilience, specifically how their characteristics and actions contributed to:

   a. Mitigating the CLS' impact on their well-being;

   b. Increasing their recovery from those impacts.

3. The extent to which the JI-HoA assistance influenced these two aspects of returnee resilience. Based on these, additional subquestions were also agreed in collaboration with IOM's regional and country offices.

This component is innovative in two respects: first, it employs a natural experiment in a programme evaluation – a seldom used approach – and second, it frames an extreme event as the uncontrolled intervention.[41] The pandemic and the mitigation measures that the

governments imposed, demarcate "before" and "after" periods and represent a point in time that people who endured them should find easy to recall. This event allows returnees to recall aspects of their well-being more accurately at that time and compare them to their current situation. The effects of the pandemic also varied in intensity across the three countries due to differences in the spread of the COVID-19 infection, co-occurring extreme events (Box 3), and the strictness with which governments responded.

By understanding how recipients of JI-HoA assistance were affected by the CLS, how they responded, and how they were constrained in their actions, it is possible to assess the importance of the programme's assistance – including the conditions and characteristics that influence its effectiveness. Furthermore, by incorporating two internal natural experiments (timing of assistance and modality of assistance) the study draws important lessons that can inform adaptations to the JI-HoA programme design and gain further insights into how important that support has been. For example, using variations in the waiting time to receive assistance means IMPACT makes comparisons between people who had received the assistance a long time ago, recently, and not at all, allowing responses to be compared to the CLS and linked to the importance of the programme's assistance. In doing so, valuable insights are gained about what kind of assistance and delivery timing can be most effective at increasing the resilience of vulnerable returnees.

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40 IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f) contains a full elaboration of the analysis and conclusions of component 2.

41 Epidemiology is one discipline that has a history of treating extreme events as the intervention in natural experiments. A well-known example is a series of studies that assessed the consequences of the Dutch Hunger Winter (1944–1945), when food supplies were cut off to western Holland, on the subsequent development of people who were in gestation at the time. Comparisons with people in other areas or with siblings born before or after the Hunger Winter have shown impacts on child and adult health, including obesity and type-2 diabetes (Lumey, et al., 2011). Other natural experiments have examined the impact of famine on HIV dynamics in Malawi, in part due to distress-provoked migration (Loevinsohn, 2015) and climatic warming, accelerated by an El Niño event, on malaria incidence in Rwanda (Loevinsohn, 1994). For more general elaborations on the role of natural experiments in evaluation, see Loevinsohn (2013) and IMPACT Study Report #5 (IOM, 2023i).

BOX 3. THE COVID-LINKED SHOCKS

The main event informing the natural experiment was the COVID-19 pandemic and associated government restrictions. However, there were important co-occurring shocks, including conflict, floods and locust invasions that were difficult to separate from the effects of the pandemic. These shocks, together with the control measures, are collectively referred to as the COVID-linked shock (CLS).

Time periods: Returnees were asked to describe their well-being at three points in time: (a) *Just before COVID-19:* The month prior to control measures being imposed (around the beginning of April, 2020); (b) *Now:* The month prior to the interview in late 2021; (c) *Worst point:* A time when conditions were worse than now, focused on the condition at that point, but not its date.

4.2.1 Target population and sampling strategy

The target population of the natural experiment comprised returnees assisted under the JI-HoA in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan, who were at least 18 years of age on arrival and who arrived at least four months before the first COVID-19 control measures were imposed in April 2020.[42] JI-HoA programme data from each country were used to identify and locate these returnees.

Within Ethiopia and the Sudan, we selected first-administrative-level areas (Ethiopia: regions; the Sudan: states) that together contained more than 85 per cent of the eligible returnee population. In Somalia, due to the relatively smaller caseload, a similar result was achieved by drawing two distinct research areas (A and B) with no correspondence with existing administrative-level areas. These are listed in Table 4. Areas that were inaccessible were excluded: Tigray, in Ethiopia, due to the ongoing conflict; and Al Jazirah, in the Sudan, due to flooding in June 2021.

Table 4. Survey sample and completion rate

		TARGET SAMPLE POPULATION	COMPLETED SURVEYS	PERCENTAGE ACHIEVED
Ethiopia	Amhara	213	127	59.6%
	Oromia	501	548	109.4%[43]
	SNNPR	327	360	110.1%[25]
	Total	1 041	1 035	99.4%
Somalia	Research area A	233	109	46.8%
	Research area B	182	120	65.9%
	Total	415	229	55.2%
Sudan, the	Darfur (Central, North, South, and West Darfur states)	412	278	67.5%
	Khartoum	382	301	78.8%
	Total	794	579	72.9%
Grand Total		2 250	1 843	81.9%

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42 That is, returnees who arrived between 2017 (when the JI-HoA programme began) and end of 2019 (four months before COVID-19).

43 SNNPR and Oromia were over-sampled to compensate for under-sampling in Amhara due to Tigray conflict spillover.

4.2.2   Methods of analysis

The JI-HoA programme data were analysed using:

1. **Survival analysis** to assess the time from a returnee's arrival until they received JI-HoA assistance, which was viewed as a critical part of assessing the programme's contribution to resilience. Using survival analysis, a branch of statistics for analysing the time to an event, assessing how long it took for JI-HoA to deliver the microbusiness assistance is possible.[44] Survival analysis was also used to compare delivery times with the returnee population that it was not possible to survey.

2. **Cox proportional hazards regression** allowed for factors influencing delivery to vary over time. The time elapsed between a returnee's arrival and their receipt of microbusiness assistance was analysed, using the Cox proportional hazards regression as a more flexible approach (piece-wise exponential models). Doing so allowed to analyse the factors associated with delivery times (country, area and personal characteristics).

Survey responses were analysed using:

1. **Fixed effect (country and region) multivariate regression models**[45] to assess the determinants of change in well-being from *just before COVID-19* until *the worst point*, and from *just before COVID-19* until *now*. Country-specific fixed effect (region) multivariate models were used to assess the impact of factors that affected only one of the countries.

2. **Fixed effect regression** was also used to analyse how physical and mental disability contributed to self-assessed ability to endure and respond to the CLS.

3. **Qualitative findings** from a subset of surveyed returnees allowed to deepen the understanding of the quantitative results.

The fixed effect (country and region) multivariate regressions were used to understand what use the returnees were able to make of the programme's assistance once it was received, and how the returnees' own actions and other factors contributed. This was conducted across four sets of models:[46]

- Determinants of actions taken by the returnees in well-being domains.

- Determinants of the level of well-being domains *just before COVID-19.*

- Determinants of change in well-being domains from *just before COVID-19* to *the worst point.*

- Determinants of change in well-being domains from *just before COVID-19* to *now.*

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH (COMPONENT 3)

The qualitative research is both supportive and complementary to the modelling under component 1 and 2. The qualitative approach has been designed to first, meet the needs of each country case in order to contextualize and understand the quantitative findings in each country. Second, the qualitative research aims to reflect on the "W" model (see section 7.3) of returnee reintegration and to provide further contextualization of the reintegration experience in each country context.

4.3.1 Qualitative methods to support component 1 (Modelling RSI impact)

In Ethiopia, the findings from component 1 show that the programme has performed well and the focus of the qualitative data was to understand the differences among returnees that have contributed to their performance.[47] The qualitative research includes key informant interviews (KIIs) with those who had received microbusiness assistance from the JI-HoA (treated) and those who had not (untreated) at the time of the

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44 This analysis did not assess all forms of CRA, only the microbusiness assistance component.

45 Fixed effect multivariate regression models are used to identify and measure the relationship between two or more variables. A fixed effect model specifically looks at how individuals differ from each other and how those difference affect the outcome being studied, especially where it is important to control for specific attributes that do not vary across time.

46 See IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f) for more details.

47 Matched non-migrants were not included in Ethiopia, given that the quantitative analysis had demonstrated that the intervention (and non-migrant comparison) worked in the way that was expected.

interview. Among the respondents who had received assistance, both returnees who have converged with the non-migrant cohort and those who have not are included. Further group discussions were conducted to consider community and family/household dynamics. Table 5 displays the types and numbers of qualitative respondents in Ethiopia.

Table 5. Sample of qualitative respondents in Ethiopia

Locations	Returnees – treated KII	Returnees – untreated KII	Returnees converged KII	Returnees not converged KII	Community FGD	Family/household group interview	TOTALS
SNNPR (Hadiya)	–	–	8	8	2	2	20
Oromia (Jimma)	8	8	–	–	2	2	20
TOTALS	8	8	8	8	4	4	40

The focus of the original research design in Somalia was to compare returnees who received additional assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)[48] with those who did not. This was effectively represented by a Libya/non-Libya distinction as only returnees from Libya (recognized prima facie as refugees) were eligible for additional UNHCR assistance. Due to challenges in tracking returnees who had not returned from Libya, this comparison was ultimately not possible. However, highlighting returnees' experiences and making comparisons between returnees and their matched non-migrants was still possible. Given the small numbers of returnees and matched non-migrants in the sample their geographical distribution, the focus of data collection was in Hargeisa – which is more accessible and where there is a concentration of returnees (Table 6).

Table 6. Sample of qualitative respondents in Hargeisa

Returnees	Matched non-migrant to returnee KII	Non-migrant	Community focus group discussion	Family/household group interview	TOTAL
11	5	5	3	3	27

The findings from component 1 in the Sudan were very different from those in Ethiopia and Somalia, and it is unclear in the statistical analysis why returnees in the Sudan performed better at baseline and endline than the matched non-migrants.

As such, the qualitative research in the Sudan focused primarily on better understanding this issue, with three aims: (1) to understand the differences between returnees and non-migrants in order to improve interpretation of the quantitative results produced under component 1; (2) to compare between returnees in Khartoum and outside of Khartoum; and (3) to compare between returnees receiving assistance in kind with those receiving it in cash.[49] There is no focus on convergence/non-convergence due to low numbers of the non-converged and possibility that the non-converged returnees were in highly vulnerable situations.

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48   Returnees coming back from Libya were provided with additional assistance from UNHCR, amounting to 200 USD in cash per month for six months starting from the first month of return.

49   The sampling for returnees receiving non-cash assistance included those receiving it through "Regular in kind" and "MoMo in kind", so as to represent both modalities.

Table 7. Sample of qualitative respondents in the Sudan

Locations	Matched Returnee KII	Matched non-migrant KII	TOTAL
Khartoum	8	8	16
Darfur	8	8	16

Two field sites were selected for the qualitative research based on areas with high numbers of returnees included in component 1 analysis, in Khartoum and South Darfur. In each location, eight interviews were conducted with returnees and eight with their matched non-migrant pairs, totalling 32 respondents. Most respondents returned from Libya and a small number from Algeria. Two focus group discussions were also held with some of the returnees and matched non-migrants to understand perspectives on community well-being in Darfur, and six with family members of returnees to understand their experience of the reintegration process.

4.3.2 Qualitative methods as part of component 2 (Natural experiment)

The qualitative research was integrated with the quantitative data collection of component 2, and the findings were analysed together. A total of 40 focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with survey respondents (15 in Ethiopia, 15 in the Sudan and 10 in Somalia). The 40 FGDs were divided in two groups, which took up specific themes: Group 1 covered CLS and its impact, adaptation and innovation of IOM assistance; Group 2 covered community-based reintegration projects, IOM assistance and timing of receiving it.

Additionally, eight KIIs were held with survey respondents in each country. These candidates were identified from their answers to open-ended questions in the survey as having something interesting to say on one of the following areas: (1) having made changes in response to the CLS – beyond coping; (2) having strong views on IOM's assistance – positive or negative; and (3) being personally involved in a JI-HoA community-based reintegration project – contributing to it and/or benefiting from it.[50]

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50   Full details are provided in IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

4.4 COMPLEMENTARITY OF EVALUATION COMPONENTS

This report presents findings of both the main impact evaluation (component 1) and the natural experiment (component 2). Given the differences in the samples, datasets and methods of analysis used, the findings of the two components are not directly comparable. However, they complement each other in different ways. While component 1 provides a broad assessment of the effectiveness of the JI-HoA programme, component 2 is a form of stress test of the intervention's effectiveness when a shock occurs.

The correct interpretation of the consolidated findings of the IMPACT study should consider the following differences and complementarities between the main impact evaluation and the natural experiment:

• Component 2 provides a broader perspective on returnees' livelihoods and well-being and is able to gather particular insights about returnees' livelihood strategies (for example, the shift to agriculture), as well as more detail on coping strategies (such as with its greater focus on food security). Component 1 uses the RSI and has a specific focus on reintegration, such as the psychosocial aspects of the returnees' reintegration experience (for example, distress and non-discrimination). However, the overlap between the two outcomes evaluated is considerable given that roughly half of the RSI indicators relate to well-being (including the majority of those that can be influenced by the JI-HoA and by returnees themselves).

• Component 1 assesses how sustainable reintegration outcomes change from the period after return to a minimum of nine months later, and compared to a counterfactual (both an internal cohort of returnees who had not yet received assistance at the time of the interview in Ethiopia, and a calibration group of non-migrants in Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan). Instead, component 2 focuses on how the well-being of returnees was affected by the CLS, using this to test the effectiveness of returnees' own efforts and the contribution of IOM's assistance to their strategies for mitigation and recovery.

- Component 2 considered returnee well-being in three specific periods: the month before the first control measures were imposed in April 2020 (*just before COVID-19*), and the month before *the worst point* and before *now* – the time of interview in late 2021. Thus, each returnee's responses referred to the same 18–20 month span. Component 1 assessed RSI indicators at two points: the retro-baseline (three months after arrival) and the contemporaneous endline. The span between these two points is highly variable, ranging from 9 to 47 months. This larger variation in the individual span affects the interpretation of differences in findings, such as on the timeliness and modalities of assistance (see Section 5.7 and Section 5.8 for details).

- For component 2, the sample included returnees who arrived from the beginning of the JI-HoA

programme (2017) until year-end 2019 – four months before the first COVID-19 control measures were imposed in April 2020. For component 1, the sample went roughly as far back in time, including returnees who arrived between July 2018 and July 2021. Thus, sample of component 1 differed from that of component 2 in including returnees arriving in 2020 up to July 2021 (either after or soon before the imposition of COVID-19 control measures) – a group that experienced the CLS differently from the one targeted by the natural experiment.

Where appropriate, findings from the three different components are used for triangulation, and on the few occasions where findings appear contradictory, differences are explained to the extent that this is possible.

Table 8. A summary comparing the designs

	Main impact evaluation (Component 1)	Natural Experiment (Component 2)
Design	Quasi-experimental design using retrospective baselines and endlines of the treatment group (those receiving JI-HoA assistance), matched to a non-migrant calibration group.	A natural experiment which assessed the impact of the COVID-linked shock (CLS) – a large covariant shock – on returnees and the factors and conditions that influenced the severity of that impact. As an evaluation, the natural experiment was used to "stress-test" the effectiveness of the JI-HoA assistance in supporting returnees' ability to mitigate and recover from the CLS.
Objectives	To evaluate: • The extent of reintegration of returnees receiving JI-HoA assistance (before/after) • The net effect of the assistance on reintegration, by comparing to: (a) similar returnees not having yet received assistance (Ethiopia); and (b) a matched non-migrant calibration group (all countries)	To evaluate: • The effects of the CLS on returnees • The resilience of returnees, how their characteristics and actions contributed to: (a) mitigating the CLS' impact on their well-being; (b) increased their recovery from those impacts • The contribution of JI-HoA assistance to returnees' resilience

Framework (impact variables)	Reintegration, using the Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI): • **Economic:** Source of income; reliability and adequacy of employment or income generating activity; debt to spending ratio; food security; self-assessment of economic situation satisfaction. • **Psychosocial:** Social and community involvement; non-discrimination; considering further migration; signs of distress; feeling safe and secure in daily activities. • **Social:** Adequate housing situation; Access to public services and social protection schemes; access to effective remedies and justice; access to health services; Access to education for school-aged children.	Nine well-being domains: 1. income assessed as purchasing power 2. days without meals 3. meals per day 4. size of meals 5. consumption of protein-rich foods 6. quality of housing 7. school attendance 8. health and access to health services 9. acceptance by family and community (Returnees' intent to remigrate was also assessed).
Eligibility criteria	• Returnee has a valid individual MiMOSA number • Returnee is an adult (18 years or older) • The returnee is the principal applicant • The returnee arrived between 1 July 2018 and 1 July 2021 • The returnee is in receipt of microbusiness assistance (except the untreated cohort in Ethiopia)	• The returnee is an adult (aged 18 years or older) on arrival • The returnee arrived between 2017 (JI-HoA's inception) and end of 2019 (four months before the first COVID-19 control measures imposed in April 2020).
Sample	• Ethiopia: 778 returnees,[51] 280 non-migrants • Somalia: 173 returnees, 89 non-migrants • The Sudan: 373 returnees, 373 non-migrants	• Ethiopia: 1 035 returnees • Somalia: 229 returnees • The Sudan: 579 returnees
Instrument	Phone-based survey using the IOM Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) with additional questions (RSS+). Endline/retro-baseline: Retrospective questions were used to obtain baseline data together at the same time as a contemporaneous endline.	A phone-based survey of returnees who were asked to describe their well-being in three periods: • **Just before COVID-19:** The month prior to control measures being imposed (beginning of April 2020). • **Now:** The month prior to the interview in late 2021. • **Worst point:** The month prior to a time when well-being was worse than now, subjectively determined, for each well-being domain. Integrated qualitative research (FGD and KII) with a subset of those surveyed.

51   Returnees surveyed with the RSS+ endline/retro-baseline instrument.

Analysis	• Calculation of the RSI • Returnee perceptions of reintegration • Multiple Indicator Multiple Cause (MIMIC) modelling	• **Survival analysis** to assess the time to receive microbusiness assistance and the individual factors (gender, disability status, age), location (country and region) and year that might affect it. • **Multivariate regressions** to understand the determinants of change in well-being from *just before COVID-19* to (a) *the worst point* and (b) *now*. As well, to understand the determinants of (c) actions taken by returnees in response to the CLs and (d) the level of well-being domains *just before COVID-19.*

5. THE IMPACT OF THE JI-HOA ASSISTANCE

This chapter presents the key findings from IMPACT and assesses the effectiveness of the JI-HoA assistance, including the timeliness and modalities of delivery.[52] The period of implementation occurred during a pandemic and for this reason, the effects of the pandemic on returnees are considered – and specifically the COVID-linked shock (CLS). This analysis includes an assessment of how returnees were able to respond to this shock using various coping strategies. More detailed findings are provided in the IMPACT country reports, as well as in IMPACT Study reports #2 (focusing on the natural experiment component of the IMPACT study) and #3 (focusing on community-based reintegration projects).[53]

This first part of the chapter provides the context in which the JI-HoA assistance was provided and highlights coping strategies that were important to returnees but not part of the assistance itself. The rest of the chapter then considers the effects of the JI-HoA assistance, evaluating the extent to which changes in reintegration outcomes could be attributed to the assistance (using the RSI to model impact), as well as changes in well-being (based on the natural experiment). The chapter ends by considering aspects of the JI-HoA implementation that might be adapted in future programming, including the effectiveness of different modalities and the timeliness of assistance.

5.1 THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-LINKED SHOCK ON RETURNEES

The period covered by the evaluation was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in March 2020, including measures taken to control the spread of the virus. The situation was also exacerbated by other extreme events in the region, and most notably, desert locust infestations, flooding in parts of Somalia and the

Sudan, and conflict, especially in southern Somalia. Since it is impossible to separate the individual effects of these shocks, all these co-occurring events are referred to, collectively, as the CLS. The natural experiment component of the IMPACT study assessed how the CLS has impacted on the well-being of returnees,[54] their resilience and ability to recover.

In all three countries, the CLS had a substantial effect on returnees' livelihoods due to the effects of control measures and associated market volatility and inflation. Lockdowns and restrictions on movement and transport, inflation and supply shortages, as well as co-occurring shocks (desert locusts plague, flooding and conflict) all affected livelihoods. The extent to which returnees were affected across the three countries in part depended on their sources of livelihood before the CLS, which varied between countries. When the CLS struck, more than 60 per cent of self-employed returnees had to close their businesses during lockdowns and many employed returnees had their salaries reduced or ceased, with returnees employed in the Sudan and Somalia most affected.[55]

This CLS also had knock-on effects for purchasing power, which was not fully recovered at the time of the survey.[56] The largest effects are seen in Ethiopia and the Sudan, where the loss in purchasing power was about 42 kg (48%) and 24 kg (38%) from *just before COVID-19* to *the worst point* respectively, and 30 kg (34%) and 18 kg (27%) to *now*. The decline in purchasing power was notably less pronounced in Somalia: 16 kg (17%) to *the worst point* and 7 kg (7%) to *now*. Research area B was less affected than Research area A.[57] Based on the qualitative research, returnees in Ethiopia and Somalia described how sharp rises in inflation during the CLS caused by the shortage of staple items exacerbated the impact of the

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52 This responds to Objective 1 of the TOR and the evaluation question: What is the impact of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative (HoA) on sustainable reintegration of supported migrant returnees?

