

# Chapter 7

## Orderly migration and sustainable reintegration

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### Abstract

*Sustainable reintegration is an important aspect of migration management in the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) region due to the increasing number of returns over time. Sustainable reintegration should be understood to include accommodating human mobility as an option, rather than only promoting static and permanent settlement of migrants. It focuses on creating stable and well developed social, economic and political environment for return migrants. The East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) can play an important role in ensuring sustainable reintegration through the facilitation of legal pathways and the development of required policies on sustainable reintegration and safe, orderly and regular migration at regional and national levels. The EAC and IGAD can enhance interregional collaboration and dialogues, creating a regional platform for countries in the region to negotiate as a bloc regarding the return and reintegration of their citizens with other relevant regional blocs such as the Southern African Development Community, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union.*

### Introduction

Orderly migration and sustainable reintegration are key elements to facilitate the free movement of persons. Orderly and safe migration increases the economic gains and the safety of migrants, which in turn are the basis for sustainable reintegration. Sustainable reintegration aims to improve the socioeconomic well-being of return migrants in origin countries, hence paving the way to orderly migration and facilitated mobility. It creates an environment where return migrants have access to better social and economic opportunities at their place of origin, and mobility when in search

of better economic opportunities. The right to return is the fifth of the five pillars that underpin human mobility, as described in Chapter 1. Its sustainability is critical.

There are limited opportunities for regular migration in the EHOA region, particularly for unskilled and low-skilled nationals. Promoting and facilitating legal pathways for nationals is a salient issue that need to be addressed by governments of countries in the region. A lack of legal pathways, along with other environmental and political

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issues, drives many young people in the region to irregular migration.

There are high numbers of irregular movements within and out of the region.<sup>7</sup> This makes orderly migration and sustainable reintegration pressing issues for the region, the Member States and their nationals. The Eastern Route, which goes to Yemen and onwards to Saudi Arabia, is the most popular for irregular movements originating from the EHoA region.<sup>8</sup> These movements are temporary: migrants travel in search of better economic opportunities. Many people from the region migrate via the Southern Route, to South Africa being the major destination. Transit countries include Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique.<sup>9</sup> The Northern Route is used as well, through transit countries such as the Sudan and Libya, towards European Union Member States. These irregular movements have resulted in an unprecedented number of return flows to the region from both transit and destination countries. The returns<sup>10</sup> are a mix of assisted voluntary returns, unassisted (or “spontaneous”) returns, forced returns and humanitarian evacuations.<sup>11</sup>

The IOM definition of safe, orderly and regular migration (as given in the glossary of this report) balances the autonomy of States over their territory with the human rights and dignity of migrants.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of orderly migration emerged at the International Agenda for Migration Management (IAMM) in 2004 and has since become a key policy priority and a cornerstone of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The African Union adopted the African Common Position on the Global Compact for Migration

that aims to achieve better migration outcomes by improving migration governance mechanisms and facilitating safe and orderly migration in the continent.<sup>13</sup> The Global Compact for Migration and regional integration are mutually reinforcing, as further discussed in Chapter 11.

Sustainable reintegration is defined differently by State and non-State actors. The African Union defines sustainable reintegration as the process of reincorporating a person into their community or State of origin and may involve, among other things, socioeconomic assistance and cooperation with the community the person is returning to.<sup>14</sup> Other actors have called for consideration of political and legal dimensions, including access to anti-discrimination remedies and full enjoyment of civil and human rights.<sup>15</sup> According to IOM, sustainable reintegration is achieved “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”.<sup>16</sup> This definition acknowledges that sustainable reintegration may be accompanied by re-migration based on choice but not despair. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines reintegration as the progressive establishment of conditions that enable returnees and their communities to exercise their social, economic, civil, political and cultural rights, and on that basis to enjoy peaceful, productive and dignified lives.<sup>17</sup> More recently, sustainable reintegration has been considered by the United Nations Network on Migration more broadly as also necessitating access to justice, peace and security.<sup>18</sup>

Governments of destination countries, on the other hand, have defined sustainable reintegration differently, perhaps because of their different

7 Marchand et al., 2017; MMC, 2022.

8 Marchand et al., 2017.

9 Ibid.

10 “Return” in this chapter refers to return of migrants. While the return and reintegration of refugees, specifically, is a critical issue that need to be addressed, it is beyond the scope of this chapter.

