Background

Every year around the world, millions of people are forced to leave their homes as a result of hurricanes, floods, windstorms, earthquakes, droughts and other disasters. In parallel, slow onset environmental change such as desertification, sea level rise, ecosystem degradation and resource scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, undermine the livelihoods of millions and push people towards migration in search of better opportunities. The combination of unaddressed environmental, economic, political and social drivers together with the limited availability of regular migration channels has resulted in the rise of larger scale irregular migratory flows in recent years.

The numbers of migrants returning to their countries of origin under assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes\(^1\) have grown too, not only in the volume of migrants in need of assistance, but for diversity of actors involved and the intricacy of challenges. While accurate figures are often not available for all forms of return, the scale of return migration is considerable.\(^2\)

While some migrants return to welcoming contexts and reintegrate in a smooth manner, many face challenges they cannot overcome on their own, and need support in their reintegration. At the same time, communities, regions and countries to which migrants return may not have the capacities to provide conditions conducive to successful reintegration due to a lack of local infrastructure and resources. Reintegration in general is understood as the re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or a process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his or her country of origin or habitual residence.\(^3\) It is a multidimensional process that requires the re-establishment of economic and psychosocial ties. As such, successful reintegration depends on various factors such as the migrant’s time spent abroad as well as his/her personal abilities and resources; the acceptance by his/her family, peers, and community; but also on environmental and structural capacities as well as development and economic opportunities available in the country of origin. Policymakers increasingly recognize that much can be done to promote

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\(^1\) IOM is one of the major implementing partners for States’ reintegration programmes under assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programmes. AVRR activities directly aim to improve the conditions under which return happens, including creating an environment where the migrant can take informed decisions, and supporting migrants in reintegrating in communities to which they return.

\(^2\) For example, through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes it implements on behalf of a number of governments, IOM assisted 72,176 people to return in 2017. For more data on return migration, please visit: [https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/return-migration](https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/return-migration)

\(^3\) International Organization for Migration, *Glossary on Migration* (2\(^{nd}\) edition), 2011.
sustainable reintegration, through support to individual returnees, the communities to which they return, and measures at the structural level to improve the governance of reintegration. Reflecting this increased understanding, a number of States have allocated funds for reintegration programmes which go beyond approaches focused on individual assistance.

Reintegration and environmental sustainability can be linked in a number of ways. Migrants returning to degraded rural areas for example are more likely to re-migrate, faced with unfavourable conditions for establishing traditional rural livelihoods and limited alternative options. Where returns are large in number to a given area, there is also a risk of exacerbating pressure on already stretched resources and fragile ecosystems. Looking from a different angle, reintegration projects and programmes can be targeted specifically towards building resilience to environmental challenges facing communities, thereby contributing to the sustainability of reintegration and reducing out-migration pressure in general.

This workshop is being held in the framework of the IOM project “Mainstreaming environmental dimensions into reintegration support to reduce the effects of climate change on migration in West Africa” funded by the Government of France. This project is an innovative response to international policy commitments to address the environmental drivers of migration, such as those made in the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular migration (GCM) in 2018, and international commitments made by EU and African States at the Valletta Summit on migration (2015), to “improve cooperation on return and sustainable reintegration.” This project also supports the implementation of the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda and the work of the Platform on Disaster Displacement.

The objectives of the project, which links IOM’s work on reintegration with its work on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, are to (i) facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants through the development of reintegration initiatives that contribute to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; and (ii) to reduce forced out-migration resulting from the negative impacts of climate change.

4 Also through the European Union’s programmes. A major recent example is the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, which covers and closely cooperates with 26 African countries in the Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa: https://migrationjointinitiative.org
5 The project is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development of France, as part of its contributions to IOM’s programme of work on Migration, Environment and Climate Change, in particular the implementation of the Paris Agreement, of the recommendations of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda, and of the workplan of the Platform on Disaster Displacement.
6 Parties to the UNFCCC are encouraged to “respect, promote and consider their obligations on (…) the rights (…) of migrants” when “taking acting action to address climate change”. Furthermore, COP21 established a task force under its ‘Loss and Damage’ workstream to develop recommendations to “avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change”.
7 Objective 2: Minimizing the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin, which contains a section specifically dedicated to the subject and entitled “Natural disasters, the adverse effects of climate change, and environmental degradation” (Objective 2, paragraphs 18.h-18.l).
9 For more information, please visit https://www.nanseninitiative.org/ and https://disasterdisplacement.org
The project focuses on West Africa through a regional component, of which the workshop forms a part, and a national component through a pilot project in Senegal. In addition, the project has an important global component, which focuses on the development of global guidelines that seek to provide practical, non-binding guidance to policymakers and practitioners to promote reintegration as an opportunity for addressing climate change and other environmental challenges in countries to which migrants return. The present workshop will help to inform the development of these global guidelines.

The workshop is being held back-to-back with a two-day workshop entitled “KAS African Climate Perspectives on Migration” organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS), in order to draw out synergies between the two events.