53 Reports available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/impact-study.

54 Table 8 provides a list of the well-being domains considered.

55 See Section 2 of IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

56 Surveys took place in Q4 2021. In Ethiopia from 12 October to 6 December, in Somalia from 23 October to 22 November, and in the Sudan from 12 October to 5 December.

57 Purchasing power was assessed using commonly used local grains (teff in Ethiopia; sorghum in Somalia; wheat in the Sudan). Survey respondents were asked about how much they could purchase pre-COVID-19 and *now*.

pandemic, as essential goods more than doubled in price. Inflation and market volatility made it even harder to live and earn money in the community. Those relying on crop farming experienced a significant rise in the price of inputs, such as fertilizer. In addition, most returnees were self-employed, and this included casual workers who depended on this activity for their daily income, making them particularly susceptible to lockdown conditions.

The key impacts on returnees can be summarized as:

- Across all countries, food security decreased as a result of the CLS with substantial reductions in food consumption, although in the majority of cases, the most extreme coping measures (such as going whole days without meals) were avoided.

- Access to health services deteriorated in all three countries but has subsequently recovered. Despite the deterioration during the CLS, there were no significant changes in the numbers of seriously ill but there were health concerns associated with mental stress and reduced nutrition, especially for children.

- Housing deteriorated for almost half of the respondents in Somalia and the Sudan with limited rates of recovery.

- School attendance levels were already low in most regions before the pandemic, so the effects of the CLS were less pronounced.[58]

- Across all three countries, returnees felt well-accepted by their family and communities before the CLS, and while acceptance deteriorated during the CLS, it subsequently recovered to near earlier levels.

The severity of restrictions imposed to curb the spread of the virus influenced the extent to which returnees were impacted by the CLS. The results of a needs assessment conducted by IOM[59] and the natural experiment survey (conducted some 16 months apart) are generally consistent, suggesting that there is indeed a link between greater severity of COVID-19 restrictions and larger deterioration of returnee well-being.[60] In the Sudan,

analysis suggests that sampled returnees in Darfur were less severely impacted by the CLS than those in Khartoum at *the worst point* in three well-being domains (meals per day, days with protein-rich foods, and housing). In Ethiopia, the analysis found that returnees in Amhara were most affected. In Somalia, analysis found lesser impacts in Research area B, with the same pattern in the three well-being domains where a significant difference was observed.

5.2 VULNERABILITY OF RETURNEES TO RESPOND TO CO-OCCURRING SHOCKS

Those who were most vulnerable before the pandemic were most susceptible to the CLS shock. The changes they were able to make to limit the harm were largely of a coping nature. Pre-existing vulnerabilities meant that the most marginalized were least prepared to endure the CLS effects. Often, these were people with mental or physical health issues and, to a lesser extent, women. This vulnerability was compounded when the CLS struck, as those dependent on casual work, who were paid daily wages, were significantly more affected by the CLS than those with fixed salaries. This exposure to the effects of the CLS meant that the most vulnerable were more likely to try to make changes to mitigate the CLS, often in desperation, to limit the damage to their well-being.

> *My husband lost his regular labour work* [which consisted of] *loading wooden construction poles into cars because nobody was buying them at the time. He couldn't go from place to place to find any other labour work either. Without his meagre labour wage, we struggled to even feed our two children and ourselves. I had to give the older child sugar dissolved in water for a meal on several occasions… When things got even worse, my husband went begging for leftover food from hotels in town to save me and the children from starving.*
>
> *– Interview with female returnee (age range 25–35), East Hararghe, Ethiopia*

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58 Of the 1,391 respondents with school-aged children, 42.5 per cent had a least one child not attending school at the time *just before COVID-19*. Of the overall 4,679 children in those households, 30.8 per cent were not attending school at the time *just before COVID-19*.

59 A JI-HoA needs assessment was conducted in July–August 2020. This identified the strictness with which COVID-19 restrictions were imposed in different parts of the three countries, using several indicators.

60 Finding 7, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f). Note: The robustness of the multivariate analysis underpinning this finding is limited by the correlation between well-being in the different domains.

Across the three countries, women were widely perceived to have been among the groups most impacted by the CLS, in particular female-headed households and those reliant on low-skilled jobs to support their families. As a result, some women had to resort to unofficial and illegal work because they had no other way to provide for their families, which exposed them to unsafe conditions.

According to the natural experiment, the length of time a returnee had spent in-country increased their resilience relative to those who had returned to the country sooner as they were better able to develop livelihoods and supportive networks. The length of time a returnee had to settle back home reduced the CLS impact on five out of the eight well-being domains, although it did also increase the number of days they went without meals. This result is consistent with the qualitative data that found that those who had returned most recently had less time to develop a livelihood and build support networks. These support networks proved to be vital for many, with a wide range of actors and means of support provided. Returnees also identified those who had returned at the beginning of the CLS as another group particularly affected: most of them arrived with nothing and had not yet been able to establish businesses, accumulate savings or develop support networks.

Beyond adaptations to livelihoods and food consumption, returnees appear to have found it difficult to respond to other aspects of well-being, such as health, education and housing. For example, just 8.9 per cent of returnees said they had acted to protect housing quality, typically moving to a cheaper dwelling or moving in with someone. Similarly, just 6.8 per cent of survey respondents reported that they had acted to improve their children's schooling situation or prevent it from worsening.

Returnees across all countries suffered increased stress and mental health issues, preventing some from implementing responses to the CLS. Among the 890 (48.8%) survey respondents who consented to answering the questions on health issues, 13.8 per cent said they experienced a great deal of difficulty with one or more of the physical disabilities,[61] and 64.7 per cent said they experienced one or more of the challenges from the mental health conditions listed in the survey.[62] The analysis also shows that the number of self-reported mental health issues – but not the number of physical disabilities[63] – was significantly and positively related to the difficulty in confronting the CLS in each country.

5.3 RESPONSES OF RETURNEES TO THE COVID-LINKED SHOCK

Overall, returnees' actions helped mitigate the CLS' impacts on well-being and to recover from these impacts, demonstrating resilience. In particular, returnees used family and social networks to help them through hardships. Furthermore, many returnees adjusted the primary and secondary sources of livelihood, with engagement in agriculture being an effective strategy (as discussed in more detail below). Many returnees viewed the lack of capital and skills as a key limiting factor.

Returnees used family and social networks to see them through hardships. To maintain that support, returnees most commonly worked with family and community members to increase food production. The level of support received from the family and community varied between countries. In Somalia, support from friends was the second most common source of support, after family, while in the Sudan over 40 per cent of respondents made their own changes to their livelihoods. The kind of support that returnees received from family networks was typically just enough to see them through short-term hardships and was sometimes in the form of loans that had to be repaid, adding to the debt that many had already incurred to migrate. Family support, including loans, helped some returnees to maintain their businesses. This came up several times during the qualitative research. For example, a respondent in Somalia mentioned to

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61 The disabilities listed in the natural experiment survey: (1) Difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses; (2) Difficulty hearing; (3) Difficulty walking or climbing steps; (4) Difficulty remembering things or concentrating; (5) Difficulty with self-care (washing or dressing); (6) Difficulty communicating in your usual language; (7) Other difficulties.

62 The other problems listed in the natural experiment survey: (1) Feeling very restless, like you can't keep still; (2) Loss of interest in things; (3) Feeling worried about going crazy or "losing your mind"; (4) Feeling very fearful; (5) Feeling trapped or caught; (6) Having a lot of pain in your body; (7) Feeling worthless; (8) Other problems.

63 Disabilities questions were based on the Washington Group Questions. Source: InfoNTD.

have received financial support from his family as he needed to increase the stock in his pharmacy business and could not do so with the assistance received from IOM.[64] Another returnee in Ethiopia received a loan of 4,000 Ethiopian Birr[65] from his uncle that allowed him to purchase three young rams, breed them and subsequently sell two sheep to gain some income, but not yet pay back the loan.

Significant numbers of returnees made adjustments in their primary or secondary source of livelihood, which varied depending on the country. Across all three countries, more than one third (37%) of returnees changed their main source of livelihood as a result of the CLS. The responses varied across the countries, with Ethiopian returnees more likely to increase self-employment.

Many returnees increased their involvement in agriculture, and not only in rural areas. Although many returnees cited obstacles to responding to the CLS, many returnees were able to increase their engagement in agriculture: over one third across the three countries, and about half in largely rural areas such as Oromia and Amhara in Ethiopia and Darfur in the Sudan, increased their engagement in farming. However, even in relatively urbanized Somalia, more than 20 per cent found agricultural opportunities.

The way in which returnees engaged further in agriculture varies regionally. The responses for largely rural Ethiopia are perhaps as expected: returnees grew more crops and raised more livestock on land in rural areas. In largely urbanized Somalia,[66] returnees who engaged more in agriculture tended to use land within cities/towns (or on their edges) more often than in rural areas. Indeed, a larger proportion in Somalia – than in either Ethiopia or the Sudan – found opportunities in processing or marketing agricultural products and in working more with others. Women were less likely than men to take action through agriculture. Returnees were more likely to increase their engagement in agriculture if they were poorly accepted by their family and community, possibly to make up for the support that family and community would have provided.

Returnees who engaged more in agriculture as a response to the CLS were better able to mitigate the impacts of the CLS and had greater rates of recovery – evidence that agriculture was an important resilience strategy. Those who engaged more in agriculture were less affected by the CLS in five of the eight well-being domains and they had recovered more by the time of interview in six of those domains. Another key finding is that those engaging more in agriculture are not more likely to act in other well-being domains such as housing, education and health. There was no relationship between greater engagement in agriculture and returnees changing their primary source of support, and only a weak but significant relationship exists with changing their secondary source of support. This finding suggests that engaging in agriculture did not entail a major change in how returnees secured their livelihood but could be carried out alongside, potentially increasing its value as a means of coping with the CLS and similar shocks.

The lack of capital and key skills, however, limited the extent of returnees' responses. A common response from returnees (during the natural experiment) was a sense of frustration that they could not make the changes that they felt would help them cope. Lack of opportunity and skill were most commonly cited obstacles to innovation. In the three countries, respondents described their skills, among them cooking, construction, cleaning, accountancy, carpentry and livestock rearing. Overwhelmingly though, respondents recounted their difficulty in using these skills or in adding more skills to a limited set.

5.4 THE IMPACT OF IOM ASSISTANCE

While returnees deployed a range of survival responses, IOM assistance was still greatly appreciated (Box 4). This gratitude highlights the important humanitarian and human rights rationale for providing such assistance, even in situations where sustainable reintegration is difficult to achieve.

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64   KII – Returnee – Research area A, Somalia.

65   This amount was equivalent to circa 118 USD in May 2020; using 0.0296 as the average Ethiopian Birr to USD exchange rate for May 2020.

66   Somalia has one of the highest urbanization rates in the region with at least 6.83 million (45%) out of 15.18 million total population of Somalia settled in urban areas, and an additional 4 million expected to do so by 2025 (UN-Habitat, 2020).

BOX 4. THE LIFE-SAVING NATURE OF IOM'S ASSISTANCE

One unique aspect of the JI-HoA is its focus on stranded migrants within Africa, whereas most of the previous return and reintegration initiatives focused on return from European countries. While the statistical analysis of the RSI in this section focuses on assessing impacts that can be rigorously attributed to the JI-HoA assistance, it is important not to overlook the appreciation felt by many returnees. This feeling comes out most strongly in the qualitative analysis, where people stranded in places such as in Libya, express gratitude for IOM's assistance, as it allowed them to get out of a difficult situation. This finding is important to underscore, as there is a strong humanitarian and human rights justification for providing such support, even if impacts in terms of reintegration outcomes are more mixed given the challenging contexts in the Horn of Africa.

For example, the C-19 natural experiment highlights that the JI-HoA assistance before the CLS was considered life-saving by some returnees, particularly before their return to their home country. There was high praise for IOM's assistance, with returnees expressing gratitude to IOM for having rescued them from dangerous, life-threatening situations abroad. They recognized that no one else in their families or communities was able to help them to return and get them out of the situation. Based on interviews for the natural experiment, returnees (especially in Ethiopia), recounted many of the difficult and dangerous situations they had experienced with irregular migration and spoke about the suffering they had witnessed on their journeys. Returnees expressed gratefulness to IOM for saving them from starvation, illness, dire living conditions and near death, helping them to recover and providing means to improve their lives when they returned.

> *They [IOM] brought us back from Libya where the living conditions of immigrants were very bad. When we reached here, they gave us funds to establish businesses. They also gave us seminars on start-ups and how to manage a business. The project was helpful because IOM saved our lives. They also helped us integrate into our communities by creating jobs for us. They gave us funding and business training. I trained as a cook, and I go to our restaurant kitchen when our cook gets ill.*
>
> *– FGD with returnees in Somalia*

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the rigorous assessment of the reintegration of returnees, and the extent to which impacts can be attributed to IOM's assistance. This analysis draws from the main impact evaluation (component 1) by comparing baseline and endline RSI scores or returnees with a non-migrant calibration group. Key findings and insights from the natural experiment (component 2) are also summarized.

5.4.1 Effects of reintegration assistance in Ethiopia

Ethiopia was the only country where the evaluation was able to assess a treated cohort (that is, in receipt of JI-HoA assistance) against a comparable untreated group (that is, without such assistance); as there were sufficient numbers of returnees who had been processed by IOM after returning but who were still waiting to receive microbusiness assistance at the time IMPACT's enumeration took place. In Ethiopia, the dominant interventions in the economic dimension were microbusiness assistance, *Kaizen* training and cash advances, although assistance related to the other dimensions of reintegration (social and psychosocial) were also provided (including medical referrals, psychosocial referrals, housing assistance and TVET). In addition to treated/untreated cohorts of returnees, the analysis in this section considers the impact of the Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) initiative.

The ECA was an adaptation introduced in Ethiopia in response to the COVID-19 lockdown period, to provide assistance while microbusiness assistance was still being processed.[67]

On average, the treated returnees[68] performed best over the course of the evaluation, resulting in a significantly higher endline RSI score. The treated group can be considered reintegrated against the 0.66 threshold at endline.[69] The treated cohort outperformed the other two cohorts (untreated and treated with ECA) over the duration of the evaluation, and with a significantly higher endline score, despite having the lowest retro-baseline RSI score (Figure 4). The difference-in-difference (DiD) analysis confirms this finding (Table 8), which shows considerable impacts at an individual level. As an illustration from the qualitative research, Mulugeta, a male returnee aged 20 from Jimma, Ethiopia,[70] reported a low overall well-being after his return. In the interview he explained, *"I'm having trouble finding work after my return. My family is also upset with me because I forced them to sell their oxen and spend the proceeds on my migration."* In late 2019, IOM assistance helped him to open a shop; he adds: *"I began to believe that my life could change after that. I can therefore rate my well-being at 4 [on a scale of 1 to 5], as I feel good after the opening of the shop."* At the time of the interview, the interviewee said that the shop was still operating and doing well and that he planned to expand the business.

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67   See definition for "Emergency Cash Advance" in the Glossary.

68   Treated returnees are here intended as those who received microbusiness assistance at the time of the survey interview. Non-migrants inherit this label from the returnee they are matched with.

69   IMPACT Study Country Report: Ethiopia; section 4.2. Available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl701/files/documents/2023-07/impact-country-report-ethiopia.pdf.

70   A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the interviewee.

Figure 5. Four Dimensions of RSI at retro-baseline and endline for all eligible returnees in Ethiopia
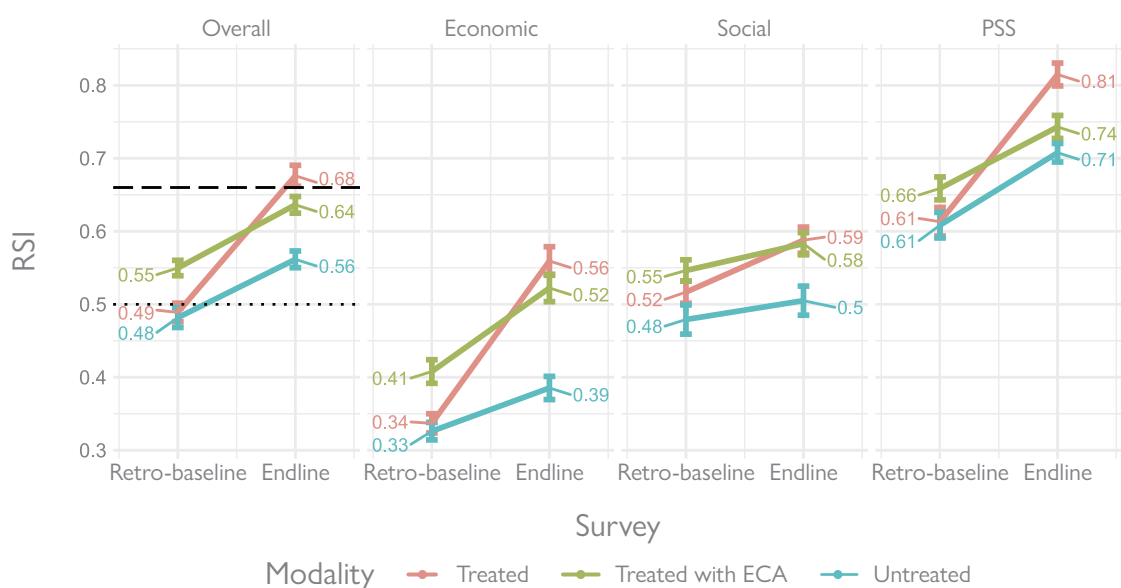
Note: Untreated = 268, Treated = 281, Treated with ECA = 229.

Table 9. Difference-in-difference calculations for Overall RSI for the
three returnee groups in Ethiopia presented in Figure 5

term (Returnees)	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value
Intercept	0.48	0.01	76.42	0.00
Endline	0.08	0.01	8.96	0.00
Treated	0.01	0.01	0.81	0.42
Treated with ECA	0.07	0.01	7.32	0.00
DID - Endline X Treated	0.11	0.01	8.62	0.00
DID - Endline X Treated with ECA	0.01	0.01	0.51	0.61

The evaluation finds a similar pattern for the separate Economic and Psychosocial RSI dimensions, and only in the case of the social dimension the endline RSI score for the treated cohort was not statistically greater than the treated with ECA cohort.

Drawing on the findings of the natural experiment component, other factors may have contributed to the different outcomes in these three cohorts. First is the length of time a returnee has been in the country. Given that the untreated cohort had yet to receive microbusiness assistance, it is likely that the treated cohort had been in the country longer on average than the untreated one. This could be significant because the natural experiment found that the longer a returnee had

been in country, the better they were able to mitigate the effects of the CLS, in part because they had more time to develop support networks (section 5.2).

Second, returnees' actions could well have contributed to the different outcomes in these two cohorts. The efficacy of their actions in mitigating and recovering from the CLS' impacts on well-being was discussed in section 5.3. Returnees in the treated cohort would have had more time to act to improve their situation (recall that roughly half of the RSI indicators relate to well-being). The natural experiment found that the longer a returnee had access to microbusiness assistance, the more likely they were to act in response to the CLS in two well-being domains. That interaction

effect would have been present in the treated but not the untreated cohort.

Those two factors would also have been relevant to the difference between the treated and treated with ECA cohorts. The latter had yet to receive the main part of the assistance and thus were likely to be relatively recent arrivals. As well, those selected for the cash advance were assessed as particularly vulnerable to the pandemic's effects, which were then evident;[71] they were disproportionately women. In contrast, many returnees in the treated cohort had received microbusiness assistance before the pandemic and so had time to develop a microbusiness, which would have helped them to mitigate the impacts on well-being (section 5.4.4). Returnees in the treated cohort who arrived in 2020–2021 would have experienced the pandemic (CLS) in a different way (section 4.2). Thus, the lesser increase in RSI from baseline to endline achieved by returnees receiving the cash advance relative to the treated returnees may well at least in part be due to the more difficult conditions they confronted (see further discussion in section 5.7).

By the endline survey, matched treated returnees perform just as well as non-migrants on the overall RSI and are slightly above the 0.66 threshold – highlighting an improvement of returnees scores that converges with the non-migrants in their communities. Other cohorts improve from baseline to endline although the untreated do not statistically converge with the non-migrants. This result further supports the finding that the JI-HoA assistance in Ethiopia contributes significantly to increasing RSI scores over time (Figure 6).

For comparison, the non-migrant cohort trends are flat between retro-baseline and endline and are either exactly on the 0.66 threshold line or +/- 0.01. This result suggests a stable calibration group in terms of the overall RSI, in line with expectations. The treated with ECA cohort, while improving significantly from baseline, have not quite attained numerical convergence but have converged statistically (see overlapping 95% confidence intervals).