11 IOM, 2021a.

12 IOM, 2019.

13 African Union, 2018.

14 Ibid.

15 OECD, 2020.

16 IOM, 2017.

17 Duffield et al., 2008.

18 UNNM, 2021.

political agendas. While their definitions also recognize the multilevel concept of sustainable reintegration as dependent on the returning individual, the local community and the structural situation of the environment of return,<sup>19</sup> definitions by State actors are largely focused on the prevention of re-migration and the expectation of long duration of stay by returning migrants in their countries of origin.

This chapter argues that sustainable reintegration should be conceived in a way that accommodates mobility, rather than using the traditional conceptualization that promotes static and permanent settlement of return migrants in their origin country.<sup>20</sup> This is anchored in the Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030), as well as the IOM definition of sustainable reintegration, which acknowledges that return migrants – and particularly migrant workers – may move in pursuit of better economic opportunities within and outside the region. Most migration within and out of Africa is motivated by the available economic opportunities in different

regions and countries. Hence, better mobility facilitated by regional integration is believed to have a positive economic impact in both countries of origin and countries of destination.<sup>21</sup>

In this chapter, orderly migration and sustainable reintegration are considered interdependent issues that are vital to mobility and to regional integration efforts. As discussed above, orderly migration paves the way for sustainable reintegration, whereas sustainable reintegration is important to ensure orderly and safe migration. The chapter is organized into five sections. Following the introduction, an overview on the significance of sustainable reintegration to achieving orderly migration is presented. This is followed by an overview of return migration to the EHoA region, mainly based on data from IOM assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR) programming.<sup>22</sup> Challenges to sustainable reintegration are then analysed. The chapter concludes by providing policy recommendations for the EAC, IGAD and their Member States to contribute to orderly migration and sustainable reintegration.

## The significance of sustainable reintegration to achieving orderly migration

Sustainable reintegration is fundamental to achieving orderly migration as it helps restore normal social, economic and political life to return migrants,<sup>23</sup> and support the well-being of society. Stabilizing the socioeconomic environment and creating conducive living conditions for return migrants are key outcomes of sustainable reintegration, which overall empowers returnees and creates opportunities for people to make better choices concerning their migration and return, as well as future decisions related to socioeconomic opportunities. According to the African Union, “Sustainable reintegration can be achieved when returnees can rely on expanded capabilities to attain a stable, safe and dignified life of economic

self-sufficiency, psychosocial well-being, political, social and civil inclusion, as a result of which they can respond to the drivers of irregular migration”.<sup>24</sup> This implies that ensuring sustainable reintegration is a prerequisite to orderly migration and facilitates better mobility.

The region has seen some notable progress by regional economic communities (RECs) in recent years, in facilitating the free movement of people, which in turn contributes to orderly migration. For instance, the abolition of visa requirements or the provision of visas on arrival between some EAC Member States,<sup>25</sup> and the waiver of work permit fees for EAC citizens and professionals working in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, are among such good

19 IOM, 2017.

20 Stepputat, 2004.

21 African Union and IOM, 2020.

22 IOM AVRR data were used to highlight return trends in the region because there are no comprehensive data available for analysis on return cases in the EHoA region.

23 IOM, n.d.a.

24 ICMPPD, African Union and European Union, 2021.

25 African Union and IOM, 2020.

practices.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the IGAD Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education aims to facilitate access to quality education to refugees and returnees. It also calls for recognizing the qualifications of refugees and returnees across all education levels in the region.<sup>27</sup> IGAD is also working on effective actions and regional coordination mechanisms to enhance the governance of labour, employment and migration.<sup>28</sup> In addition, in 2021, IGAD and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) entered into a two-year agreement to harmonize remittance policies across the IGAD countries of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda.<sup>29</sup> This positively contributes to the sustainability of reintegration, as better management of remittances are vital for migrants' families in the country of origin as well as for the savings required for migrants' sustainable reintegration on return.