### Environmental challenges in West Africa

West Africa faces a range of major environmental challenges, caused by a variety of factors. Land degradation (including soil erosion) and desertification are among the most severe of these challenges, with major implications for traditional rural livelihoods (farming and livestock herding). Water shortage is another, and affects both rural and urban areas. Key causes include population growth and unsustainable farming practices (including deforestation). Climate change (rising temperatures and increasingly erratic rainfall) is exacerbating existing challenges (including flooding), and bringing new ones. For instance, sea-level rise is predicted to have significant impacts on certain coastal areas, such as in the form of coastal erosion. Environmental challenges are widely believed to be driving migration from rural areas, many of which are dependent on rain-fed agriculture. However, migration decisions take place in complex frameworks, which are also shaped by economic, demographic, political and social factors. For example, the ‘pull’ of employment and education opportunities in urban areas (and potentially of destinations in other countries) is an important consideration which makes it difficult to accurately assess the relative importance of environmental ‘push’ factors of migration in the region. Environmental challenges can also affect the viability of return, limiting livelihood options and affecting the availability of essential natural resources such as water, food and fuel.

### Objectives of the workshop

This workshop will bring together experts, policymakers and academics from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe to exchange knowledge, document relevant good practices (policy, programme and project levels) and generate ideas and recommendations that will inform the development of global guidelines for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient reintegration of returning migrants.

The workshop is expected to provide an opportunity to:

- Build a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges for environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient reintegration;
- Identify and exchange effective practices and learn from experiences from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe;
- Gather recommendations on elements to be included in the global guidelines on environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient reintegration

**Themes for discussion**

The discussions during the workshop will address the following questions:

1. How could reintegration be an opportunity for addressing environmental drivers of re-migration (and migration)?
2. Are there examples to draw on? Examples could come from existing reintegration programmes or from other sectors (ex. climate change adaptation; green economy/ green jobs programmes). Examples can be at country-level (policies or programmes) or at community-level (projects).
3. What are the key challenges at local and national levels and how could they be overcome?

Participants are invited to prepare, ahead of the meeting, examples of relevant policies, programmes and projects, as well as experiences and lessons learned that could contribute to this discussion.

**Expected outputs**

- Compilation of relevant good practices
- List of recommendations

**Structure**

**Day 1:** After initial introductory presentations and discussions in plenary led by invited experts, the second part of the day will be composed of ‘hands on’ sessions in which participants, working in small groups, will present and brainstorm on ways in which reintegration assistance could be targeted to address climate change and other environmental challenges.

**Day 2:** Field visit to Swani Tiqa, an agroecological farm collaborating with IOM as part of a project on diasporas’ involvement in agroecology. This field visit will offer an opportunity for participants to understand how diaspora’s involvement can contribute to the resilience of a territory, and to discuss the reintegration challenges this kind of initiatives imply. The visit will include a working session at the farm during which participants will be invited to provide further inputs for the development of the Guidelines.

Please find the draft agenda attached.

**Logistics**

**Venue**

La Tour Hassan Palace Hotel
26, Avenue Chellah, Rabat, Morocco
**Working language**
English (French interpretation provided)

**Participants**
The workshop brings together 25-30 participants representing governmental entities, UN and non-UN agencies and the academia from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe, specialized in the areas of migration management, reintegration and social affairs, international development, environmental management, climate change adaptation and the green economy.

**Organizing entity**
International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, and with the generous financial support of the Government of France and of the IOM Development Fund.

IOM, the UN Migration Agency, is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 173 member states and offices in over 150 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. IOM has been addressing the links between migration, environment and climate change for more than 25 years through research, policy, capacity building and operational response programmes. IOM’s objectives in managing environmental migration are: (a) To minimize forced migration that results from environmental factors to the extent possible; (b) To provide assistance and protection to affected populations when forced migration does occur, and to seek sustainable solutions to their situation; and (c) To facilitate migration as a climate change adaptation strategy and enhance the resilience of affected communities.

For more information about IOM’s work on migration, environment and climate change, please visit [https://environmentalmigration.iom.int](https://environmentalmigration.iom.int)

**Contacts for further information**

**Participation:**
Ms. Hind Aissaoui Bennani, IOM Regional Office for West and Central Africa, Dakar (haissaoui@iom.int)

**Logistics:**
Ms. Maha Bargach, IOM Morocco (mbargach@iom.int)
Ms. Mina de Beaumont, Consultant, IOM Morocco (minadbt@gmail.com)

**Agenda and content:**
Ms. Daria Mokhacheva, Programme Officer, Migration, Environment, Climate Change (MECC) Division, IOM Headquarters, Geneva (dmokhnacheva@iom.int)
Mr. Alex Flavell, Consultant, Migration, Environment, Climate Change (MECC) Division, IOM Headquarters, Geneva (aflavell@iom.int)

**Field visit:**
On the 4th of July, participants are invited to join a one day field visit to Swani Tiqa, an agroecological farm collaborating with IOM as part of a project on diasporas’ involvement in agroecology. IOM will provide transportation from and to the hotel.
La Tour Hassan Palace (pick-up at 9:30 and return to hotel by 18:00). Lunch will be provided at the farm. Participants are advised to wear comfortable clothing and shoes. Additional logistical information will be shared separately.

**Useful references**

**Migration, environment and climate change:**

[https://www.iom.int/migration-and-climate-change](https://www.iom.int/migration-and-climate-change)

[https://environmentalmigration.iom.int](https://environmentalmigration.iom.int)


**Reintegration:**

[https://www.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration](https://www.iom.int/assisted-voluntary-return-and-reintegration)

[https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/return-migration](https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/return-migration)

[https://migrationjointinitiative.org](https://migrationjointinitiative.org)


**Migration terminology:**