Figure 6. Overall RSI at retro-baseline and endline for matched returnee-non-migrants in Ethiopia
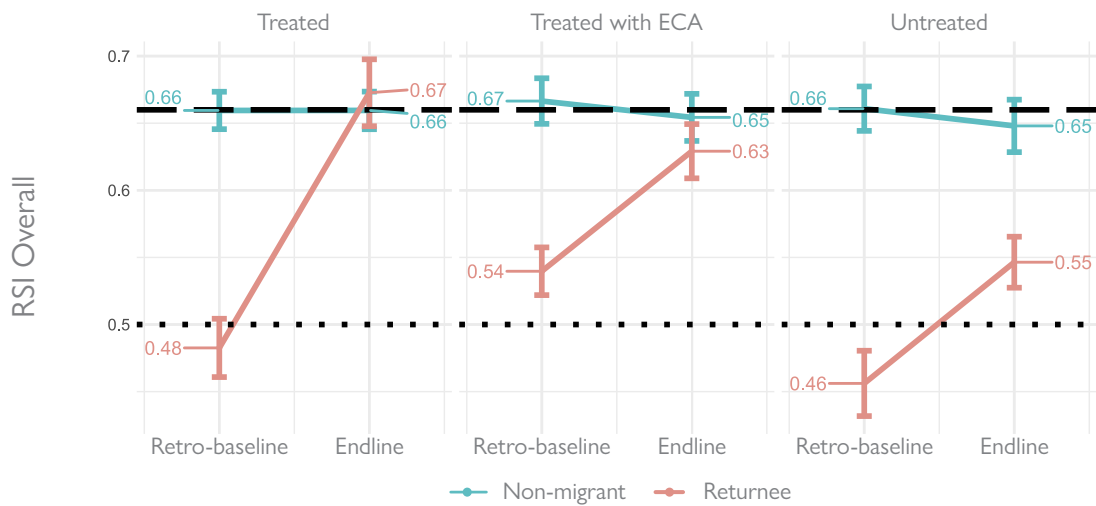
Note: Treated (returnees) = 117, Treated (non-migrants) = 117, Treated with ECA (returnees) = 82, Treated with ECA (non-migrants) = 82, Untreated (returnees) = 81, Untreated (non-migrants) = 81.

71 Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) was provided to selected Ethiopian returnees between May and December 2020.

5.4.2 Effects of reintegration assistance in Somalia

For Somalia, the evaluation was unable to compare treated and untreated cohorts, but there is still a comparison with a non-migrant calibration group. In addition, two other analytical cohorts were added due to distinctive features of the Libya migration route of returnees to Somalia. This distinction was made because returnees coming back from Libya were considered prima facie refugees and were therefore provided with additional assistance from UNHCR, amounting to 200 USD in cash per month for six months starting from the first month of return. This was not the case for returnees arriving from other countries. For this reason, the evaluation includes a Libya versus non-Libya comparison (labelled "Libya + UNHCR Cash" and "Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash").

Overall, both Libya and non-Libya returnee groups can be considered reintegrated against the 0.66 threshold at endline, and there is no statistically significant difference between the two cohorts. Indeed, there is no statistical difference at either baseline or endline, suggesting that the additional UNHCR cash assistance did not play a detectable role in improving reintegration scores. The DID analysis (Table 10) confirms this finding. The three individual dimensions (the RSI scores for economic, social and psychosocial) perform similarly to the overall RSI across the different cohorts of returnees, with significant improvements from baseline to endline (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Four Dimensions of RSI at retro-baseline and endline for all eligible returnees in Somalia
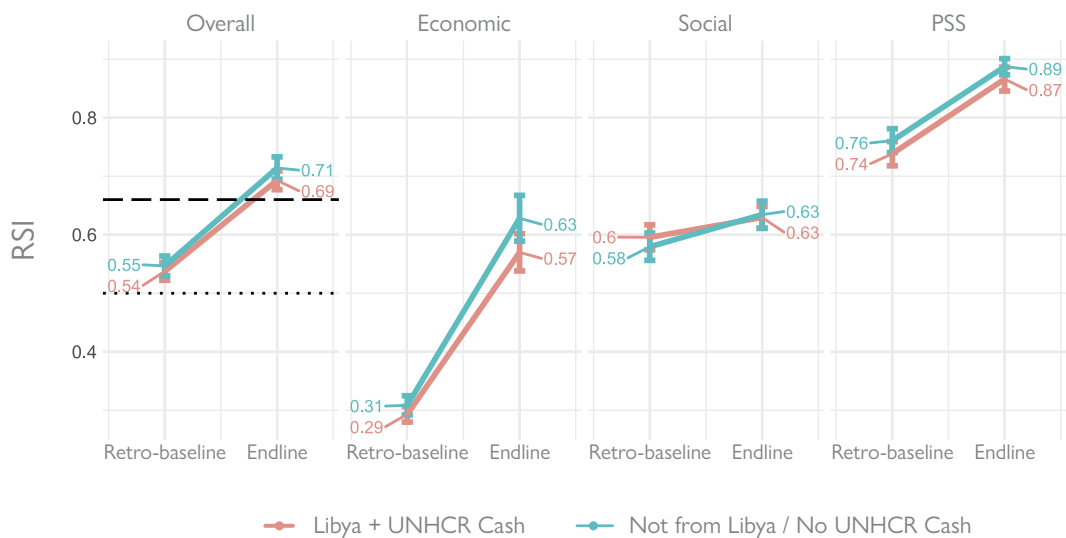
Note: Libya + UNHCR Cash = 112, Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash = 67.

Table 10. Difference-in-difference calculations for Overall RSI for the
three returnee groups in Somalia presented in Figure 7

term (Returnees)	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value
Intercept	0.54	0.01	71.24	0.00
Endline	0.16	0.01	14.58	0.00
Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash	0.01	0.01	0.76	0.45
DID - Endline X "Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash"	0.01	0.02	0.67	0.50

The returnee RSI scores increase significantly from baseline to endline, while matched non-migrant scores remain constant. At endline, returnees perform significantly better than matched non-migrants on the overall RSI and move above the 0.66 threshold. At baseline, both returnee cohorts (Libya and non-Libya) score statistically lower on the RSI than their matched non-migrant counterparts, which is what might be expected. By the endline, both cohorts return overall RSI scores that are above the 0.66 threshold and are indeed statistically higher than that of the non-migrant groups (Table 8). This differs from Ethiopia, with Somali returnees' outcomes being above those of non-migrants.

Figure 8. Overall RSI at retro-baseline and endline for matched returnee-non-migrants in Somalia
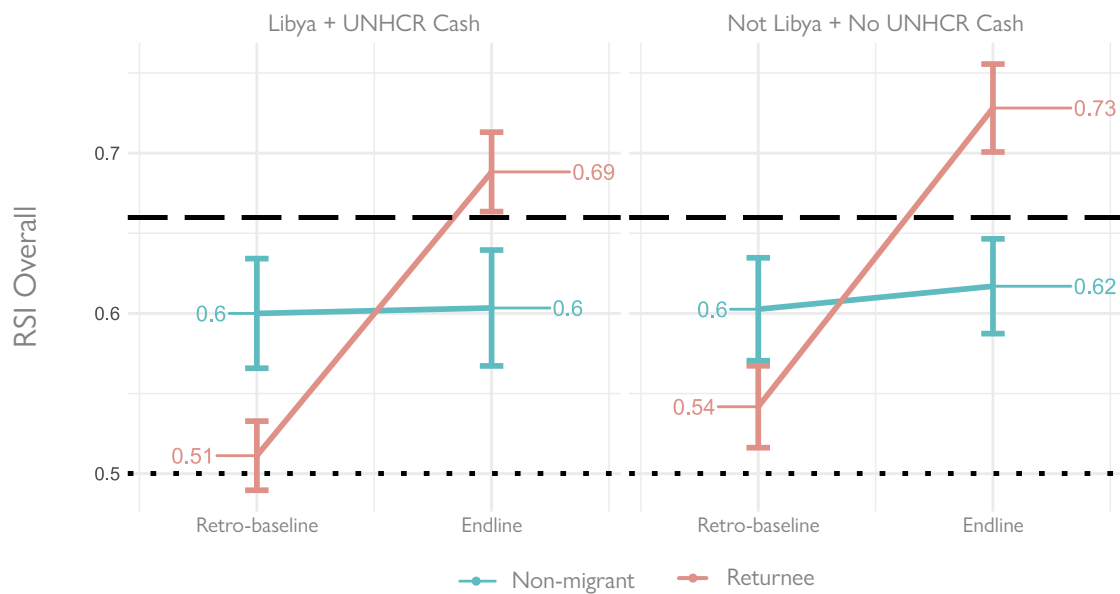
Note: Libya + UNHCR Cash (returnees) = 59, Libya + UNHCR Cash (non-migrants) = 59, Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash (returnees) = 30, Not from Libya / No UNHCR Cash (non-migrants) = 30.

5.4.3 Effects of reintegration assistance in the Sudan

In the Sudan, the evaluation was similarly able to compare returnees with a non-migrant calibration group. There are also separate analytical cohorts to compare changes in modalities as these evolved with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The original "Regular in kind" modality entailed the physical provision of materials to returnees after a three-quote tender process managed by IOM. This process was seen as administratively demanding and time-consuming, so programme adaptions were made to speed up the delivery of assistance to returnees, including both the "MoMo in kind" solution, where the three-quote process was delegated to the returnees themselves, with wholesalers receiving their payment from IOM via mobile money, and the eventual substitution of all in kind modalities with direct cash payments to returnees. For the analysis, the cohorts are divided into different groups: (i) the original mode, labelled "Regular in kind"; (ii) a cohort that received the cash assistance the soonest after return (labelled "Cash <= 4 months", n=122, 22%);

(iii) a cohort for whom the new modality of cash came much later after their return ("Cash > 4 months", n= 321, 49%); and, (iv) those who received assistance in kind, but with the three-quote tender process managed by the returnees themselves and payments made to the wholesalers through mobile money ("MoMo in kind", n=29, 4.4%).

There is an overall slight decline in RSI scores over time, suggesting no statistically significant effect of the JI-HoA assistance on the reintegration of returnees. Across the modality cohorts, those receiving cash the soonest after return ("Cash <= 4 months") performed best on average over the course of the evaluation, resulting in the highest endline RSI score of 0.66; whereas "Cash > 4 months" remained static across the observation period at 0.65; with only the "MoMo in kind" and the "Regular in kind" cohorts resulting in an endline RSI score significantly lower than the other two modalities and the notional 0.66 sustainability threshold score (Figure 9 and Table 11).

Figure 9. Four Dimensions of RSI at retro-baseline and endline for all eligible returnees in the Sudan
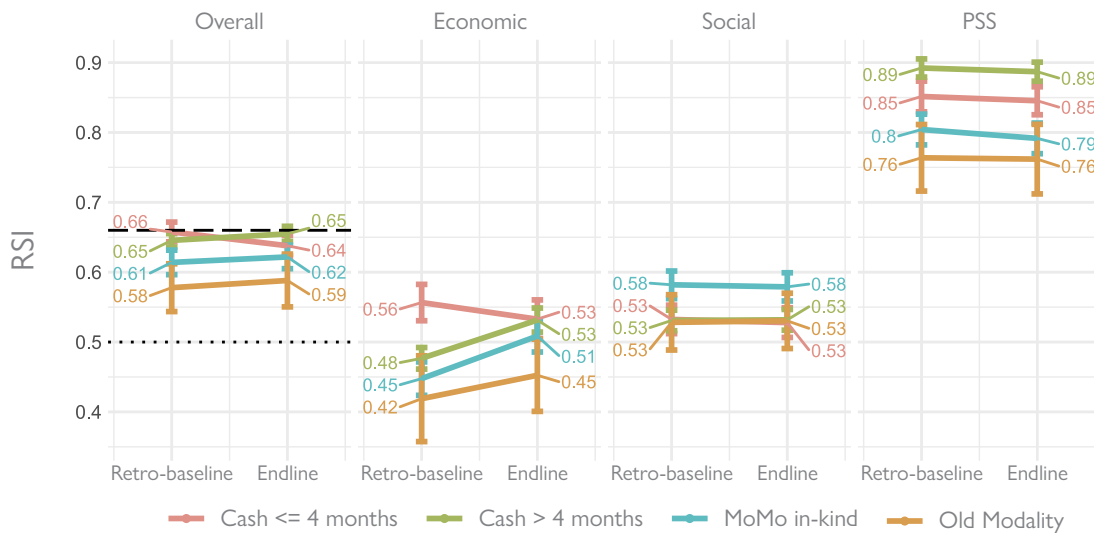
Note: "Cash <= 4 months" = 144, "Cash >= 4 months" = 321, MoMo in kind = 29, Regular in kind = 163.

Table 11. Difference-in-difference calculations for Overall RSI for the four returnee groups presented in the Sudan in Figure 9

term (Returnees)	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value
Intercept	0.66	0.01	81.24	0.00
Endline	-0.02	0.01	-1.72	0.09
Cash > 4 months	-0.01	0.01	-1.23	0.22
MoMo in kind	-0.04	0.01	-3.92	0.00
Regular in kind	-0.08	0.02	-4.03	0.00
DID - Endline X Cash > 4 months	0.03	0.01	2.10	0.04
DID - Endline X MoMo in kind	0.03	0.02	1.75	0.08
DID - Endline X Regular in kind	0.03	0.03	1.07	0.28

Note: Reference levels = retro-baseline "Cash <= 4 months".

Figure 10. Overall RSI at retro- and endline for matched returnee-non-migrants in the Sudan
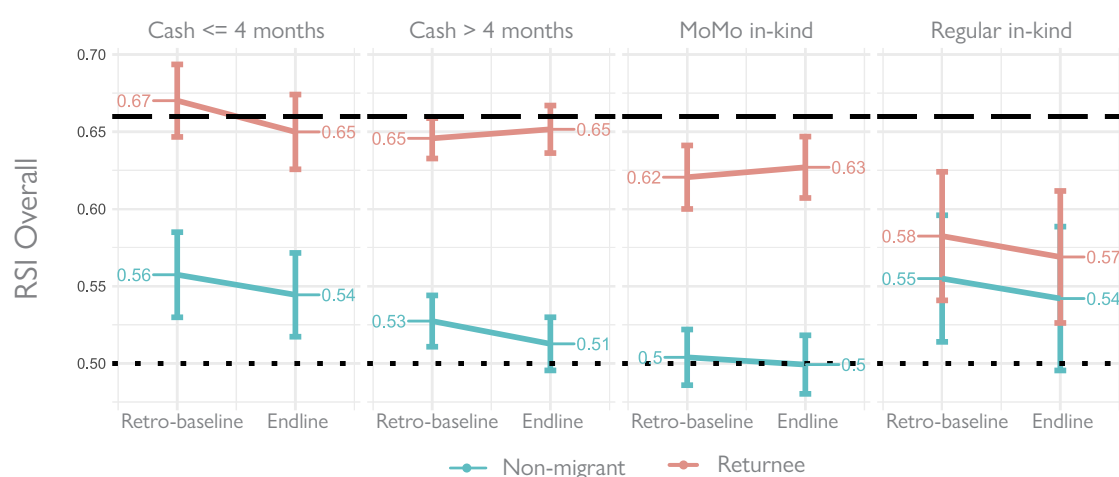
Note: "Cash <= 4 months" (returnees) = 61, "Cash <= 4 months" (non-migrants) = 61, "Cash > 4 months" (returnees) = 168, "Cash > 4 months" (non-migrants) = 168, MoMo in kind (returnees) = 119, MoMo in kind (non-migrants) = 119, Regular in kind (returnees) = 23, Regular in kind (non-migrants) = 23.

The overall RSI raises more questions than it answers about the programme in the Sudan and why the evaluation results are so different to the other JI-HoA geographies included in the evaluation. Returnees in three out of four treatment cohorts returned significantly greater overall RSI scores than their corresponding non-migrant, both at baseline and at endline. It is difficult to draw much from these findings as there is no significant improvement over time for any of the returnee or non-migrant cohorts. Furthermore, without an untreated cohort of returnees, it is hard to fully understand whether the supported returnees are less worse off than they would have been if they had not received assistance.

Based on the qualitative research, both returnees and non-migrants concur that conditions in the Sudan have continued to worsen. Insecurity in the country was the more significant factor, having increased since the 2018–2019 Revolution. The continued protests have contributed to inflation and economic crisis; in addition, extreme weather events (droughts, floods) took place in 2022 and severely impacted rural livelihoods.

These conditions were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The qualitative findings suggest more nuance between returnees and non-migrants, with returnees not necessarily being better off than non-migrants (in contrast to the statistical analysis of the RSI scores). One possible explanation is that this is an effect of relative deprivation, which suppresses feelings of well-being.[72] Furthermore, relative deprivation is a common theory of migration – people migrate to reduce their relative deprivation.[73] The qualitative interviews show that non-migrants were dissatisfied with their conditions and achievements in life and that their conditions have worsened in recent years. Thus, compared to their own past, many are now worse-off than before and thus are relatively deprived – and this may have led to their poor scoring on the RSI and well-being grid (used for the qualitative research). Yet, compared to the returnees, non-migrants are often doing better than returnees in terms of having employment, good health, good social relations and a more stable situation overall. Returnees on the other hand, may score themselves higher as they compare their circumstances to the challenging situations faced in Libya; although struggling, they still feel relief and gratitude to have returned safely to the Sudan. Therefore, compared to their past they are no longer deprived. If this effect is common among both returnees and non-migrants responding to the endline/retro-baseline, the overall scoring between the groups may be inflated upwards or downwards based on their situations. While this has the potential to occur in all of the three countries investigated in this study, it seems most likely to be prevalent in the Sudan due to the extremely challenging (and recently deteriorating) conditions of both returnees and non-migrants. The phenomenon of relative deprivation may be a significant factor in the unusual ranking (in the statistical analysis) of returnees as consistently better than matched non-migrants. Furthermore, returnees that were able to acquire funds while abroad are in some cases better off than their matched non-migrant pairs – and therefore not all cases are misaligned.

Overall, the results of the overall RSI in the Sudan sit in stark contrast to the other JI-HoA countries. Compared to Ethiopia and Somalia where significant increases in RSI scores from baseline to endline are revealed, in the Sudan no significant changes for any cohort of returnees exist. In fact, the observed level of reintegration for returnees in the Sudan has slightly worsened from baseline to endline, with some small differences between the cohorts. The strongest evidence for the impact of the JI-HoA on reintegration is for Ethiopia, where a treated and untreated comparison among returnees is also possible. The calibration group in Ethiopia performed as might be expected, with returnees converging at endline with non-migrant scores; and similarly in Somalia, although returnees indicate higher scores than their matched non-migrants at the time of endline.

5.4.4 Effects of reintegration assistance on returnees' resilience to the COVID-linked shock

Returnees saw the JI-HoA assistance as vital to enduring the CLS, lessening the deterioration of their well-being. The results of the multivariate analysis were consistent with the returnees' testimony: the longer returnees had use of JI-HoA microbusiness assistance, the greater their ability to mitigate the initial fall (that is, from *just before COVID-19* to *the worst point*) in six of the eight well-being domains, across the three countries. Importantly, the more time with JI-HoA assistance also increased the likelihood of returnees engaging further in agriculture, and in making changes with respect to their children's schooling. As described in section 5.3, returnees engaging more in agriculture were able to better mitigate and recover from the impacts of the CLS in a majority of the well-being domains.

These results show that the timing of assistance can be critical. Returnees commented that where microbusiness assistance had been received before the CLS hit, this had helped them survive the difficult times brought on by the lockdown and other restrictions, especially for those who had no support from their families or local governments. Returnees explained that they would not

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72   Chen (2015).

73   Stark and Taylor (1989).

have survived without the programme's support,[74] using the assistance received to keep their families alive.[75]

For example, in Somalia, returnees who had received assistance before the CLS were able to establish reasonably successful businesses that helped them to deal with the impact of the pandemic.[76]

> *Without [JI-HoA] assistance, we would have been very vulnerable to COVID-19. The businesses they established for us were very useful in enduring the pandemic. In most cases, they are the only source of income for us and for our families. Our businesses might have been affected by COVID-19, but the situation would have been much worse for us without our [JI-HoA]-supported businesses/sources of income.*
>
> *– FGD with returnees in Somalia*

> *It was very helpful because some of us used the materials received to establish successful businesses. Those businesses were a source of income for us before and during the pandemic. We now know that the biggest impact of COVID-19 [in this location] was economic. Some of us bought auto rickshaws, which we use to this day.*
>
> *– FGD with returnees in Somalia*

Despite the JI-HoA assistance helping them to endure the CLS, many returnees were left weakened by its effects. The CLS had a continuing effect on returnees across the three countries and many commented that the CLS had undone whatever progress they had made before the pandemic.[77] Many returnees reported depleting the assistance provided by the JI-HoA (for example the goods in their stores), often diverting such assistance to support survival but thereby diminishing the value of that assistance in recovery. These accounts help explain the results of the multivariate modelling: there was no evidence that the JI-HoA microbusiness

assistance contributed to recovery in any well-being domain in any of the countries.