Despite improvements gained through free movement protocols (FMPs), semi-skilled and unskilled youth in the region engage in irregular migration through the Eastern, Southern and Northern Routes. Hence, the sustainable reintegration of these return migrants is critical to ensure orderly migration and to facilitate regional integration. Currently, sustainability of reintegration is mainly the responsibility of Member States, and it is not covered in the EAC Common Market Protocol (EAC-CMP) and the IGAD Free Movement Protocol (IGAD-FMP). It is also an area that could benefit from more attention from the governments of countries in the EHoA region including by adopting national reintegration plans and policies.

The IGAD Regional Migration Framework includes aspects on return, readmission and reintegration (RRR),<sup>30</sup> and suggests that to ensure success, proper monitoring and collection of information on demographic socioeconomic attributes, including knowledge and skills, should be developed. It further recommends strategies to standardize procedures on RRR, urging Member States to take ownership and responsibility of the process and working with international partners to ensure dignified RRR. Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) by the EAC and IGAD<sup>31</sup> can be used to facilitate dialogues and discussion on the issue, such as through regional information-sharing and policy dialogue dedicated to migration issues. These policies and dialogues provide a solid starting position for regional integration regarding orderly migration and sustainable reintegration.

It is also important to note that RECs are expected to play a central role in advocacy and coordination to ensure the sustainability of reintegration, as stipulated in the African Union Migration Policy Framework (MPFA)<sup>32</sup> continental guidelines on RRR. These provide opportunities to develop better migration governance, including orderly migration and sustainable reintegration at the regional level. Addressing migration issues at the regional level is expected to increase efficiency while decreasing costs, incoherence and duplication of policies.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, such steps would also strengthen Member State's power to negotiate as a bloc on different migration issues – such as improving the working condition of migrants – with other RECs in and out of the region, and in securing funds to ensure the sustainability of reintegration in the region.

26 *The East African*, 2015.

27 IGAD, 2017.

28 IGAD, 2021a.

29 *Ibid.*

30 IGAD, 2012.

31 IOM, n.d.a; the EAC RCP is in the process of establishment; the IGAD RCP was established in 2008.

32 The MPFA is responsible for overarching policy frameworks in relation to migration.

33 Marchand et al., 2017.

## Overview of return migration to the East and Horn of Africa region

In the EHoA region, as elsewhere in Africa, data on return migration are scarce.<sup>34</sup> For example, the IGAD Migration Statistics Report of 2021 does not include a section on return migration.<sup>35</sup> Given the absence of comprehensive statistics, this chapter attempts to identify the main trends and magnitude of return migration in the EHoA region by combining different sources.

Our main source is IOM data pertaining to returns facilitated in the context of AVRR initiatives that took place in the EHoA region from 2019 to 2022. While these data are useful to identify the main trends of return migration to and within the region, they focus on the most vulnerable segment of the returning migrant population and cannot be taken as representative of national flows.<sup>36</sup> It should also be noted that AVRR data can generally be taken as representative of the supply of these services (for example, the availability of funds to implement AVRR initiatives and their geographical coverage, the presence of specific conditions in the sending and return localities under which the assisted return can take place) rather than of the underlying demand for them, which may often be greater. Importantly for their interpretation, the figures presented on returns facilitated by IOM as part of AVRR initiatives do not include return movements that are forced in nature (such as repatriations or deportations), given that this type of movement falls outside the realm of AVRR.<sup>37</sup> They also do not include return movements that are undertaken by migrants without external support, or with the support of other organizations (including governments, which sometimes facilitate autonomously the return of their nationals stranded abroad).

IOM data on AVRR are then contrasted or accompanied by statistics from other sources to help attain a more comprehensive (or rather, less partial) picture of return migration in the EHoA region. These include data collected by the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)

and anecdotal evidence from different sources. In general, noting the partiality and fragmentary nature of sources, this chapter argues that a greater effort is needed to collect and consolidate data on return migration on a continuous and systematic basis.