The natural experiment also investigated the impact of non-economic forms of JI-HoA assistance on resilience. In the FGDs and KIIs, returnees were asked open-ended questions about how the JI-HoA assistance had helped them to endure the CLS and make necessary changes, without specifying microbusiness assistance or non-economic forms of reintegration assistance. It is striking that there were no comments on any of the non-economic forms of assistance, although there were positive responses associated with psychosocial assistance provided at the Migration Resource Centre in Obock (Djibouti), which supported returnees before their return. The absence of perceived benefit during the CLS is substantiated by the multivariate regression modelling, which found that business training (TVET or SIYB), the most widely provided form of non-economic reintegration assistance, had no significant effect on mitigating the CLS' impacts on well-being or on recovery to the time of interview across the three countries.[78]

Similarly, in the Sudan, provision of National Health Insurance registration had no effect on either mitigating impacts or recovering from them in a country-specific multivariate regression. The absence of any significant benefit during the CLS may be related to the difficulties that returnees reported in accessing health care, for example the reluctance of health workers to treat people for fear of infection. National Health Insurance registration may well have been of benefit in non-pandemic times.

In the Sudan, the natural experiment also used country-specific models to compare the impact of two cash-based microbusiness assistance modalities described in Section 5.4.3 ("MoMo cash" and "MoMo in kind") with "Regular in kind" microbusiness assistance in relation to mitigation of CLS impacts on well-being and recovery from them.[79]

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74   FGD – Group 1 (CLS) – Arsi, Oromia, Ethiopia.

75   FGD – Group 1 (returnees without phone) – East Hararghe, Oromia, Ethiopia.

76   FGD – Group 2 – Research area B (I1), Somalia.

77   This was mentioned during a FGD with returnees in East Hararghe, Oromia, Ethiopia.

78   Business training was included as an independent variable in the models of change in well-being from *just before COVID-19* to *the worst point* and change in well-being from *just before COVID-19* to *now* (the time of interview). It did not contribute significantly in any domain in either set of models.

79   See IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

The analysis found that in seven of the eight well-being domains, "MoMo cash" and "MoMo in kind" appeared to significantly mitigate the impact of the CLS better than "Regular in kind" assistance. The impact of "MoMo cash" was greater than "MoMo in kind" in each of these seven domains, but the differences were not statistically significant.

The effect of these two microbusiness assistance modalities on recovery were less apparent up until the time of the interview. Relative to "Regular in kind" assistance, "MoMo cash" was associated with a significantly greater improvement in only one domain (meal size) and both modalities ("MoMo cash" and "MoMo in kind") were associated with reduced improvement in terms of consumption of protein-rich foods. These results are consistent with the findings from the three country models: IOM's assistance had a clear positive effect on mitigating the CLS' impact on well-being, but not on recovery.

5.5 COMMUNITY-BASED REINTEGRATION PROJECTS[80]

As part of the integrated approach to the JI-HoA, community-based reintegration projects (CBRPs) were implemented to complement the assistance given to individual returnees as part of the holistic, Integrated Approach to Reintegration of the JI-HoA (see section 2 for more details).[81] Since 2018, there have been 54 CBRPs implemented in Ethiopia, the Sudan and Somalia under the JI-HoA. These projects were implemented using a participatory approach that involves returnees and their respective communities and are implemented where there is a large number of returnees to a specific community.

The evaluability assessment of IOM's CBRPs found that **the quality and consistency of documentation across the projects was generally poor, raising concerns about the MEL systems.[82]** Indeed, due to limited documentation, it was only possible to conduct

the evaluability assessment of 17 out of 40 CBRPs across the three countries. And, while in general the project documentation that existed did suggest that the projects were robustly designed, weaknesses in the MEL systems made it challenging to evaluate the projects. In particular, it was difficult to find evidence of baseline measures/data or plans for when this will take place (only 6 out of 17 CBRPs had baseline measures to a great extent); and there was limited data gathered and reported on outcome or impact-level changes (only 5 out of 17 CBRPs had critical data available). Taken together, particularly with the lack of documentation, this makes it difficult to gather the evidence needed to learn about what works well (and less well), to support adaptive management, and to understand the cumulative impact of the individual CBRPs.

IOM's CBRPs were found to align with reintegration assistance provided to individual returnees – particularly through an economic focus that aimed to reduce the stresses of unemployment.[83] **The sample of projects reviewed were found to have the potential to contribute significantly to improvements in the quality of participants' lives and in the relationships between returnees and host community members.** While these improvements were primarily achieved through the creation of jobs and livelihood opportunities that increased the incomes of community members and returnees alike (such as through a fish farming project implemented in Oromia, Ethiopia), other assistance was also provided (such as psychosocial assistance in various locations).

Successful CBRPs also helped to improve the relationships between (and among) returnees and local community members by raising awareness of negative migration experiences and increasing opportunities for collaboration between returnees and host communities. CBRPs brought together both groups to foster a better understanding, with community members and returnees discovering the benefits of working together and improving their livelihoods in their community. Counselling and family reunification

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80 This section summarizes key findings from IMPACT Study Report #3 (IOM, 2023g). It also draws on findings IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

81 See factsheets of Community-Based Reintegration Assistance in the HoA (IOM, 2023a; IOM, 2023b; IOM, 2023c).

82 See the "Evaluability assessment" and "Conclusions from the evaluability assessment" sections in IMPACT Study Report #3 (IOM, 2023g).

83 The IMPACT team's review was based primarily on existing project documents and monitoring information, with deep dives on six CBRPs. The quality and consistency of the documentation across all projects was found to be generally poor, although where documentation does exist, the design of these projects was considered to be robust with plausible outcomes.

was also important, such as in Somalia, where a sampled CBRP provided phone-based counselling to 90 returnees as well as some face-to-face counselling to help build morale, as well as their understanding of how they could improve their own lives. The project worked at finding migrants that had returned to Somalia and connecting them with their families – something reported as having a huge impact on the community and reintegration.

Successful projects were often the result of the inclusive participation of returnees, members of the communities of destination and other key stakeholders – as well as having adequate equipment, training and distribution channels (such as for businesses once the project had finished). For example, the fish farming project (Box 5) worked closely with the Government of Ethiopia (who provided land for project participants' businesses), the national aquatic office (who supported in increasing fish stock in the dam), the Ethiopian electric power corporation (who granted permission for businesses to operate near the dam) and Jimma University (who implemented the project and provided technical assistance).

While generally perceived as successful, CBRPs encountered challenges related to external factors that were beyond the project's control. However, different issues arose across the three countries that could be better addressed by IOM and its implementing partners. For example, in Ethiopia, there were shortages of goods such as fuel for generators and chicken fodder due to rising prices; in the Sudan, there was insufficient capital, price instability and conflict; while in Somalia, there was lack of assistance provided by implementing partners or IOM (such as training, financial support or equipment) and insufficient follow-up by IOM. Indeed, across all the CBRPs reviewed, it was reported that there was limited follow-up support, especially with training and/ or access to equipment.

> ## BOX 5. FISH FARMING PROJECT, OROMIA, ETHIOPIA
>
> As well as removing economic constraints, the CBRPs also addressed infrastructure issues. For example, in Ethiopia, the project provided the community with five modern boats, and these have enabled community members to improve transport links across the dam – as people previously had to travel long distances to go from one woreda to another, especially during market days. In addition, the CBRP constructed a "market-shade" where project beneficiaries could sell products like fish and soup; and also provided water pumps to improve access to water for the production of vegetables. Both returnees and members of the communities of destination benefited from this initiative as it helped save time/labour, which in turn increased productivity.

Findings from the natural experiment component of the IMPACT study shed additional light on the contribution that CBRPs could have made to returnees' resilience to the CLS.[84] Survey respondents who lived in the vicinity, defined as the same district,[85] as one or more of the 40 CBRPs described in the version of JI-HoA monitoring data used for the study, were asked whether they had heard of those CBRPs and then whether they had benefited from them. Across the three countries, more than half the returnees lived in the vicinity of at least one CBRP.

Overall, across all three countries, the proportion of returnees living in the vicinity of at least one CBRP who had benefited from it was only 5.7 per cent. In some cases, it became clear that the CBRP returnees said they had benefited from was not one supported by IOM. Some districts are large, more than 1,000 km^2, so a returnee might well not have heard about a project on the other side of the district, which in any case is local in its intent. The key point, however, is that relatively few returnees benefited from support beyond the individual level at the time of the CLS, whether from a CBRP initiated by IOM or another organization.

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84 Finding 26, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

85 In Ethiopia, a district (level-three administrative unit) is called *woreda.*

Qualitative evidence complemented the survey findings. While relatively few returnee respondents said that they had heard of a CBRP in their vicinity, many saw their value and said that they would have liked to benefit from one had that been possible. For example, an informant in Ethiopia lamented the unnecessary rent and taxes he had to pay because of the long waiting time for receiving microbusiness assistance and that his loss was compounded by the absence of any supportive CBRP. Multiple informants in Somalia stated that the CBRP they had interacted was targeting the right issues (job creation, skill learning and investment support) but that what it provided in each of these areas was insufficient to make a real difference.

5.6 SPOTLIGHT ON MICROBUSINESS ASSISTANCE

While the JI-HoA is an integrated programme covering different aspects of economic, psychosocial and social reintegration, most support focuses on the establishment of microbusinesses, with IOM providing either materials (in kind) or cash. Indeed, microbusiness assistance was the most in-demand type of Complementary Reintegration Assistance across all three countries: received by 76.9 per cent of returnees in Ethiopia, 81.6 per cent in Somalia and 95.4 per cent in the Sudan (see section 3.3). For this reason, IMPACT focuses on the evidence of its effectiveness in this section.

In both Ethiopia and Somalia, empirical evidence suggests that a successful microbusiness is strongly correlated to improvements in reintegration.[86,87] Returnees who indicated that their microbusiness performed successfully displayed a statistically significant positive coefficient (p value <= 0.001) for all three RSIs at endline.

In Ethiopia, this finding is particularly evident: the trendlines in RSI scores across all dimensions are generally similar across returnees with microbusiness that are closed, in preparation, struggling and those not answering the question. Yet, for those reporting a successful business, significantly steeper gradients of change exist between retro-baseline and endline for all dimensions except the social score. Economic scores more than double in Ethiopia, while both the overall and PSS scores rise by 0.25 on average. Returnees in Ethiopia also have the highest endline score in all four dimensions.

Some of the implementation of microbusiness assistance has faced issues. Box 6 highlights some of the feedback from returnees on aspects that could be improved (based on qualitative research).

In some circumstances, microbusiness assistance combined with training leads to better results, but not in all situations. In Ethiopia, returnees who received both microbusiness assistance and *Kaizen* training fared particularly well, increasing their RSI scores by more than double than any other treatment combination, and reporting significantly higher reintegration perception scores at endline. Among the treated group, those who also received *Kaizen* training had on average a significantly higher RSI endline score (0.71 vs 0.62). No significant differences are observed by TVET however, though this is reflective of the relatively small numbers of those receiving this form of assistance in the sample. In Somalia, few differences exist between the combinations of the different types of assistance (microbusiness, TVET and SIYB) – although the lack of significant differences may be in part due to the relatively small numbers receiving TVET assistance in the sample.

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86   IMPACT Study Country Report: Ethiopia; section 5.1.1. Available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl701/files/documents/2023-07/impact-country-report-ethiopia.pdf.

87   IMPACT Study Country Report: Somalia; section 5.1.1. Available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl701/files/documents/2023-07/impact-country-report-somalia.pdf.

BOX 6. LESSONS FROM RETURNEES ON THE REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE RECEIVED

- **Costs of maintaining the business:** of the respondents who did receive microbusiness assistance, some commented that it was unsustainable to keep the business going because of rises in the cost of commodities or the high prices of renting shop space. One returnee – who was considered to have converged[a] – noted that the assistance [from IOM] *"was not sufficient enough to open and/or run building materials shop and the price of store rental was high."*[b]

- **Issues with supplies:** some non-converged returnees commented that the commodities they received were either out of date or faulty. This meant they could either not start the business or tried to find some money to replace these commodities from other sources (usually borrowing from friends/family). Additionally, for some treated returnees, the shop commodities were left in distant locations and the returnees had to cover the costs to transport the good to where they were living/their shop would be.

- **Lack of training/follow up mechanisms:** Many treated returnee respondents commented that while they had initial training in Jimma Town, they would have appreciated follow-up on assistance from IOM to understand better how to maintain an effective business. One respondent commented: *"IOM supported me by providing me with merchandise for the shopping business that I run. This played a crucial role in helping me earn an income and live my future life in a stable way. But it would be good if they followed up on me so as to help make my business better. It is good if they visit us and check our status. Since there are no follow-up mechanisms, I am running as my whim."*[c]

- **Mismatch of business type with returnee wishes:** most treated and non-converged returnees felt there was a lack of consultation on the type of business they could start. Most treated and non-converged returnees said they would redesign their businesses if given the opportunity.

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a   For the statistical analysis, returnees were matched with non-migrants. Returnees were considered to have converged at the endline if their score was similar to the one recorded by the corresponding individual in the non-migrant cohort.

b   Qualitative respondent #221 (returnee, male, 20, from Hadiya, SNNPR, Ethiopia) who attained RSI endline convergence with corresponding non-migrant.

c   Qualitative respondent #195 (returnee, male, 18, from Jimma, Oromia, Ethiopia) who had not attained RSI endline convergence with corresponding non-migrant.

In the Sudan, in line with the overall findings of the JI-HoA's effectiveness, little to no change in RSI scores and minimal differences across microbusiness performance are observed.[88] The only exception is for those with a successful business, where a small increase in their RSI overall score is detected, resulting in an endline score higher than other groups, especially compared to those who closed their business – these saw a decline in their overall score. The biggest difference is observed in the RSI economic scores, where there is significant growth by 0.13 between time points for those with a successful business. The findings in the Sudan also indicate that SIYB training is not a significant determinant of reintegration scores. This holds for all of the procurement modalities and for all of the reintegration measures.

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88   IMPACT Study Country Report: Sudan; section 5.1.1. Available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl701/files/documents/2023-07/impact-country-report-sudan.pdf.

5.7 ADAPTATIONS: IN KIND AND CASH MODALITIES[89]

In each country, assistance has been adapted over time, including in response to the pandemic and to address the backlog of returnees requiring assistance. Notable adaptations include: in 2019, "MoMo in kind"[90] was introduced in the Sudan to reduce waiting times for microbusiness assistance (the returnees were delegated the three-quote procurement process and the money for the purchase of the material was transferred by IOM to the wholesalers via mobile money). Then, in March 2020, "MoMo cash" was introduced to transfer mobile money directly to returnees. In September 2020, a fully cash-based modality of delivery was also introduced in Somalia. As well, in 2020, the Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) was introduced in Ethiopia, whereby a proportion was deducted from the budget of the individual (in kind) microbusiness assistance and provided as a cash lumpsum to help returnees cope with the effects of the pandemic.[91] ECA was provided upon request and only to Ethiopian returnees still waiting to receive the microbusiness assistance, while those who had already received it did so entirely in kind.

According to the natural experiment (component 2 of the IMPACT study methodology: see section 4.2), ECA was requested much more frequently by women. Regression analysis also shows that ECA helped returnees to mitigate and recover from the CLS. Those receiving ECA experienced significantly less increase in the days per week without meals at *the worst point,* indicative of the most severe food insecurity situations, and less decline in acceptance by family and community. Though less marked, the effect on days without meals persisted to the time of interview. Returnees receiving the ECA also had significantly improved access to health care at the time of interview. Overall, the results indicate that a relatively modest but timely and targeted cash assistance had a significant benefit for the most food insecure.

The main impact evaluation (component 1: see section 4.1) for Ethiopia however shows that the treated cohort outperformed the cohort treated with ECA over the duration of the evaluation (section 5.4.1). Moreover, for those receiving microbusiness assistance, there does not appear to be an impact on the RSI scores for those receiving cash; the "treated with ECA" cohort have a negative gradient that is significantly different to the treated group ($p = 0.023$).[92] This might suggest that the positive influence of the cash advance quickly fades while those receiving full support experience longer term benefits.

At first sight, the natural experiment result appears to contradict the main impact evaluation finding, indicating the superior performance of the treated cohort versus the treated with cash advance cohort in terms of change in RSI from baseline to endline. However, the discussion that followed in section 5.4.1, and that is taken up here, indicates that the returnees receiving the cash advance differed in important ways from the treated: they were disproportionately women and judged to be vulnerable to the CLS. They also were confronting the difficult conditions during the CLS initially without benefit of microbusiness assistance. In contrast, many returnees in the treated cohort received microbusiness assistance before the CLS and had time to establish a microbusiness before it struck. Others in that cohort who returned in 2020 and 2021 didn't experience the CLS or only partially. Thus, the main impact evaluation does not consider the different composition of the two cohorts and the very different conditions they faced.[93]

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89   This section addresses subquestion 1a: How and to what extent have changes in programme implementation, such as the transition to mobile money, affected outcome of reintegration assistance? And subquestion 1c: How have the JI-HoA adapted the assistance provided to meet changes in context and what has the impact of these changes been on the reintegration of returnees?

90   "MoMo in kind" was an approach whereby returnees directly look for quotes for materials from merchants who, in turn, receive a payment from IOM via mobile money. For more details, see the definition for "Microbusiness Assistance" in the Glossary.

91   The cash lumpsum was of 4,500 Ethiopian Birr (equivalent to circa 133 USD in May 2020; using 0.0296 as the average Ethiopian Birr to USD exchange rate for May 2020).

92   IMPACT Study Country Report: Ethiopia; section 5.2, finding 22. Available at: https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl701/files/documents/2023-07/impact-country-report-ethiopia.pdf.

93   Note also that the natural experiment's multivariate regressions which assess the determinants of resilience, include in those determinants the time returnees had been in country – independently of the time they had use of the microbusiness assistance – and the contribution of returnees' actions in response to the CLS. These two factors are not taken account of in the main impact evaluation.

In the Sudan, across the different modality cohorts covered by the main impact evaluation, those receiving the cash the soonest after return ("Cash <= 4 months") actually performed best on average over the course of the evaluation; whereas "Cash > 4 months" remained static across the observation period (section 5.4.3). This has similarities to the findings of the natural experiment, where cash-based modalities contributed more to mitigating the impact of the CLS on well-being than in-kind provision. However, this did not alter the absence of effect of the JI-HoA assistance on recovery from those impacts.

In summary, the findings suggest that cash-based modes of delivery have an important role to play for the more vulnerable beneficiaries, especially at times of extreme stress. No single modality is inherently superior to support reintegration: adaptation to the needs of returnees and the context is essential. The provision of ECA in Ethiopia is a good example of this adaptation, as IOM and implementing partners responded to the challenges of the CLS, and the modality was particularly effective in mitigating the most severe instances of food insecurity (and by proxy, the more vulnerable JI-HoA beneficiaries). Indeed, the ECA was provided to returnees who expressed a need for it during the CLS; according to FGD and KII respondents, returnees who had not established a microbusiness were among the most vulnerable to the CLS.

It is not just the modality that is important, but also the appropriateness of what was provided and how long it took to receive it (as discussed further in the following section). As the qualitative research in Ethiopia highlights, returnees mentioned that they had no choice on whether they could receive microbusiness assistance in kind or in cash, and they were not fully consulted about the types of assistance they received. This highlights the importance of monitoring the programme's effectiveness, and of IOM and its implementing partners being able to adapt the assistance.

5.8 TIMELINESS OF ASSISTANCE[94]

The variation in the time the JI-HoA took to deliver microbusiness assistance to returnees was substantial, ranging from a few months to a few years – and varying significantly by region and demographic. These variations have implications for how well the JI-HoA assistance might contribute to returnees' resilience.[95] Survival analysis undertaken as part of the natural experiment component of the IMPACT study shows that country programmes took different times to deliver microbusiness assistance (Figure 11). The shape of the curves varies greatly between the three countries, showing that a greater proportion of returnees in Somalia had received microbusiness assistance than in the Sudan and Ethiopia. The shortest median time was 3.5 months after arrival in Research area A (Somalia) and the longest 17.7 months in SNNPR (Ethiopia), with returnees in the Sudan receiving their microbusiness assistance typically six months sooner than those in Ethiopia. In all three countries, women received microbusiness assistance sooner than men (up to 6.5 months sooner in Ethiopia). In the Sudan, returnees who acknowledged (in the survey) that their physical disabilities or mental health conditions made it harder for them to confront CLS received microbusiness assistance faster than those who were not willing to discuss these issues.

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94   This addresses subquestion 1b: How has delay in providing assistance to returnees affected/impacted on their reintegration?
95   Finding 21, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

Figure 11. Time to receive microbusiness assistance by country
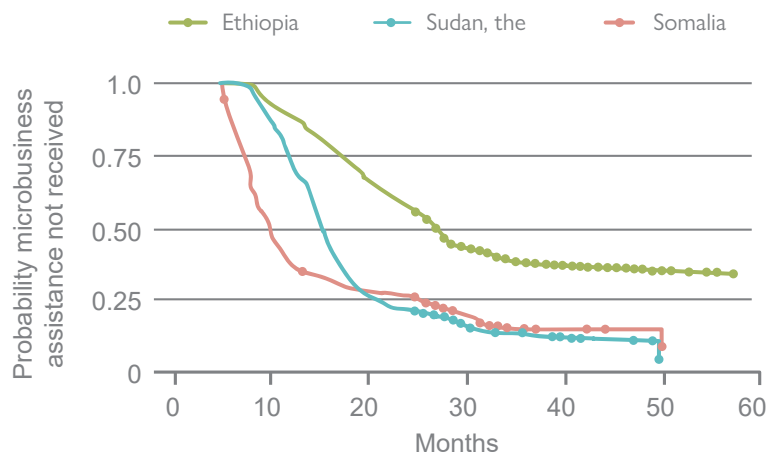
The main impact evaluation (component 1) finds no discernible effect on the endline score due to the time that a returnee has to wait before receiving microbusiness assistance. In both Ethiopia and Somalia, there is no indication that the less time a returnee is waiting, the better the RSI endline scores. Interestingly, in the Sudan, evidence suggests that the RSI endline scores diminish rapidly with any wait to receive cash assistance (for the cohort receiving cash within four months of their return) – although the other modalities show little such effect. Specifically, those receiving assistance sooner (Cash <= 4 months) on average had slightly higher RSI endline scores than those receiving with the "MoMo in kind" and the "Regular in kind" modalities; and those receiving their assistance much later after return (Cash <= 4 months) similarly display a significantly negative gradient. Once the wait reaches four months, there seems to be no further disadvantage on average.

It is important to recognize that, at an aggregate level, the length of time spent waiting for assistance has no consistent relationship to the time spent with the assistance. However, for an individual, the longer they have to wait and the less time they have with the assistance, the less opportunity there is to put it to use. Respondents in the qualitative research commented that delays can impact on their ability to establish stability and a successful business, with some considering remigration: *"The assistance was given to*

me two years after my return. So, there is a big delay in getting the assistance. This created a big problem in my success. Due to the delay, we started thinking to migrate again." (interview with male returnee aged 18, from Jimma, Oromia, Ethiopia)

The time returnees have to make use of the assistance is important – with the natural experiment (component 2) finding that the time with microbusiness assistance together with time in-country are important explanatory factors. The longer a returnee had use of IOM's assistance, the better they could mitigate the CLS' impact on their well-being.[96] Returnees viewed JI-HoA assistance as vital to enduring the CLS, lessening the deterioration of their well-being. The results of the multivariate analysis are consistent with the returnees' testimony: the longer returnees had use of microbusiness assistance, the greater their ability to mitigate the initial fall (that is, from *just before COVID-19* to *the worst point*) in six of the eight well-being domains. Importantly, more time with assistance also increased the likelihood of returnees engaging in agriculture and in making changes with respect to their children's schooling.

These results show that the timing of assistance can be critical, and returnees commented that where assistance had been received before the CLS hit, it had helped them survive the difficult times brought on by the lockdown, especially for those who had no support from their families or local governments. Returnees

96   Finding 20, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

explained that they would not have survived without the JI-HoA assistance, having used it to keep their families alive.

A significant cohort is hard-to-reach, and generally falls outside IMPACT's samples. The time to receive microbusiness assistance was substantially greater for those returnees (two thirds of the population) that are difficult to contact by phone and hence with whom the JI-HoA programme has difficulty maintaining contact. The enumeration for the natural experiment survey relied on remote interviews by phone, but many returnees may not have access to a phone or had numbers that were unreachable, making it difficult to include them in the sampling. IMPACT was nonetheless able to include them in some of the analyses using JI-HoA programme data. Survival analysis shows that those not in the sample waited for longer to receive assistance than those sampled. Figure 12 shows the

comparison for Oromia, Ethiopia – the largest region in terms of eligible returnee numbers. The analysis shows that 45 per cent of the unsampled returnees had not yet received microbusiness assistance by the time of the interview, versus 27 per cent of the sampled ones. At that point, for the unsampled returnees, the median time spent waiting was 38 months versus 33 months for the sampled returnees, suggesting that even more of the unsampled returnees were without microbusiness assistance during the CLS. It should be noted that unsampled returnees were not entirely unreachable, as fieldworkers were able to meet with a number of them in East Hararghe, Ethiopia, thanks to local returnee networks, and to engage them in FGDs and KIIs. None had received JI-HoA assistance. Some spoke of very harsh experiences during the CLS, including having to resort to begging to feed one's family.

Figure 12. Time to receive microbusiness assistance among sampled and unsampled returnees in Oromia
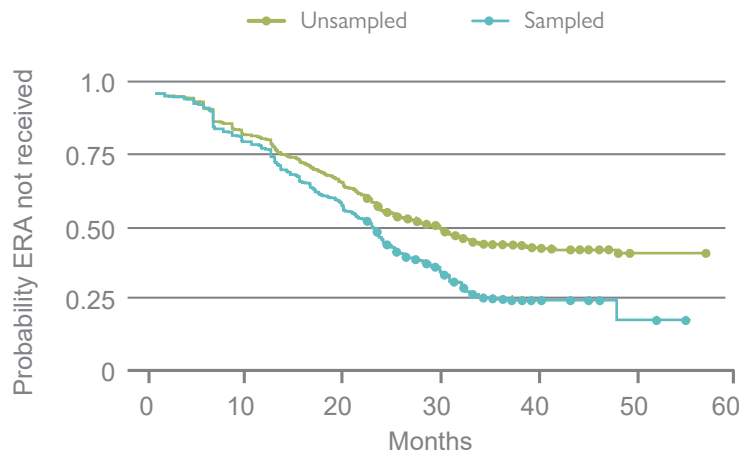
In summary, these findings point to ways in which the JI-HoA could have more effectively assisted returnees. First, returnees who had use of JI-HoA assistance for longer were better able to mitigate the CLS impacts – a key aspect of resilience. The time to receive assistance was significantly shorter for some groups of returnees, in certain places and at certain points

in time. This variability highlights how the JI-HoA can make improvements, as a shorter waiting time will provide more time for returnees to make use of assistance. In particular, attention needs to be paid to the hard-to-reach groups of returnees, who either have not received assistance or who have had to wait longer on average compared to the other returnees.

5.9 SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT OF THE JI-HOA

In all three countries, the pandemic and associated lockdowns had a profound effect on the livelihoods of returnees. Those who were most vulnerable before the pandemic were most susceptible to the CLS – with the changes they were able to make to limit the harm being largely of a coping nature. Indeed, the length of time a returnee had spent in-country increased their resilience relative to those who had returned to the country sooner, as they were better able to develop livelihoods and supportive networks. The actions of returnees made a difference in mitigating the impact of the CLS on well-being and on recovery from these impacts – both of which are key to resilience. Family and social networks were particularly important to help them through hardships, plus many returnees adjusted the primary and secondary sources of livelihood (such as increased engagement in agriculture).

In this context, the IOM assistance was greatly appreciated and it can be justified on humanitarian and human rights grounds. Achieving sustainable reintegration is however a more significant challenge, particularly given the conflicts, instability and natural disasters faced in each of the three HoA countries covered by the IMPACT study. The statistical evidence suggests that the JI-HoA led to improvements in reintegration for returnees in both Ethiopia and Somalia, with microbusiness assistance (and sometimes with associated training) making a statistically attributable contribution. The natural experiment, operating alongside the main impact evaluation, has shed light on those analyses of attribution, suggesting additional factors that may be contributing.

The "stress-test" of the JI-HoA that the natural experiment carried out provides insight into the value of its assistance to returnees and their communities confronting a major shock:

- Microbusiness assistance made a significant contribution to enabling returnees to mitigate the impact of the CLS on their well-being. However, it apparently contributed little to returnees' ability to recover from those impacts.

- Returnees often saw opportunities to make changes to their livelihood that could better safeguard well-being but many were unable to grasp those opportunities because they lacked specific skills, capital or support to join with others. The JI-HoA assistance could have done more to help returnees address these constraints.

- The multivariate models found that the JI-HoA microbusiness training (*Kaizen* and SIYB), as well as TVET assistance, did not contribute to returnees' resilience to the CLS; similarly, respondents in the qualitative research made no mention of these trainings when asked about the JI-HoA assistance that had helped them endure the CLS and make necessary adaptations.

- Increased engagement in agriculture was the most widespread and effective returnee response to the CLS, yet agriculture was not typically part of returnees' microbusiness plans.

- Long waiting times for receiving microbusiness assistance meant that substantial numbers of returnees were without that support when the CLS struck. This was all the more the case in the part of the returnee caseload which the JI-HoA had fallen out of contact with.

- Given that having an established microbusiness enabled returnees to mitigate the impact of the CLS on well-being, the delays and loss of contact meant that people were exposed to avoidable harm.

- Community-based reintegration projects (CBRPs) are a key element in IOM's Integrated Approach to Reintegration. Many returnees saw the potential they offered in responding to the CLS, for example in skill enhancement and joint action. However, less than 5 per cent of returnees had benefited from one of the 40 CBRPs that were functioning across the three countries when the CLS struck.

JI-HoA country programmes have gone some way to addressing the impact of the CLS on returnees. They have designed and delivered adaptive, targeted assistance in the midst of a very difficult period – suggesting that more of such support can be developed.[97] The best example is the Emergency Cash Advance in Ethiopia,

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97   Chapter 5, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

a modest sum deducted from the microbusiness assistance, which helped recipients mitigate the most severe dimension of food insecurity (that is, going whole days without meals) – an effect that persisted. This assistance was requested more frequently by women. The average waiting time to receive microbusiness assistance has also improved for later-arriving cohorts in the Sudan and Somalia and women have received assistance faster than men in all three countries amid significant implementation challenges. These findings suggest that country programmes were able to learn and prioritize vulnerable returnees, capacities they can draw on to achieve further and wider improvements.

Developing means to communicate with the two thirds of the returnee caseload that is difficult to contact by phone and has waited longer for assistance is an important challenge. Similar difficulties exist in communicating with the returnees living with physical and mental disabilities, who often avoid acknowledging them and the difficulties they create.

Finally, the comparisons of the different modalities of microbusiness assistance delivery indicate that no single modality is intrinsically more effective in increasing long-term sustainable reintegration outcomes, although some, such as cash advances, have demonstrated a significant effect on addressing severe food insecurity. It is therefore imperative that reintegration assistance continues to adapt and respond to the expressed and evolving needs of returnees.

6. LESSONS ON IMPROVING SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION METRICS[98]

In this chapter, IMPACT explores lessons for improving the Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI) as a measure of sustainable reintegration, while in the next chapter the broader methodological lessons on evaluating reintegration assistance are presented. The RSI builds on a long line of multidimensional indices that have become increasingly popular over the past decade for measuring difficult concepts (such as poverty, resilience and gender inequality, among others).[99] These indices recognize the challenges of measuring such concepts, including the lack of a universally agreed definition or consensus on an approach to measurement. Originally developed in 2017, the RSI has since been applied by multiple IOM missions globally (see section 2.2 for details). It was initially designed for the multidimensional measurement of sustainable reintegration, but throughout this evaluation, three distinct use cases are identified:

- First, as a global scoring index: The RSI is used internationally by IOM as a global scoring index. It is applied to tens of thousands of returnees across nearly 70 countries. As a global scoring index, the intention is to create comparability in measuring sustainable reintegration across countries.

- Second, to support service delivery: The RSI is used in the JI-HoA for case management purposes and targeting additional assistance to returnees with an overall score below 0.33. In this role, the RSI is used as a targeting tool for service delivery.

- Third, for monitoring and evaluation: The RSI is used to determine programme effectiveness for reintegration assistance. In the JI-HoA, the RSI is used for reporting on sustainable reintegration of returnees in the programme's logframe.

The trade-offs between these multiple purposes compromises the tool when used for the impact evaluation (Component 1) of an IOM programme.

The remainder of the chapter draws out lessons for improving several aspects of the index:

- The AVRR data chain,

- Pre-departure and migration experiences that influence reintegration,

- Appropriateness of indicators within the Index,

- The weightings between the different indicators,

- The threshold of what constitutes sustainable reintegration,

- Alignment of the RSI with programme evaluation.

6.1 IMPROVING THE AVRR DATA CHAIN[100]

At present, returnee data is collected by IOM and its partners at various points along their individual journeys through the use of multiple unconnected ODK-based instruments.[101] Much of the monitoring data are collected at country level and not always with a standardized variable name. In some countries, some collected variables are unique, which has prevented the unambiguous merging of JI-HoA monitoring data across different countries. A review of the existing data chain by IMPACT indicates that the intended unique identifier, the MiMOSA number, is sometimes partially or completely missing in some of the datasets. This shortcoming has led to the data chain having many

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98   This chapter addresses Objective 2: How can sustainable reintegration metrics be improved? For a fuller elaboration see IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

99   The Multidimensional Poverty Index is a leader in the field (Alkire and Foster, 2011), using three equally weighted dimensions with a total of 10 indicators (covering nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing and assets). Koser and Kuschminder (2015) produced the first return and reintegration index, based on three equally weighted dimensions, five equally weighted indicators per dimension, and a threshold of reintegration for each indicator.

100   This addresses subquestion 2a: To what extent does the AVRR data chain collect sufficient information assess sustainable reintegration?

101   ODK is an open-source mobile data collection platform that enables users to fill out forms offline and send form data to a server when a connection is found. Once on the server, the data can be viewed, downloaded, and acted upon.

breaks where it is not possible to track data on the same returnees through the different instruments along data chain.

Ensuring a consistent data chain can support improvements in the analysis of the RSI scores – including making use of other data to contextualize findings or to test different hypotheses and types of analysis. Given that data collection requires significant resourcing as part of the programme's M&E system, it is important to maximize the consistency of data formats and the potential to link datasets. At the start of the evaluation, it was difficult to link datasets that capture different information about the same returnees as they return and continue on their reintegration journey. Ensuring a data chain that tracks returnees reliably across all M&E instruments provides the opportunity for additional insights from the existing datasets at minimum additional cost. Doing so is useful when constructing sample universes, formulating hypotheses as well as when stratifying samples. It can also help support the analysis of the returnee journey and reintegration (including the RSI), as well as programme performance.

6.2 UNDERSTANDING THE PRE-DEPARTURE EXPERIENCES

The RSI (by drawing on the data collected through the RSS some 12–18 months after return) provides a snapshot in time but is limited in what is known about the migration and pre-departure experience. Even if the migration route is known and serves as a proxy, limited information is available on the returnees' experiences that are likely to affect them in different ways. The qualitative research suggests some clustering of migration experiences around the convergence / non-convergence of returnees' RSI scores with non-migrants. For example, many of the treated un-converged in Ethiopia had all returned from being in detention in the United Republic of Tanzania,[102] with specific challenges around economic, physical health

and mental health – including stress and physical illness due to beatings:

> " *I was depressed as I had nothing in my hand and when I recall or think of the money (150,000 Ethiopian Birr)[103] that I paid for the brokers. In fact, I went through many sleepless nights. I have also been struggling with my health, pneumonia that I developed while in the Tanzanian detention centre as I used to sleep on a concrete floor and without mattress. Moreover, I have also faced economic challenges as I could not start the previous business as I didn't have the money required to run the business. In addition, although not significant, my migration experience has impacted my ability to fully be myself for some time. That is, sometimes I used to feel pain around my backbone that was beaten by the detention centre police.*
>
> – *Interview with female returnee (25), Hadiya, Ethiopia*

The qualitative research findings in Ethiopia and Somalia also indicate that family debt is a significant barrier to reintegration – with a majority of respondents interviewed having decided to migrate without informing their families. While the samples of qualitative interviews are small, this issue was often mentioned. For example, half of the treated non-converged SNNPR returnees[104] in Ethiopia reported that their family disagreed with their migration or that they did not inform their family. The majority of returnees in Oromia did not receive support from their families before their migration. Similarly, in Somalia, the majority of returnees did not consult their families in their decision to migrate and decided to leave on their own.

This decision is important for reintegration well-being, as families that were not informed of the migration (or did not agree to the migration) were frequently asked by the migrant while en route for financial assistance by extortionists and smugglers who threatened the life of the migrant if the family did not pay. The resulting debt

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102 Seven out of eight returnees in this group declared to have been detained in the United Republic of Tanzania.

103 This amount was equivalent to circa 4,440 USD in May 2020; using 0.0296 as the average Ethiopian Birr to USD exchange rate for May 2020.

104 Interestingly, those returnees who were closer to the non-migrant population at endline (that is, converged returnees who had reached a RSI score similar to that of their matched non-migrant) were more likely to have received support from their families before migration. This is based on a small qualitative sample of SNNPR returnees in Ethiopia who migrated on the Southern Route to reach South Africa.

the family had to incur and the eventual return of the migrant without being able to repay the debt negatively impacts both the family and returnees' relationship and well-being.

The findings show that debt significantly impacts reintegration processes socially through challenging familial relationships and economic hardship. In Ethiopia, returnees reported family conflict upon their return and family members interviewed were frustrated that they did not hear of their return until they had already arrived in the village. The accountability for the debt is tied to the decision for the migration. When this decision is made collectively and with support of the family, there is joint accountability for the debt – in most cases. When the migration decision is taken unilaterally or against the wishes of the family, and the debt is extorted against the fear of their death, the accountability dynamics regarding the debt may shift, resulting in strained family dynamics. It clearly is an important variable in considering not only the returnee's well-being, but the overall ability of the returnee to reintegrate. Furthermore, families that have not gone into debt over the migration are in a stronger position to support the returnee both emotionally and financially. This aspect is important in considering the overall reintegration process.

In Somalia, families were generally welcoming to their returning family members regardless of the debt. However, given the high cost of migration to Libya, families had frequently sold their assets to support the migration and had little capacity to provide any financial support upon return. Community members scorned returnees for what they did to their families by migrating and the qualitative findings revealed a clear negative stigma towards migration. This stigma reflects the well-known risks associated with the migration journey in Somalia. One non-migrant in Somalia stated: *"To begin with, migration is not considered as a success or failure; it is always a risk; you are either gambling with your life or with your family's belongings; also, they are constantly worried about you and wonder whether their son will stay or depart."* The negative impacts of irregular migration on the family were cited as a key reason for poor mental

health and depression, due to the shame resulting from the situation, among returnees in Somalia.

The interpretation of the RSI scores would benefit from gaining deeper insights into the migration experience. This could involve improving the use of available monitoring data within the data chain and gathering further insights through the RSS. For instance, exploring aspects such as the reasons behind returnees' decision to migrate and any current debt they may have incurred with family members could provide valuable context.

6.3 NON-RESPONSE AND REVISING THE RSI INDICATORS

Of the 29 indicators that make up the index, there are three variables that can be skipped in the revised RSS+ survey depending on the preceding screening question:[105] (i) debt to spending ratio (if the respondent has no debt); (ii) school-aged children attending school (if the respondent's household has no children); and (iii) wish versus need to migrate (if they feel they can stay in their country of origin, unweighed in the RSI). Not all returnees are asked these questions, and while this does not constitute a non-response, it does raise the issue as to whether variables that are only applicable to certain respondents should be included in an index that aims to compare across all respondents.

A related issue during IMPACT was that of non-response, where respondents could answer, *"Don't know"* or *"I do not wish to answer"*. Seven indicators had non-response rates greater than 2 per cent at either retro-baseline or endline (Table 12). The frequency of non-response suggests that some respondents were either unable to understand the question or uncomfortable to answer, and/or that enumerators were not properly trained on the questions and the importance of full RSS completion. A combination of the former appears more likely given the sensitivity of the topics. In either case, non-response creates inaccuracies in measurement and highlights the need to revise these variables for the future.

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105   These three variables were skipped as they are only asked if the respondent had an existing debt, had school-aged children in their household, or stated that they do not feel able to stay in their community respectively. The questions on debt-spending ratio and school-aged children attending school were initially asked to everybody in the institutional version of the RSS. In RSS+, the "screening" questions were added to improve data quality. The question on "wish" versus the "need" to migrate had the screening question in the institutional RSS as well as the RSS+.

In response to the missing values, IMPACT used existing imputation methods defined by the institutional tool in order to cover those missing variables and not entirely lose the response from the analysis.[106] This approach was necessary, but not preferred. It is thus recommended for future versions of the RSI to revise the highlighted questions and field-test responses before implementation to validate that the questions are easily understood and responded to both as a contemporaneous endline and as much as possible, for a retro-baseline. Box 7 provides an example of a potential alternative indicator for debt, based on questions included in the RSS+ instrument.