As shown in Figure 1 below, within IGAD and between 2019 and 2021, IOM facilitated the return of 7,495 migrants. The vast majority of these returns were directed to Ethiopia (97.6%), and originated mainly from Djibouti and Somalia (wherein Ethiopian migrants were likely travelling on the Eastern Route and therefore attempting to reach the Arabian Peninsula), followed by the Sudan (wherein Ethiopian migrants may have been travelling on the Northern Route). Somalia was the second largest receiving country (1.4%), with most assisted migrants returning from the Sudan. In general, these data confirm the relevance, within IGAD, of irregular migration along the Eastern Route and how this mainly originates from Ethiopia. According to the IGAD Migrations Statistics Report,<sup>38</sup> the stock of irregular migrants in Djibouti amounted to 12 per cent of the total population.

Within the EAC during the same period, IOM facilitated a significantly lower number of returns (75 in total). These mostly pertained returns from Kenya to Uganda and Burundi. Here, it is important to note that within the EAC numerous returns of refugees take place, although these do not show in the IOM AVRR data because the movement of refugees is facilitated by other organizations. The return of refugees is an important issue, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Concerning AVRR movements between the EAC and IGAD, between 2019 and 2021, 562 migrants were assisted by IOM to return from an EAC Member State to an IGAD Member State (mainly from the United Republic of Tanzania to Ethiopia, and likely pertaining Ethiopian migrants travelling on the Southern Route) and 145 from an IGAD

34 IGAD, 2021c.

35 Ibid.

36 This covers generally irregular migrants who find themselves stranded during transit or in the destination country and want to return but are unable to do so without support. Migrants who participate in AVRR initiatives are generally selected based on their level of vulnerability.

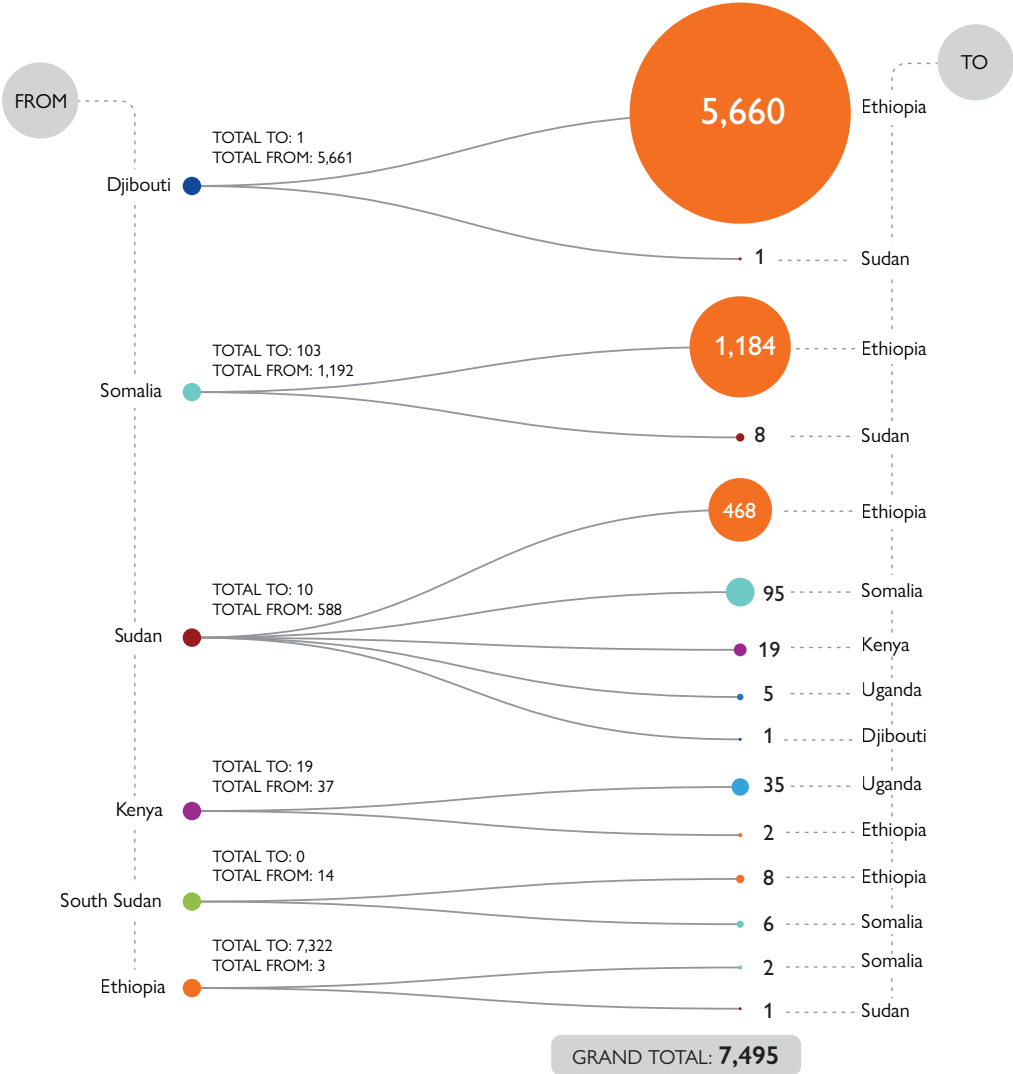
37 IOM, 2021a.