Table 12. Percentage of returnees and non-returnees who did not respond to the RSS indicator asked

#	Indicator	Retrobaseline	Endline	Retrobaseline	Endline
econ_1	Satisfaction with current economic situation	0.2%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%
econ_2	**Frequency of food insecurity**	0.9%	0.8%	2.9%	2.7%
econ_3	**Ability to borrow money**	1.2%	0.8%	5.2%	4.5%
econ_4	Frequency of borrowing money	0.2%	0.1%	1.1%	1.2%
econ_5	**Debt to spending ratio**	2.7%	0.9%	5.6%	3.7%
econ_6	Perceived access to employment and training	0.6%	0.6%	1.6%	1.5%
econ_7	Currently working	0.3%	0.4%	1.0%	0.4%
econ_8	**Ownership of productive assets**	3.2%	2.0%	1.0%	1.1%
econ_9	Currently searching for a job	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%
soc_11	Access to housing in community	0.3%	0.1%	0.9%	0.7%
soc_12	Perceived standard of housing	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%	0.6%
soc_13	Access to education in community	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	1.0%
soc_14	Children enrolled in school	0.1%	0.1%	2.6%	2.6%
soc_15	**Access to justice and law enforcement in community**	1.5%	1.3%	2.6%	2.6%
soc_16	Possession of ID	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.4%

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106 A score of 0.5 (on a 0-1 scale) is applied in cases of non-response. This imputation method for the retrospective questions in the IMPACT evaluation RSS is also adapted.

soc_17	Access to health care in community	2.5%	2.4%	2.7%	2.7%
soc_18	Quality/adequacy of health care in community	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
soc_19	Access to documentation in community	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%
soc_20	Access to safe drinking water in community	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%	0.7%
pss_22	Participation in social activities	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
pss_23	**Strength of support network**	**20.4%**	**11.0%**	**24.4%**	**23.5%**
pss_24	Strength of belonging to community	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
pss_25	Sense of physical security	0.1%	0.0%	0.4%	0.4%
pss_26	Frequency of conflict with family/domestic tension	1.5%	1.4%	1.1%	0.9%
pss_27	**Feeling of discrimination in country of origin**	**20.3%**	**19.2%**	**12.2%**	**13.0%**
pss_28	Frequency of experimenting signs of distress	0.2%	0.6%	2.0%	1.5%
pss_29	**Desire to receive psychological support**	**2.1%**	**0.8%**	**5.4%**	**4.1%**
pss_30	**Subjective ability to stay in country of origin**	**7.3%**	**6.4%**	**2.9%**	**3.0%**

Note: Indicators with greater than (or equal to) a 2 per cent non-response rate are in bold.

BOX 7. DEBT: AN EXAMPLE OF A MORE INFORMATIVE, ALTERNATIVE INDICATOR

It is important to have an accurate account of a returnees' debt situation, as research highlights the prominence of debt in the reintegration process.[a] The current RSS question (Econ_5) for measuring debt is: *"On average, which amount is bigger: your spending every month, or your debt?"* This question is used to determine the returnee's debt-to-spending ratio and provides one of the nine indicators for the economic dimension of the RSI.

This question has a high non-response rate in the RSI at both retro-baseline and contemporaneous endline (with an imputed value used to complete the index calculation). It seems likely that the main cause of the low response rate is that respondents have to estimate a household's average monthly consumption – a non-trivial matter.

Two alternative questions on debt (Econ_5a and Econ_5b) were trialled in the RSS+, and can be combined as a potential alternative:

- Econ_5a. *Did you borrow money for your migration journey?* [yes, no]

- Econ_5b. *Which of the following statements best describes your current debt situation as a result of the money borrowed for your migration journey?*

   ○ I repaid my entire debt incurred for my migration journey.

   ○ I will pay off my entire debt incurred for my migration journey in the next 12 months.

   ○ I will pay off my entire debt incurred for my migration journey in more than 12 months.

   ○ I do not know when I will be able to pay off my debt incurred for my migration journey.

Using these questions, an analysis of debt repayments and varying levels of microbusiness performance shows an emerging pattern:[b] those with a currently functioning business are repaying their debts at higher rates than those whose business has either closed or yet to be operational. Furthermore, when that business is successful, 35 per cent of this group have repaid their debts compared to 25 per cent of those with a struggling business, and 19 per cent of those whose business has closed.

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a   Samuel Hall, University of Sussex and IOM (2022).
b   See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

And lastly, the current food security indicator[107] is poorly phrased as it confounds both the quality and quantity eaten, and assumes that returnees purchase food but do not self-provide – in addition, no timeframe is indicated. Analysis conducted for the natural experiment component of IMPACT found that four food insecurity variables permitted a clear characterization of returnees' situation and how it changed: (1) going days without meals; (2) reducing meals per day; (3) reducing size of meals; and (4) reducing consumption of protein-rich foods.[108] For example, assessing whether returnees went a whole day without eating any meals and the frequency that they did this provides an indication of the most extreme food insecure. The experience suggests that better phrased indicators of food insecurity (such as replacing the current RSS question with two clearly phrased indicators) will improve this key aspect of the RSI.

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107   Question Econ_2: "How often have you had to reduce the quantity or quality of food you eat because of its cost?".
108   These variables are based on questions used in the reduced Coping Strategies Index (WFP, 2019). See also Maxwell and Caldwell (2008).

6.4 THE USE OF THRESHOLDS TO BENCHMARK REINTEGRATION

Thresholds provide a basis against which to form judgements, and typically indices will be benchmarked against global standards using available datasets. However, as reintegration indices are relatively new, benchmarks remain challenging given that such standards do not exist. Furthermore, the RSI is comprised of several subjective variables, because reintegration is both a subjective and objective process, and this makes defining thresholds more challenging.

There RSI score can range from 0 to 1, and while in theory, a composite RSI score of 1 (or 100%) is most desirable, in practice this is unlikely. The originally proposed RSI suggested a threshold of 0.66 to determine the cut-off between reintegrated and not reintegrated. In the JI-HoA, the 0.5 threshold was used for the programme-specific objective indicator (SOI 3.3): *"percentage of migrants assisted reporting*

sufficient levels of economic self-sufficiency, social sustainability, and psychosocial well-being in their country of return."[109] Throughout the IMPACT evaluation, the threshold of 0.66 has been used to determine sustainable reintegration.

Further analysis[110] of these thresholds shows a **large difference between the 0.66 and 0.50 cut-offs of the composite RSI score. Whereas 89.5 per cent of all respondents[111] are reintegrated at a 0.50 threshold at endline, this compares to only 44.5 per cent of respondents[112] being reintegrated at the 0.66 endline cut-off.** There is also a continuous decline from the 0.50 to the 0.66 threshold with no break in the distribution between these two values, with the exception of the Somalia endline, which demonstrates a more abrupt gradient change at 0.62 (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Percentage of Returnees' RSS scores meeting reintegration thresholds between 0.50 and 0.66

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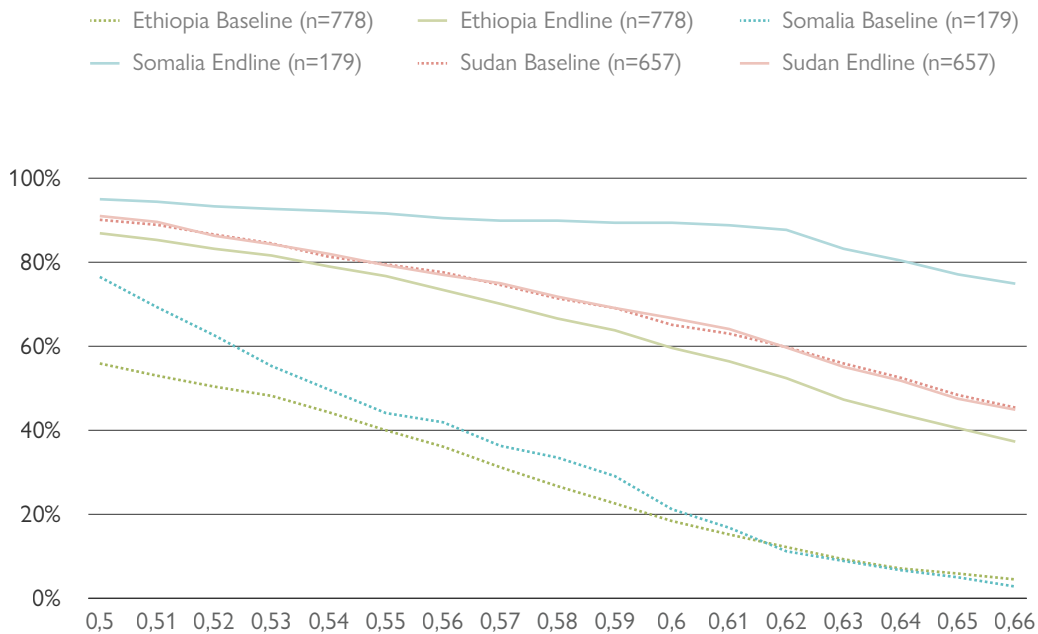
109   The source of this statement is the Logical Framework of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in the Horn of Africa (IOM internal document).

110   Section 4.5, IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

111   86.9 per cent in Ethiopia, 95.0 per cent in Somalia and 91.0 per cent in the Sudan.

112   37.3 per cent in Ethiopia, 74.9 per cent in Somalia, and 44.9 per cent in the Sudan.

This simple comparison highlights the importance of the threshold decision as it describes a very different picture of reintegration. In particular, the large number of returnees above the 0.50 threshold suggests that reintegration at this level is fairly tenuous and raises concerns about whether thresholds are the best way to assess sustainable reintegration. Without thresholds, the RSI could be presented as scores to illustrate the range of reintegration at a moment in time; or rather than focusing on the score itself, it may be preferable to focus on the change in scores over time, regardless of a notional threshold.

In summary, these findings suggest that further calibration of thresholds is necessary, including taking account of specific contextual factors and difference between countries. Options to consider include:

- **First, using the non-migrant population in each country as a benchmark to then calibrate the "sustainable" reintegration thresholds to be used by the RSI.** This is the approach primarily adopted in this evaluation and has the advantage that the RSI definition and its associated weights remain unchanged. The disadvantage is that it places a burden on the matching and selection of non-migrants, as well as the requirements to enumerate both cohorts through the RSI. The IMPACT findings show that in Ethiopia and Somalia this approach has potential, with the Overall RSI values for non-migrants being relatively flat between retro-baseline and endline. For the Sudan, where the challenges of daily life increased over the observation period, the average non-migrant Overall RSI value decreases from about 0.57 to 0.52 at endline.

- **Second, using qualitative threshold score validation within a country, once the RSS enumeration has been completed and the RSI scores calculated.** One challenge with this approach is to be able to conduct enough reintegration threshold validation interactions with returnees across a sufficient number of contexts in any given country. Furthermore, in a country where significant regional differences exist, different normative values may be necessary for different subnational areas.

- **Third, combining the existing normative threshold with a proxy indicator of reintegration** – as this could lead to a reduction of returnees that are misclassified as reintegrated. The two proposed proxies are: (1) Qualitative self-perception of the returnee's ability to stay and continue to live in the country: and/or: (2) Returnee's perception that they feel that their level of reintegration is either very good or fully reintegrated. By taking Question 30[113] out of the current RSI, the remaining variables within the index will be more consistently focused on the drivers of reintegration (that is, rather than being conflated with a self-perception of reintegration, and the remigration decisions of returnees). This approach does not require any non-migrant RSI enumeration to provide a calibration group.

These three options are not mutually exclusive, and in fact there is an argument for combining them – with this IMPACT study having done elements of each. The final chapter of this report returns to this discussion.

6.5 WEIGHTS AND THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF EACH VARIABLE

The RSI uses expert-selected drivers of reintegration with fixed weights. The weights were informed by Principal Component Analysis (PCA)[114] outputs, which were reviewed and modified by expert consensus.

The strengths of the current RSI weighting approach are:

- The definition of sustainable reintegration is fixed. Universal fixed weights allow for easy interpretation of index values and the development of standard operating procedures (such for returnee tracking / case management).

- The index is comparable between contexts and over time.

The weaknesses of the RSI weighting approach include:

- There may be significant changes to programme and country contexts over time, which would imply changes should also be made to the weights used. Given that the RSI weights were developed using data from 290 respondents across five countries between

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113 Question Pss_30: *"Do you feel that you are able to stay and live in this country?".*

114 PCA is a data analysis technique used to reduce large datasets to make them easier to interpret, while minimizing the loss of information.

February and August 2017, it is unreasonable to expect it to be equally relevant to all countries.

- Whenever a weighting system is used, there is a potential lack of transparency, and the burden is on the designers to justify the value of the extra complexity. In the absence of compelling evidence for the differential weights and their robustness across locations and time, an appropriate substitute is to default to an equally self-weighted index.[115]

An additional methodology is provided by Samuel Hall[116] for updating of RSI indicator weights to reflect local context and reintegration dynamics, thus aiming to account for variations in country contexts. This method has not been implemented,[117] and universal weights are applied.

The IMPACT's analysis of the weights finds:[118]

- A misalignment between data-driven weightings compared to the PCA/expert approach of the RSI.[119] Indeed, significant drivers of the data-driven RSIs (MIMIC or PCA) vary between time of enumeration (retro-baseline vs endline) and whether the analysis is cross-sectional, baseline or endline alone, or dynamic in the case of the RSI MIMIC delta.

- The removal the PCA/expert weighting does not change the retro-baseline/endline ranking between returnees and matched non-migrants, nor the level of convergence at endline. This finding applies equally to the Overall RSI as well as for any of the three dimensions.

- The relative weights within a dimension vary depending on whether the index calculation is for the Overall RSI score or the individual dimension score. This is an artefact of the PCA analysis but

is hard to justify given that the relative weights within a dimension (economic, psychosocial, social) change depending on whether the Overall RSI or the individual pillar RSIs are calculated.

Overall, no clear a priori rationale exists to give higher weights to one indicator over another, and establishing a weighting system that always suits all contexts appears infeasible. In contrast, universal fixed weights allow for a more straightforward interpretation of index values, as well as an RSI that is comparable over time.

6.6 ALIGNMENT TO PROGRAMME EVALUATION[120]

The RSI is used as a tool for the multidimensional measurement of sustainable reintegration, a way to determine vulnerability and target assistance, as well as means to evaluate the effectiveness of IOM's programming. The latter is especially challenging as not all of the variables that make up the index have the potential to be affected by IOM's interventions. For example, there are many indicators that require longer-term change or are affected by other interventions or structural issues like the economic performance of the country or government policies.

Overall, it was predicted that 14 variables across the three dimensions would display a positive direct effect, while in reality it was found that only six variables show a significantly positive result, with all of them being part of the economic dimension[121] (Table 13). The first analysis is based on a qualitative assessment of those variables that are likely (or "expected") to be affected: with a positive direct effect expected on 14 indicators; an indirect effect on 10

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115 As part of establishing the Human Development Index, and the related United Nations Human Development Report, Mahbub ul Haq argued that equal weights were justified, "on the simple premise that all these choices were very important and that there was no a priori rationale for giving a higher weight to one choice than to another" (ul Haq, 1996: 48).

116 Samuel Hall (2017b: 41-49).

117 Implementing this methodology also seems unlikely in the future, as it assumes that country staff have robust information to modify weights in a particular direction, and at a specific geographic scale.

118 The detailed analysis is contained in the Technical Annex of IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

119 The analysis compares the Overall RSI weights with the coefficients from the MIMIC retro-baseline, MIMIC endline, MIMIC delta, PCA endline and PCA delta.

120 This section addresses sub question 2b: To what extent does the RSI appropriately capture local context, and provide the empirical basis for appropriate programme intervention decisions, including opportunities for analysis of drivers of reintegration and drivers of remigration, and determine which of those can be affected by AVRR programme implementation?

121 Chapter 3, IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

variables; and no effect on five variables in the RSI. The second analysis is based on a comparison of whether returnees who received assistance displayed significantly greater increases (at the 5% level) in related indicators than those who did not (using the IMPACT dataset for the JI-HoA).[122] Based on this second analysis, the only significant effect of IOM assistance was on six indicators within the economic dimension, namely:

- Econ_1 Satisfaction with current Economic situation,

- Econ_3 Financial inclusion (ability to borrow),

- Econ_6 Access to employment and training,

- Econ_7 Currently working,

- Econ_8 Ownership of productive assets,

- Econ_9 Currently looking for a job.

This finding broadly aligns with where IOM programming interventions are focused, and to some extent, the predictions made in Table 13. The IMPACT country reports show the greatest improvements in returnees RSI scores from baseline to endline across all three countries are in the economic and psychosocial domains – with little impact in the social domain. Indeed, the vast majority of JI-HoA recipients received some form of economic assistance (79%), whereas just over one quarter received social assistance (27%), and a minority received psychosocial assistance (5%).[123] While the latter is only 5 per cent, this is based only on psychosocial referrals, which occur only in the more severe cases and where a referral partner is available. Other returnees received psychosocial assistance in terms of group support, although this is not indicated in the data available and could not be used for analysis.

This analysis demonstrates that while the RSI may be an effective tool for measuring the multiple dimensions of reintegration, it is not necessarily an effective tool to evaluate IOM reintegration programming – with the vast majority of RSI variables beyond the scope of IOM programming, and unlikely to change in the short term. Only a minority of the variables in the RSI directly align to the programme interventions most utilized by returnees – with just six of the variables showing a significantly positive change in returnees' outcomes from baseline to endline. Furthermore, three out of 29 RSI variables have no statistically significant changes from baseline to endline. These are: frequency of borrowing money (econ_4), access to justice (soc_15), and wish versus need to migrate (pss_31a).

Table 13. Predicted and actual direct, indirect and no effects of individual RSI indicators

Question	PREDICTION			ACTUAL		
	Direct	Indirect	None	Direct	Indirect	None
Economic						
Satisfaction with current economic situation	✓			✓		
Food security		✓			✓	
Financial inclusion (ability to borrow)		✓		✓		
Frequency of borrowing		✓				✓
Debt to spending ratio		✓			✓	
Access to employment and training	✓			✓		
Currently working	✓			✓		
Ownership of productive assets		✓		✓		
Currently looking for a job		✓		✓		

122   The analysis is limited to mono variant t-tests and not a more rigorous regression analysis with other controlling variables included. It is limited by the sample size and the use of hypothesis testing, and so further research and more detailed analysis would be needed to confirm these findings.

123   Chapter 3, IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

Table 13. Predicted and actual direct, indirect and no effects of individual RSI indicators (continued)

Question	PREDICTION			ACTUAL		
	Direct	Indirect	None	Direct	Indirect	None
Social						
Access to housing in community	✓				✓	
Perceived standard of housing	✓				✓	
Access to education in community	✓				✓	
Children enrolled in school	✓				✓	
Access to justice and law enforcement			✓			✓
Possession of ID	✓				✓	
Access to documentation in community	✓				✓	
Access to safe drinking water			✓		✓	
Access to health care	✓				✓	
Quality/Adequacy of health care			✓		✓	
Psychosocial						
Participation in social activities		✓			✓	
Strength of support network		✓			✓	
Feel part of community		✓			✓	
Sense of physical security		✓			✓	
Frequency of conflict with family/domestic tension	✓				✓	
Feelings of discrimination		✓			✓	
Frequency of experiencing signs of distress	✓				✓	
Desire to receive psychological support		✓			✓	
Feel able to stay			✓		✓	
Wish vs need to migrate			✓			✓

6.7 SUMMARY OF LESSONS

The institutional RSI is a reasonable approach for assessing the multidimensional nature of reintegration. The three independent methods of assessing reintegration used by IMPACT (MIMIC, non-migrant propensity logistic regression, and self-perceptions) largely agree that returnees are improving between baseline and endline – although they do not reach full convergence with their corresponding non-migrants, except for the Treated RSI MIMIC and reintegration perception, which achieve statistical convergence. The institutional RSI findings are more optimistic in terms of non-migrant returnee convergence than any of the other three measures.

As with any index, some aspects of the RSI could be improved, including:

• The current RSI is used as both a tool to measure sustainable reintegration and a tool for evaluating IOM's programming to deliver reintegration to returnees. The findings in this chapter demonstrate that the JI-HoA had an impact on a minority of variables in the index, mostly those associated with economic interventions. This suggests that there is either a need for additional variables beyond the RSI

to adequately capture programme effectiveness[124] and/or for changes to IOM programming to better address the other aspects of the RSI (such as the social and psychosocial dimensions).

- The analysis of the RSI thresholds shows that a significant difference exists in the 0.5 and 0.66 composite index cut-offs, with the 0.5 cut-off seemingly a tenuous point at which to assess the achievement of reintegration. Rather than drawing a somewhat arbitrary threshold, a range of reintegration scales is likely to be more helpful (such as "not reintegrated", "somewhat reintegrated" and "highly reintegrated").

- The analysis of weights in the RSI suggest that they don't have a noticeable effect and could be removed. This allows for all indicators to be considered equally and has the added advantage of providing a more straightforward interpretation of individual RSI indicators.

There is also some uncertainty around the relevance of indicators within the RSI, such as those associated with the specifics of a country context, as well as the migration experience and the subjective perceptions of returnees. As the IMPACT findings for the Sudan show (section 5.4.3), in some contexts the underlying conditions may be so unstable (or destitute) that even if IOM's reintegration assistance is effective, many of the RSI variables will decline for reasons beyond the control of IOM.[125] This potentially undervalues the assistance provided by IOM. As the natural experiment component of IMPACT demonstrates, significant shocks can have a huge impact, and yet the RSI does not take particular account of such dynamics. For example, the national experiment's well-being framework detected the life-saving nature of IOM assistance, particularly the cash modalities at mitigating the worst effects of the CLS for the most vulnerable (see section 5.4).

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124 This might include intermediate and proxy indicators based on the programme's theory of change, and which are captured within the programme's routine monitoring or using additional evaluative tools – rather than necessarily altering the RSI.

125 For example, the qualitative research component undertook focus groups with returnees and matched non-migrant pairs. The well-being lines produced showed migration as having a low rating, with locust invasion, drought and inflation rated as having higher level impacts on their communities.

7. LESSONS ON EVALUATING REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES[126]

This chapter presents lessons from conducting IMPACT, offering insights that can inform future evaluations of reintegration programmes. As mentioned at the start of this report, the evaluation is innovative in a number of ways – particularly the testing of calibration groups to rigorously assess impact and the use of a natural experiment to assess the performance of the JI-HoA and "stress-test" the assistance.

In the first part, the chapter considers the use of retrospective data – something that became a necessity when the numbers of returnees slowed due to the pandemic and the ability of IMPACT to enumerate a sufficient sample of contemporaneous baselines sharply declined. Retrospective data collection, which is often considered suboptimal, is also cost-effective and sometimes the only feasible option in such contexts. Second, the chapter analyses the use of non-migrant cohorts as a calibration group, which is particularly relevant to future impact evaluations due to the challenge of devising a sufficiently robust counterfactual to returnees. Third, the W-model is considered, which postulates that returnees experience "ups" and "downs" as a non-random phenomenon – something that if empirically true, could undermine the evaluation and limit the interpretation of findings. And last, lessons on the use of natural experiments for similar interventions and contexts are presented.

7.1 THE USE OF RETROSPECTIVE DATA

While contemporaneous data is usually considered preferable, evaluating migrant populations is often challenging and using retrospective data can sometimes be the only feasible option. This was the situation for IMPACT, which was commissioned after the programme had started and had a significant disruption of returnee flows – which substantially tailed off as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated government restrictions.

The reliability of retrospective data is important, not only for this evaluation but also for future evaluations, as it is likely to be needed given the resource constraints and unpredictable and challenging contexts in which most reintegration programmes operate.

The typical assumption is that retrospective data is less reliable and tends to report a distorted recollection than contemporaneous data. This is based on the idea that retrospective enumeration can lead to measurement bias, such as due to *"rosy retrospection"* (a tendency to recall the past more fondly than the present), *"euphoric recall"* (a tendency to remember past experiences in a positive light, while overlooking associated negative experiences) and *"egocentric bias"* (a tendency to rely too heavily on their own point of view when examining their life events).

A literature review by Dennison (2022) however, indicates that recall can display reasonable correspondence to contemporaneous assessments for periods of five years or less – but that the difference between the two increases with the cognitive complexity and demand of the questions asked. Others suggest that reliable retrospective information can be collected on events that people remember, suggesting a recall period of two years or less.[127] For returnees, the return from migration should provide a significant anchoring event, whereas for non-migrants they are highly unlikely to have a similarly significant anchoring event at the two-month period after the return of their corresponding matched returnee (Box 8).

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[126] This chapter addresses Objective 3: How can we effectively evaluate the impact of reintegration programmes in the future and what are the methodological requirements to do so?

[127] Smith and Thomas (2003).

BOX 8. COMPARISON OF CONTEMPORANEOUS AND RETROSPECTIVE BASELINES IN THE SUDAN[a]

It is impossible to unequivocally determine the extent of bias associated with the retro-baseline enumeration under IMPACT without panel observations of both contemporaneous and retro-baseline values for the same respondent. Only in the Sudan is this possible due to a change in sampling strategy – and even then, only for a very small sample of 21 returnees and 18 non-migrants.

Reassuringly, the contemporaneous and the retro-baselines for the returnees are almost identical, but as expected, there is a greater difference between the two scores for the non-migrant cohort. Although this is a very small sample, and the difference is not statistically significant, it is consistent with the view that non-migrants are more challenging to retrospectively enumerate due to the lack of a significant anchoring event.

a   Both IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h) and the three IMPACT Study Country reports (available at https://eastandhornofafrica.iom.int/impact-study) provide more details on this matter.

Overall, IMPACT's analysis[128] finds that there is a more pessimistic recollection for the retro-baseline, and importantly, the greater the time since arrival the greater the likelihood of a lower RSI (although this is inconsistent across the three countries). Dennison (2022: 4), using the IOM/IMPACT dataset, suggests that the evaluation's retro-baseline data may similarly be reporting a more negative situation (contrary to some of the literature). The analysis however finds that this effect disappears when respondents finding it "not easy to remember the

time/period" are removed from the analysis (circa 20% of the sample). This suggests that the effect observed in the full sample is largely a consequence of memory bias (the struggle to recall by a small minority), rather than a consistency bias (inconsistent recollections of the past). While far from conclusive, it provides some confidence about the lack of a systematic bias and gives credibility to the data – though more research is needed.

Meanwhile, for the natural experiment it was likewise critical that respondents could accurately recall, but rather than their return from migration, it was the situation just before COVID-19. IMPACT assessed this reliability indirectly by testing: (i) their recall (the ability to remember something unprompted); and (ii) their recognition (the ability to remember something with prompts) of the control measures that the governments had imposed or strongly recommended at the beginning of the CLS around the beginning of April 2020. The two most frequently recalled control measures were the same in the three countries and in the same order: the banning of large gatherings and school closures. Other than these, the measures returnees recalled most frequently appeared to reflect the strictness with which they were imposed by the government and how much the measure would have affected returnees.[129] The analysis suggests that returnees were able to remember the measures imposed for longer than 18 months that had particularly affected them. It seems likely that their recall of their own situation at that time – central to the study's methodology – would have been no less accurate.[130]

The empirical evidence provides some reassurance to the use of retrospective data in this evaluation, and certainly remains too mixed to rule out retrospective measurement altogether. As Dennison concludes: *"the current presumption against the use of long-term recall questions in field surveys ignores a potentially rich source of data… both prospective and retrospective data have merits and drawbacks so ideally both should be used".131*

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128   This repeats Dennison's analysis but for individual countries (rather than across countries) and restricting the sample to the impact evaluation's inclusion criteria. See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

129   See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

130   Section 9.2, Methodological Notes, IMPACT Study Report #2 (IOM, 2023f).

131   Dennison (2022: 2).

7.2 NON-MIGRANT CALIBRATIONS[132]

The challenge of selecting a standard counterfactual comparison to returnees is considerable, as by simply migrating (and returning) they are by nature different to the non-migrant population; and returnees not receiving assistance may be expected to be different to those who did (such as by not meeting an assessment criteria or being delayed in receiving assistance because they are hard-to-reach). Only in Ethiopia was there a sufficient sample size of untreated returnees, which provided a natural counterfactual to assess the net effects of IOM's assistance. In addition, the natural experiment employed internal comparisons to test the additional value of the JI-HoA assistance (that is, the variations in waiting time to receive microbusiness assistance).

IMPACT innovated with the use of a calibration group of demographically matched non-migrants. This assumes that the non-migrating population provides an example of an "integrated resident" allowing reintegration outcomes to be put into perspective. Importantly, it is not known whether non-migrants are integrated or not, but rather it provides a way to help interpret the results. In practical terms, this means that over time, it is expected that the difference between returnees and non-migrant community members should disappear, with equal access to services, improved self-perceptions of feeling part of the community, and availability of the same (or very similar) opportunities. This conceptualizes sustainable reintegration as equalizing of returnees to the local population.[133]

The Ethiopia analysis provides confidence that this calibration group is useful in some country contexts; the non-migrants' scores are essentially flat between retro-baseline and endline, suggesting stability in the comparison group. The returnees at baseline start from a much worse position, and by the institutional RSI measure, converge at a level that is almost indistinguishable from non-migrants. In Somalia, there was similar improvements of returnee scores, although the returnees exceeded the non-migrants at endline.

In contrast, the Sudan returnee / non-migrant data trends and ranks were very different to the Ethiopian (and Somalia) ranks and trends. Surprisingly, returnees were consistently better than their matched non-migrants at both retro-baseline and endline. As well, there was no significant difference between retro-baseline and endline as measured by any of the four reintegration measures in both returnees and non-migrants. See Box 9 for details on the types of convergence between returnees and non-migrants for each country.

BOX 9. TYPES OF CONVERGENCE PATTERNS AND THEIR MEANING[a]

Across the three countries (Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan), there were three different examples of possible returnee/non-migrant convergence patterns.

First, the Ethiopian returnees experienced **statistical convergence** for the "Treated" and "Treated With ECA" cohorts, but not with the "Untreated". This was against a backdrop of the non-migrant cohorts remaining stable and having no significant change between retro-baseline and endline.

Second, the Somali returnees experienced **"convergence plus".** The returnee treated cohorts significantly exceeded the corresponding non-migrant endline RSI. This was also against a backdrop of non-migrant cohorts not experiencing any significant change between retro-baseline and endline.

Third, the Sudanese returnees in three out of four of the treatment cohorts averaged **returnee RSIs significantly greater than corresponding non-migrants –** and this was at both retro-baseline and endline. This was against a backdrop of all non-migrant cohorts numerically declining, as opposed to returnee cohorts numerically increasing ("Cash >= 4 months" and "MoMo in kind") between retro-baseline and endline.

a   See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h) for more elaboration on this matter.

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132   This section addresses question 3a: As definitions of reintegration often reference the non-migrant residents as a comparison, how can this cohort be meaningfully included in the data chain and contribute to an understanding of sustainable reintegration?

133   Based on Malakooti and Zwick (2022: 20-21).

The contrast between the Sudan and Ethiopia/Somalia highlights that the migration experience and local context are significant to constructing a relevant non-migrant calibration group and fostering reintegration. Anecdotal evidence from IMPACT's in-country partner in the Sudan suggests that returnees reported that having any type of assistance from IOM felt like a safety net that non-migrants did not have. And given the particularly dire economic, political and security context, this real (or perceived) safety net may have been responsible for the consistently greater returnee RSI scores.

7.3 THE W MODEL[134]

The W model hypothesizes that returnees experience shocks at different levels and at different steps of the process that impede the capacity to cope with return and reintegration – and that the model can be used to identify key moments that shape returnees' experiences of reintegration. The model also assumes that reintegration is objectively measurable, and that there is some regularity to a returnees' experience of ups and downs rather than being a random phenomenon. If so, this would have implications for the evaluation – as the RSI score could overly reflect changes that systematically occur through a regular pattern experienced by returnees, rather than as a consequence of IOM's assistance.

The W model was introduced by Samuel Hall as part of the integrated approach to reintegration in 2017 and was used to frame their qualitative research. The model is based on academic work from Gullahorn and Gullahorn,[135] who argued for a W shaped trajectory for sojourner adjustment in reaction to the previous "U theory hypothesis". The original argument for the U theory was premised on the work of Lysgaard, who argued for a U-shaped curve to sojourner adjustment.[136] With further research in this field, the U curve hypothesis has been discredited by several scholars.[137] In addition, a recent comprehensive longitudinal study on sojourner stress and adaptation found five different reflective

growth trajectories, arguing that different migrants have different shaped trajectories.[138] As such, contemporary research suggests that adaptation experiences are not singularly shaped, with different patterns that can emerge from adaptation or reintegration processes.

To better understand the returnees' reintegration process, IMPACT's qualitative research used a neutral grid approach, the "well-being grid," for the interviewees. The well-being grids were analysed to first, assess the shape of the reintegration trajectory; second, the direction of the overall trend line of the reintegration trajectory; and third, the frequency of highs and lows in the reintegration process. At different points in time, returnees reported their well-being, which was plotted onto the grid.

The majority of Ethiopian, Somali and Sudanese respondents did not have either a W or U -shaped reintegration experience. Multiple shapes could be described from the resulting patterns of reintegration. In both Ethiopia and Somalia, only six of the 43 respondents (14%) indicated a U-shaped trajectory, and a further six (another 14%) having a W-shaped trajectory. These well-being trend lines show that 42 per cent of returnees felt their well-being did not change from the time of return to the time of interview, 33 per cent felt it increased and 26 per cent felt it decreased. In Somalia, most respondents felt their well-being increased (7 out of 11 respondents).

The well-being grids were also analysed to assess significant highs and lows in the reintegration process – a significant high and low is considered as a two-point change or more within the well-being grid over the reintegration process (from baseline to endline). Thirty of the 43 returnees (70%) had a significant change in their well-being over the process of their reintegration. This finding supports the theory that there are significant highs and lows in the reintegration process. In Ethiopia, the treated and treated-converged returnees were more likely to have highs and lows than the untreated and treated non-converged. In Somalia and the Sudan, all respondents stated experiencing highs and lows. Lows in the reintegration process are primarily cited as challenges

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134   This section addresses question 3b: Is there evidence to support the W model theory and what are the implications for evaluative methodologies assessing the effects of reintegration assistance?

135   Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963).

136   Lysgaard (1955).

137   Ward et al. (2001).

138   Demes and Geeraert (2015).

with economic reintegration. As discussed previously (section 6.2), several respondents had challenges with migration debt that impacted them and their families upon return. The poor economy meant few jobs were available. Receiving microbusiness assistance from IOM was very meaningful for the treated and converged returnees to improve their economic reintegration.

BOX 10. COMMON HIGHS AND LOWS OF REINTEGRATION EXPERIENCES

Reintegration highs for both Ethiopian and Somali returnees were also associated with the initial return and excitement of seeing friends and family. One returnee (male, 22, from Alle, Oromia, Ethiopia) stated: *"I would assess my overall well-being at that moment as a 5* [on a scale from 1 to 5] *as my family was delighted that I had returned alive."* The relief of return is often considered a high point. A second common high point was receiving assistance from IOM. The same responded stated: *"IOM made an effort to assist me with the difficulties I encountered. They gave me the money and supported my efforts to open a shop. Their assistance enabled me to become independent. I was helped by no one other than IOM. My family and friends have not attempted to assist me because they are angry and dissatisfied with me."*

A common low relating to social reintegration in Ethiopia was challenges experienced with family upon return. In the FGDs with returnees' family members, they stated that the family are not informed of the return until the migrant has already arrived in the local community. Families were often shocked by the return of their family member and there was sometimes anger as families had to sell their assets to be able to pay kidnappers, extortionists and smugglers for their returning family member's migration. The initial return is then one of shame for the returnee, and anger for the family that realized their investment is lost. One returnee (male, 19, from Nada, Oromia, Ethiopia) stated: *"I was struggling with my health and even lost weight as I was overthinking or worrying about how to support my father to recover from the bankruptcy he was in as a result of financing my migration."* The shame and stress of this situation lead to a significant low for several Ethiopian returnees.

To conclude, the evidence primarily shows that the experience of return more commonly diverges from a W-shape than meets it, as is consistent with contemporary academic evidence. Rather than confirming the W-model per se, the qualitative evidence for Ethiopia, Somalia and the Sudan supports the underlying arguments behind the model. That is: (i) returnees experience shocks at different stages of their reintegration process that can impede their coping capacities; (ii) returnees experience highs and lows in their reintegration process; and (iii) mapping returnees' experiences can help to identify trends in beneficiaries' experiences. Such evidence is important methodologically for working with beneficiaries and capturing their experience without leading the respondent towards the desired pattern or response. A simple grid tool is more neutral for beneficiaries to capture their experiences than a pre-printed W. Future research with wider applications of a grid tool and a larger sample would be able to determine common shape trajectories in reintegration processes. This further analysis and categorization of shape trajectories could assist in identifying common reintegration trajectories and understanding how to assist returnees in these different patterns of experiences.

7.4 NATURAL EXPERIMENTS

The methodological approaches of the IMPACT natural experiment-based evaluation (component 2; see section 4.2) have proven to be valuable and feasible, indicating the potential to replicate them elsewhere. Extreme events are becoming increasingly common and severe in the HoA (as well as in many other returnee locations) and need to be factored into how the JI-HoA and any future iteration are designed and managed. These events are widely shared experiences and important challenges that returnees, their families and communities, as well as organizations like IOM have had to respond to and adapt.

Natural experiments offer several advantages for the evaluation of reintegration assistance:[139]

- **Natural experiments provide real-life evidence of an intervention being "stress-tested".** Often,

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139 See IMPACT Study Report #5 (IOM, 2023i) for the full elaboration.

the events used in a natural experiment will be shocks that stress-test a programme intervention or outcome at scale. By observing how programmes perform under stress, and the extent to which those programmes help people and communities deal with that stress – especially the most vulnerable learning more about programme effectiveness is possible. In IMPACT's natural experiment, the evaluation was able to assess how specific elements of the JI-HoA assistance contributed to people's resilience to the COVID-linked shock (CLS). By using fixed-effect multivariate regression analysis and integrated qualitative research, the analysis identified the factors that helped or hindered resilience. This analysis provided valuable insights into returnee agency in the face of shocks, the actions they adopted in response, and what conditions and characteristics influenced their resilience.

- **Natural experiments can provide a broader perspective than programme-centric evaluations.** Evaluations tend to be programme-centric, with limited budgets and competing demands narrowing the scope of their objectives. An advantage of natural experiments is that they are more people-centred, as they are able to take a more holistic view when seeking to understand how an event has influenced the lives of individuals and communities. This broader perspective is apparent in IMPACT's natural experiment, which used a resilience lens to look beyond the JI-HoA intervention. By looking beyond the programme, the analysis allowed to draw conclusions about the relative importance of the JI-HoA assistance compared to returnees' own actions and other factors – highlighting for instance, coping strategies based on agriculture (which is not directly part of IOM's programming), as well as capturing the positive effects of cash-based assistance delivery modalities in mitigating the CLS for the most vulnerable (which is possibly obscured in the main impact evaluation analysis due to the longer time period and variability of the sample of returnees).

- **Natural experiments can shed light not just on programmes but on conventional approaches used to evaluate them.** As an experiment, the natural experiment is able to develop rigorous analytical methods, complemented by integrated qualitative research. IMPACT's natural experiment worked alongside the main impact evaluation (component 1) and the two developed some findings that intersected that in some cases appeared contradictory. Careful comparison identified factors that the natural experiment had analysed but that were not considered by the main impact evaluation and that would affect its conclusions. In a sense, IMPACT's natural experiment provided a stress-test also for the other component of the IMPACT study.

- **Natural experiments can be more suited to dynamic and shock-prone contexts than traditional evaluative methods.** Natural experiments are centred on natural and social events beyond the control of the programme, which means that natural experiments can be responsive to the context. This makes them more adaptive than traditional evaluations that will typically be designed around artificial constructs like baseline, midline and endline – points in time often determined by funding cycles rather than real-world events and timings. Natural experiments on the other hand work with the environment to frame and focus the methodology, making it a less risky approach in contexts fraught with change.

The natural experiment approach can be a valuable addition to evaluation and research, either as a standalone piece or part of a larger evaluation. The challenge is having the mindset and operational capacity to be able to deploy the skills and resources in response to a shock or extreme event – which by its nature tends to be unplanned and somewhat unpredictable, and counter to typical organizational and programming funding cycles.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The standout features of the JI-HoA programme – its design being based on the Integrated Approach to Reintegration and its focus on stranded migrants within Africa – make it an important intervention from which to learn. The focus on an integrated approach combined with the scale and rigorous approach to evaluation provide a unique opportunity to inform the field of assisted voluntary return and reintegration. This chapter returns to the three core objectives: the assessment of impact; the use of metrics to measure sustainable reintegration; and the methodologies used to evaluate the impact of reintegration programmes.

8.1 RETURNEES' RESILIENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES

The JI-HoA provided assistance to returnees during a challenging time, with the COVID-19 pandemic and associated control measures having a profound impact on all aspects of people's lives. In all three countries, the COVID-linked shock (CLS) had a substantial effect on returnees' livelihoods – including lockdown and other restrictions to movement, inflation and supply shortages, and co-occurring shocks such as desert locusts, flooding and conflict.

The extent to which returnees were affected in each of the three countries depended on their sources of livelihood before the CLS. Around 60 per cent of self-employed returnees had to close their business during lockdowns, with employees also affected when salaries were reduced or ceased – particularly in the Sudan and Somalia, with around 30 per cent employed, and to a lesser extent in Ethiopia, where relatively few returnees are employed. The key impacts on returnees were on food security (across all three countries), access to health, housing, school attendance and to some extent, acceptance by family members and communities – though this subsequently recovered.

The actions of returnees made a difference in mitigating and their recovery from the impacts of the CLS. Of particular importance were the returnees' use of family and social networks. In Somalia, support from friends was the second most common source of support, after family, while in the Sudan, over 40 per cent made changes on their own. The support received from family and social networks was typically just enough to see them through short-term hardships – and was sometimes in the form of loans that added to debts incurred during their migration journey.

Returnees also made adjustments to their primary and secondary sources of livelihood, with many increasing their involvement in agriculture. Doing so was an important resilience strategy, with those who engaged more in agriculture also having more pronounced rates of recovery. This coping mechanism did not only take place in rural areas. For example, even in the relatively urbanized areas of Khartoum, more than 20 per cent found agricultural opportunities – including making use of available land in and on the edges of towns and cities, involving themselves in food processing and marketing, and working more with others. The shift towards agriculture was most marked in Ethiopia, with about half of returnees in largely rural areas such as Oromia and Amhara (as well as in Darfur in the Sudan) increasing their engagement in farming.

8.2 THE IMPACT OF THE JI-HOA ON THE SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF RETURNEES

Within this context, IOM's assistance was generally greatly appreciated by returnees – and importantly, as a humanitarian response that helped those stranded in Africa to escape dangerous and often life-threatening situations. For some, no one in their family or communities were able to help them return and in places like Libya, conditions were dire.