38 IGAD, 2021c.

Member State to an EAC Member State (this includes the 75 returns “internal” to the EAC noted above, as well as 61 returns from the Sudan to an EAC Member State; most probably EAC nationals travelling on the Northern Route). It is important to recall how IOM AVRR data are representative of the supply of these services rather than their underlying demand. In this sense, AVRR initiatives currently ongoing in the EHoA region mainly

focus on the Northern and the Eastern Routes, with relatively less resources being available for the return of migrants travelling on the Southern Route. As there is ample anecdotal evidence on the presence of several migrants in detention in the United Republic of Tanzania, it is important to note a possible underestimation of return flows from EAC to IGAD countries (especially the United Republic of Tanzania to Ethiopia).

**Figure 1. Number of individuals assisted by the International Organization for Migration to return within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development regional economic community (2019 to 2021 inclusive; internal returns excluded)**



Source: IOM, n.d.b.

Concerning return movements from outside the EHoA region (Table 1), along the Northern Route, IOM assisted 2,525 migrants to return to their country of origin from Libya, mostly to the Sudan. Most of these returns fall in the category of voluntary humanitarian returns (VHRs) and

pertain to migrants being held in detention centres across the country as a result of national policies aimed at curbing irregular migration.<sup>39</sup> The condition of migrants in Libya has significantly deteriorated with the conflict, and reports indicate the occurrence of casualties among migrants in

<sup>39</sup> In April 2022, IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix counted 1,651 migrants held in detention in Libya.

detention caused by military operations.<sup>40</sup> Besides being a transit country for migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, Libya is also an important destination country, especially for Sudanese migrants: as of January 2022, IOM DTM identified a total of 125,285 migrants from the EHoA region in the country (of which, 116,182 were from the Sudan, 2,786 from Somalia, 2,622 from South Sudan, 2,432 from Eritrea and 1,263 from Ethiopia), out of a total of 635,051 migrants. Political instability is also causing the return of many long-term migrants who had resided there for several years. In addition to returns from Libya, a significant number of migrant returns to the EHoA region were from Egypt. In this case, AVR data indicate that IOM facilitated 1,455 returns from Egypt between 2019 and 2021, mostly to the Sudan and Ethiopia.

Along the Eastern Route, there is ample evidence of the dire conditions suffered by migrants in Yemen.<sup>41</sup> IOM AVR data (see Table 1) show that, between 2019 and 2021, a total of 7,875 individuals were assisted to return from this country to the EHoA region (almost exclusively to Ethiopia and Somalia), as part of a humanitarian initiative aimed at evacuating migrants held in detention centres across the country. Many more “spontaneous” returns take place without support from IOM or other entities. According to IOM DTM, since May 2020, more than 17,000 migrants returned from Yemen to Djibouti and Somalia unassisted, often using the same smuggling networks used to cross in the opposite direction. Data on deaths that occurred during the crossing also suggest that the return journey is more perilous than the onward one.<sup>42</sup>

**Table 1. Number of individuals assisted to return to East and Horn of Africa countries from various regional economic communities and countries (2019 to 2021 inclusive)**