In terms of the resilience of returnees, IOM's microbusiness assistance helped mitigate the impact of the CLS on well-being, although there was no apparent effect on recovery from these shocks. Many returnees commented that the CLS had undone whatever progress they had made before the pandemic. The assistance provided by the JI-HoA was in many cases critical to help returnees endure the CLS; with microbusiness assistance having a significant effect

on mitigating the decline in well-being in six of the eight domains (meals per day, days with protein-rich foods, meal size, health-care access, housing and family/community acceptance).

The findings also show an overall positive impact of the JI-HoA on sustainable reintegration in both Ethiopia and Somalia, but not in the Sudan. The evidence is particularly strong in Ethiopia, where returnees scores converge with non-migrants by the endline, highlighting that returnees have broadly equalized with those who did not migrate. In Somalia, returnees' scores were significantly better at endline than their corresponding non-migrants. It is only in the Sudan that the findings are very different, with returnees and non-migrants not improving over time, and none of the cohorts could be considered reintegrated. The Community Based Reintegration Projects (CBRPs) component of IOM's assistance was not fully evaluable, particularly due to the quality and consistency of the documentation. Nevertheless, preliminary findings suggest the usefulness of community support, with the potential to contribute to the quality of lives and the relationships between returnees and community members.

The microbusiness assistance in both Ethiopia and Somalia led to attributable improvements in reintegration. This is especially evident in Ethiopia, where successful businesses show a significantly steeper improvement for the economic and psychosocial scores, compared to microbusinesses that are closed, in preparation, or struggling. Also in Ethiopia, those who receive both microbusiness and the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training fared better, whereas in Somalia there are few differences between the combinations of microbusiness assistance, TVET and SIYB. In the Sudan, there is no change in reintegration scores and little difference across microbusiness performance.

Cash-based modalities have an important role to play, such as for the most vulnerable in times of extreme stress, but no single modality is inherently superior: the key is adaptation to the needs of returnees in their context. The provision of Emergency Cash Advance (ECA) in Ethiopia is a good example of adaptation by IOM and its implementing partners. The results of the natural experiment component of the IMPACT study show that the ECA modality was especially effective at mitigating the most severe instances of food insecurity. Alongside the modality selected, it is just as important to carefully consider the appropriateness of the assistance provided and how long it takes to receive it.

Timeliness of assistance is important: First, returnees who had access to JI-HoA assistance for longer were better able to mitigate the impacts of the CLS – a key element of resilience. Second, the time taken to receive assistance was significantly shorter for some groups of returnees, in certain places and at certain points in time. This variability shows how the JI-HoA can make improvements, as a shorter waiting time will provide more time for returnees to make use of the assistance.

Particular attention needs to be paid to the hard-to-reach groups of returnees, for whom the time to receive microbusiness assistance from IOM was substantially greater. These returnees generally fall outside the programme and the evaluation's sampling, such as those who are difficult to contact by phone or had phone numbers that were unreachable. However, many are reachable by drawing more heavily on returnees' own social networks.

8.3 IMPROVING THE METRICS FOR SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

The Reintegration Sustainability Index (RSI), as a multidimensional reintegration index, is generally useful at capturing the complexity of the reintegration process.[140] The dimensions approach allows for different aspects of reintegration to be measured and brought into the overall reintegration score. The RSI is currently being used for multiple purposes: (1) as a global index to assess sustainable reintegration and have comparability across countries; (2) for case-management and to target additional assistance to returnees with a low score; and (3) to monitor and evaluate programme effectiveness, such as the indicator reported in the programme's logframe and by this evaluation. The RSI's multiple objectives undermine some of its potential, and in its current configuration, it has drawbacks for programme evaluation.

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140   See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

The RSI provides a snapshot of the reintegration outcomes in a particular time point, with limited information on the prior migration experience, including resources acquired abroad, debt and perceptions of the migration journey and return.[141] Previous research highlights the importance of the migration lifecycle and migrant's own experiences in understanding reintegration – which could be addressed both by adding questions in the RSS and linking up datasets across the data chain. The IMPACT's qualitative research component also show that these experiences are likely to affect returnees in different ways and may have implications for their reintegration. For example, in Ethiopia and Somalia, the majority of respondents interviewed decided to migrate without informing their families, and family debt adds to tensions and becomes another significant barrier to reintegration. Families were also asked for financial assistance en route, with the life of migrants threatened by extortionists if their family did not pay. The resulting debt can negatively impact family relations, the well-being of the returnees, and the reintegration process.

The threshold for attaining "reintegration" (0.66) is arbitrary and requires further calibration to take account of specific contexts and differences between countries. The 0.50 threshold, as used in the programme logframe, is especially tenuous. By endline, 89.5 per cent of all respondents are deemed reintegrated at the 0.5 threshold at endline, compared to only 44.5 per cent at the 0.66 cut-off. Alternative options, or a combination of them, should consider: (1) using a non-migrant population as a calibration of the threshold (as per this study); (2) using a qualitative assessment to validate the threshold once the RSS has been completed; and/or, (3) combining with a proxy indicator of reintegration, such as of a returnee's self-perception of their reintegration position.

There is no a priori rationale to give particular weights within the RSI, and data-driven models (MIMIC or PCA) suggest that weightings vary over time (retro-baseline vs. endline) and location. Moreover, the removal of the original PCA/expert weightings does not alter the retro-baseline-endline rankings between returnees and matched non-migrants, nor the level of convergence. It seems unlikely that a weighting system

that suits all contexts all of the time will be feasible, and so applying universal, equal weighting provides for a more straightforward interpretation of the index.

Lastly, the biggest challenge to using the RSI to evaluate IOM's assistance is that the majority of its variables are beyond the influence of IOM's programming – with no direct causal link. Only six of the 29 variables show a significantly positive change in returnee outcomes from baseline to endline when assistance is received. There are of course several incremental improvements that will improve the RSI (such as addressing the skipped, non-response and poorly worded questions). But fundamentally, it is the RSI's multipurpose appeal (as a global index of reintegration for all contexts) that undermines its specific utility (for service delivery or programme evaluation for a specific IOM operation in a specific country). A revised RSI for evaluation purposes is suggested in the methodological recommendations (Section 9.2). Even with this revision, there will still be some contexts where the underlying conditions are so unstable or dire that even if the reintegration assistance is effective, the revised RSI indicators may still decline – potentially obscuring the contribution of IOM assistance in making it less bad than it would otherwise have been. From this study, the Sudan is an example of this situation, and a different, more humanitarian assessment of effectiveness may be necessary.

8.4 METHODOLOGIES FOR EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMES

While contemporaneous data is often preferable, retrospective data may be the only feasible option and is a potentially rich source of evidence that should not be overlooked. Understanding the extent and direction of any recall bias remains an area for improvement (see methodological recommendations, Section 9.2). For returnees at least, there are significant anchoring events around returning home that aid recall, and similarly for the natural experiment, the significance of the period associated with COVID-19 restrictions. The extent and

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141   Ibid.

direction of any recall bias has nonetheless been difficult to conclude and therefore, further research is needed.

The challenge of selecting a standard counterfactual comparison is considerable, and the evaluation found that a calibration against a (matched) non-migrant cohort can be useful in some country contexts. While not comparable (that is, having decided to not to migrate and not having the migration experience), non-migrants do provide a basis to compare returnees in terms of equal access to services, perceptions of similarities and availability of the same opportunities. The analysis for Ethiopia and the Sudan provides two contrasting examples, with Somalia somewhere in-between. These examples further highlight the importance of the different country contexts, and where in situations of extreme uncertainty, many factors are beyond IOM's control and might influence the RSI score.

The study finds that respondents' perceptions of well-being do fluctuate up and down, but that there are multiple shapes – not a consistent "W" or "U" model. There are different reasons for the highs and lows experienced, with some patterns such as: a common low in Ethiopia was due to challenges experienced with family upon return; but equally in Ethiopia (and Somalia), other returnees experience a high associated with the return and excitement of seeing friends and family. The common divergence from the W-model suggests that it is important for evaluations to capture returnees' experiences as it is context- and time-specific; but also, that the variability gives confidence that no underlying bias in the RSS data exists.

Combining a plurality of methods and measures is important to understand the complexity of the returnee experience, as well as to capture the diversity of effects. As pointed out above, the RSI as a measure of reintegration may not fully capture the effects of IOM's assistance – with indicators that are more responsive to IOM's assistance (such as the microbusiness assistance) and others that are driven by factors beyond IOM's control and influence. Furthermore, the well-being domains used in the natural experiment provide a valuable understanding of well-being – with some domains, such as food insecurity, being more responsive to IOM's assistance than those in the RSI. The methodology of the natural experiment also provides a way to capture empirical evidence of a real-life "stress-test", providing evidence of how returnees respond and cope and of aspects of resilience that can be better supported.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter sets out a number of recommendations based on the evidence presented in this study.

9.1 PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **RECOMMENDATION 1: Continue to provide assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance to stranded migrants in Africa as an important humanitarian and development initiative that reduces vulnerabilities and improves post-return well-being.** The findings of this evaluation demonstrate the effectiveness of the intervention, indicating the need for further funding to stranded migrants that would otherwise be left in desperate conditions in transit countries – and without the support to return. The findings also demonstrate the need for reintegration assistance to reduce returnees' vulnerabilities post-return.

- **RECOMMENDATION 2: Support programme managers to make better use of programme data to evaluate, adapt and improve delivery of assistance.** Several of the findings highlight that there is capacity to adjust assistance over time. Such adjustments include whether to address particular delays in delivery or responding to particular needs (such as the Emergency Cash Advance provision in Ethiopia). Data sources could be better linked together and exploited by data analysts to provide more real-time insights on delivery (such as delays, different modalities, unreached returnees) and the migrant experience (for example, differences in their journey that might affect the effectiveness of reintegration assistance and that could inform a more tailored, adapted approach). To better support evidence-informed adaptation, the key areas to improve monitoring and data use are:

  – Improve AVRR data chain management to better analyse and track the journey of returnees through all service delivery assessments and M&E instruments;

– Incorporate a better understanding of the pre-departure and pre-distribution experiences into M&E analysis (see also recommendation 8);

– Investigate the performance of different adaptations used to speed up delivery (such as the "MoMo in kind" in the Sudan and the Emergency Cash Advance initiative in Ethiopia);

– Investigate variations between cohorts, implementing partners and locations with persistent delays.

- **RECOMMENDATION 3: In future programming, focus on what has proved effective in this evaluation and address areas that haven't responded well to the current JI-HoA configuration, particularly the psychosocial and social aspects.** Importantly, while the list of interventions that are available (such as training, microbusiness assistance, etc.) may change, it is essential that there continues to be local adaptation to changing conditions. Particular areas of the integrated approach to consider, as highlighted by this evaluation are: (i) the strong evidence of the effectiveness of microbusiness assistance in Ethiopia and Somalia (and microbusiness combined with SIYB in Ethiopia); (ii) the need for continued psychosocial assistance over a longer period, as highlighted by the qualitative research; (iii) the importance of complementary interventions such as in agriculture to support returnees' own coping strategies (as per the findings of the natural experiment component of the study); and, (iv) the potential of community-based interventions to support returnee and non-migrant collaboration – helping to reduce social stigmatization and to improve access to services (as per the review of selected community-based reintegration projects implemented under the JI-HoA).

- **RECOMMENDATION 4: Improve reintegration planning to take better account of the debt dimension and its impact on sustainable reintegration.** This recommendation builds on findings from the IMPACT study, as well as on existing IOM studies on the debt of migrants assisted

with voluntary return.[142] Debt negatively impacts the reintegration process, such as socially by making familial relationships more challenging, as well as by increasing the economic hardship of returnees (see section 6.2). Specific improvements that should be considered by IOM programming are: (i) Families should generally be better informed of when a returnee / family member will arrive (while still respecting the choice of the individual returnee and any specific safeguarding risks); (ii) Mediation should be provided to enhance social and psychosocial reintegration and well-being of the returnee and her/his family; (iii) Returnees should be given choices in their businesses, with processes put into place to ensure returnees have an influence in this process; (iv) Debt assistance for new returnees should be considered, such as expanding the role of the case manager to include debt management plans as part of case management;[143] and, (v) Supporting/incubating self-help revolving community funds in returnees' communities to provide community-wide access and debt management benefits should be considered.

- **RECOMMENDATION 5: As part of future programme design, programme managers should develop mechanisms that draw on returnee networks to improve communication with and among returnees, including those currently "unreachable" and those living with disability.** Given the large numbers of returnees who were unreachable by the programme (by phone at least), this study shows many returnees are vulnerable and would benefit from this support. The natural experiment in particular highlighted the potential to draw on returnee networks to reach those who are ordinarily unreachable – something that could be built upon to extend the reach of the programme.

- **RECOMMENDATION 6: Programme managers should expand local and community-based projects to support returnee innovation, integration with** host communities and durable job creation. The review of JI-HoA community-based reintegration projects showed the community-level interventions have potential, but this should be on the proviso that the documentation, monitoring and evaluation is improved, alongside strengthened linkages with individual-level programming.[144] The suggestion is to build on the participatory approaches already used, but with more support from IOM and implementing partners to better address the key constraints (particularly with training and follow-up assistance). Given the limits of what IOM is able to achieve alone, collaboration with other organizations, whether State or non-State, should be expanded substantially to achieve a greater scale of community-based projects.

9.2 METHODOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- **RECOMMENDATION 7: The RSI, or an evolved version of the RSI, should continue to be used to measure multidimensional sustainable reintegration. The focus should be on prioritizing its purpose for IOM programming and evaluation, rather than as a global index[145] comparing countries.** It is suggested that the RSI be used as a starting point for programme evaluations, rather than the only measure – that is, used pragmatically to support a consistent way of assessing reintegration, but within a theory of change process[146] that identifies priorities and additional measures specific to the context. For example, in conflict-affected contexts there may be additional proxy (intermediate) measures needed to capture the more humanitarian objectives – to help demonstrate how IOM has addressed basic needs such as food security and contributed to a situation that is less bad than would have otherwise been.

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142 IOM (2020b); Samuel Hall, University of Sussex and IOM (2022).

143 This has been explored in some countries, such as Bangladesh. This might include case managers mediating with creditors or family members, or negotiating a different or delayed repayment process.

144 The *potential* is highlighted in IMPACT Study report #3 (IOM, 2023g). However, as the evidence is from a review of a small number of CBRPs and is not underpinned by more generalizable statistical evidence, further research would be needed to fully understand the effectiveness of CBRPs.

145 If used as a global measure for sustainable reintegration, further country contextual variables must be incorporated to account for these differences.

146 A theory of change process is a way for programme and evaluation staff to map out the causal chain of *how change happens,* and to be explicit about the expected contribution of the programme as well as the assumptions and other contributory factors.

- **RECOMMENDATION 8: Revise the RSI around a reduced set of indicators and produce an equally weighted additive index.** A reduction in the number of RSI indicators from the current 29 to a maximum of 15 indicators is suggested, where progress can be measured individually for each indicator. The use of a universal, equally weighted approach means that weights do not change for indicators within each dimension/pillar as well as for overall score – giving greater transparency when reporting the index. The index should also be constructed using a validated method.[147]

The indicators used in the index should be revised as follows:[148]

- Incorporate questions regarding migration experience, including resources acquired abroad and perceptions of the migration journey and return in the RSS (as has been implemented in the RSS+ for the IMPACT evaluation).[149]

- Consider removing indicators with no historical or likely future contribution to integration, including frequency of borrowing money, access to justice and the wish versus need to migrate.

- Variables that are only asked to a selection of respondents should be removed from the RSI (i.e. the variables in the RSI should be relevant to all respondents to reduce non-response).

- Consider testing and reframing the questions in the Psychosocial dimension that are atypical of household member questionnaires. Doing so will make them more relatable to non-migrants if a calibration group is used.

- Revise questions in the RSI where the non-response rate is higher than 2 per cent (see section 6.3 for details).

- Where possible, indicators chosen for the index should feasibly benchmarked to global standards.[150] For example, the food security indicators used in the survey used for the natural experiment component

of IMPACT were based on the Coping Strategies Index and provide a more complete understanding of food security than the current RSI indicator.

- Align indicators to IOM programming, excluding the current Social Pillar indicators from contributing to the RSI (as mostly they describe the access and quality of basic services, where there is little variation between returnees and/or non-migrants at a community level).

- **RECOMMENDATION 9: Donors and IOM should allocate additional and more responsive funding within monitoring and evaluation workstreams, so as to exploit extreme events as "tests" of programme design and implementation.** IMPACT's natural experiment component has provided a real-life "stress-test" of an intervention, with valuable insights from a broader, less programme-centric perspective. Natural experiment-based evaluative approaches would be particularly well suited to shock-prone contexts. While the IMPACT study has piloted the use of a natural experiment approach, further development would be valuable to develop a "lean natural experiment" that is better suited to being deployed at short notice – such as by making more cost-effective use of existing administrative and external datasets, anticipating likely shocks and upskilling a team to be deployed at short notice.

- **RECOMMENDATION 10: Panel observations of returnees (and matched non-migrants, if utilized) are highly recommended over repeated cross-sectional sampling.** Panel observations provide more accurate estimates of reintegration progress over time. Retro-baseline questionnaires can be used to provide a one-off cost-effective option for enumerating both returnees and non-migrants RSIs, while still resulting in panel observations. See also Recommendation 11, below.

- **RECOMMENDATION 11:** Retrospective data can provide a practical and cost-effective option for studying returnees, but with some improvements.

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147   For example, the Alkire-Foster method that is used for assessing multi-dimensional poverty. See: https://ophi.org.uk/policy/alkire-foster-methodology/.

148   See IMPACT Study Report #4 (IOM, 2023h).

149   The IMPACT team recommend that these questions remain outside of the RSI but can be used for analytical purposes to understand how previous migration experiences impacts RSI outcomes.

150   For example, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) has a dimension on standard of living and is used in Ethiopia. If the RSI were to incorporate these indicators it would be possible to benchmark returnees to the MPI Ethiopia sample for this dimension.

IMPACT's approach to retro-baseline-endline data collection has several advantages for future studies because: (1) it is a one-off, efficient option for enumerating both returnees and non-migrants while still providing panel observations; and (2) a single retro-baseline-endline survey allows for more accurate and efficient sampling of different treatment arms and analytical domains, especially in a context where the quantum, times of return and location of returnees is constantly changing. This was a particular challenge for the JI-HoA as returnees arrived in waves, and these were constantly changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Where retro-baseline questioning is employed, it is advisable to make an effort to calibrate the extent and the direction of the retrospective results in comparison to a subset of contemporaneous baseline data. This may not always be possible or practical due to time and cost constraints. Nonetheless, it is always vital to:[151] (1) simultaneously gather data on self-reported ease-of-memory for the time being measured; (2) systematically produce tests for variation in the results according to self-reported memory; and (3) prioritize face-to-face interviews, especially as phone interviews can be found to increase self-reported problems in memory.[152]

- **RECOMMENDATION 12: The assessment of reintegration should include a plurality of methods, particularly given the variability of returnees' experiences (and the non-objectivity of reintegration outcome measures).** The W-model is a useful reminder of the highs and lows of the returnees' experience, and of the considerable variability in their experiences. The evaluation supports the view that divergence away from the W-model is more typical (section 7.3), and that qualitative research using well-being grids can capture the returnee's experience. The natural experiment also provides insights (with a less programme-centric approach) that would not have been evident simply from the quasi-experimental assessment of impact (that is, using a broader well-being framework rather than the RSI as the only measure of reintegration).

- **RECOMMENDATION 13: A calibration group consisting of matched non-migrants can form a useful reference cohort in many, but not all contexts.** If a significant number of returnees were eligible but did not receive the main support package, then using these as a form of counterfactual can be considered – as was the case in Ethiopia. Doing so requires careful testing of the potential biases between the returnees that maintained contact with the IOM programme and received assistance in full, versus those that for various reasons did not.

Otherwise, a non-migrant calibration group can provide a useful benchmark to assess returnee convergence and provide a basis to calibrate the threshold of the returnees' RSI scores. Where matched non-migrant baseline-endline scores are statistically flat or a similar steady-state value (as in Ethiopia and Somalia), this suggests that non-migrants are facing a consistent local set of economic and social conditions. This steady state provides a locally adjusted estimate of durable reintegration in place of the non-empirical 0.66 or 0.5 thresholds. This locally adjusted estimate can also be combined with a single measure of the returnees' self-perception of reintegration. This provides a mixed method validation of sustainable reintegration.

A calibration cohort is less useful to assess convergence in contexts where the non-migrants' daily experience is dynamic and very challenging – as was the case in the Sudan, with political instability and conflict. The patterns observed in the Sudan suggest that durable reintegration efforts in such a context have a small chance of success, and the focus is primarily humanitarian (such as providing safety nets for returnees and non-migrants to reduce the likelihood of endangering forms of migration being used as a coping strategy).

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151 Based on Dennison (2022).

152 The results on the effect of phone interviews were inconsistent across the three countries, and more research is needed. Hence, the preference remains to conduct face-to-face interviews, but if resources are insufficient, ideally the entire enumeration is done over the phone to remove a potential bias.

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