Receiving countries/RECs	EAC member	IGAD member	Number of inbound returns facilitated by IOM (Domestic returns excluded)						
			From IGAD countries	From EAC countries	From Libya	From Yemen	From Egypt	From selected African Union countries*	From all sending countries
Burundi	X		44	39	-	1	1	6	95
Democratic Republic of the Congo	X		3	-	10	-	20	426	580
Djibouti		X	1	-	5	-	-	-	16
Eritrea			-	-	56	-	-	-	59
Ethiopia		X	7 322	503	155	5 854	594	548	15 253
Kenya	X	X	19	1	11	-	8	3	163
Rwanda	X		2	-	-	-	1	7	46
Somalia		X	103	23	270	2 011	32	15	2 720
South Sudan	X	X	-	-	2	-	64	6	79
Sudan		X	10	-	2 015	9	733	516	3 532
Uganda	X	X	40	35	1	-	2	10	188
United Republic of Tanzania	X		34	-	-	-	-	-	34
<b>Total EAC Members</b>			<b>142</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>1 185</b>
<b>Total IGAD Members</b>			<b>7 495</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>2 459</b>	<b>7 874</b>	<b>1 433</b>	<b>1 098</b>	<b>21 951</b>
<b>Total EHoA region</b>			<b>7 578</b>	<b>601</b>	<b>2 525</b>	<b>7 875</b>	<b>1 455</b>	<b>1 537</b>	<b>22 765</b>

\* Selection includes all African Union countries except Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, EAC and IGAD member countries.

Source: IOM, n.d.b.

40 United Nations, 2019.

41 IOM, 2021c.

42 IOM, 2020.

Data on returns from Saudi Arabia are fragmented and incomplete.<sup>43</sup> However, the data that are available leave little doubt that this flow, which is largely driven by return operations conducted by Saudi authorities to reduce the stock of migrants in the country, is possibly the most significant one for the EHoA region. Between May 2017 and December 2021, IOM DTM has registered over 425,000 Ethiopian migrants arriving at the Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa as part of Saudi return operations aimed at reducing the presence of migrants in the country.<sup>44</sup> Precise figures are not available on returns from Saudi Arabia to Somalia, although it is believed that several thousand migrants have been sent back by Saudi authorities over the last decade as part of the same operations.<sup>45</sup> There is anecdotal evidence that migrants from Kenya have also been impacted upon, although data on returns to this country are unavailable.<sup>46</sup>

Despite gaps and limitations in the data available, the importance and relative magnitude of return migration to and within the EHoA region is clear, with IGAD standing out as a major recipient of return migration flows. Factors such as socioeconomic restrictions imposed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, instability in Yemen and measures taken by Saudi Arabia to reduce the presence of migrants in the country have likely led to an increase in the flow of returns in recent year.

The implications of these trends for regional integration projects in the EHoA region are significant, as return migration flows will likely remain consistent in the foreseeable future. In addition, conditions in transit and destination countries expose migrants, especially those without legal status, to significant risks and harmful experiences, which makes a strong case for increasing support for sustainable reintegration and for improving policy coherence around RRR, to which RECs can provide a central contribution.

## Challenges to orderly migration and sustainable reintegration in the East and Horn of Africa region

Orderly migration and sustainable reintegration face several challenges in the EHoA region. Some of these include socioeconomic and environmental conditions in Member States, which are drivers of high irregular migration; the lack of return and reintegration policies; and inadequate harmonization of migration data and policy, which are key for better migration governance.

### Economic and environmental conditions of Member States

The EHoA region has a large population of youth who are either unemployed or underemployed, often in very precarious working conditions.<sup>47</sup> This drives many to look for job opportunities within and outside the region, often in irregular ways.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, livelihood opportunity and access to different social services is affected by environmental and political conditions such as droughts and conflicts that exist in the region, particularly in IGAD Member States.<sup>49</sup>

43 Returns from Saudi Arabia do not appear in the IOM AVRR data presented because IOM is not involved in return operations arranged by Saudi authorities.

44 IOM, 2021b.

45 IOM, 2021c; in 2014, Human Rights Watch reported that 12,000 Somalis were deported from Saudi Arabia to Somalia (Human Rights Watch, 2014).

46 It was reported in 2021 that the Ministry of Labour in Kenya had facilitated employment for 87,784 Kenyans in the Middle East. There has been increasing concern as a reported 93 Kenyans died in the Middle East from 2018 to 2021 (Mutai, 2021).

47 IOM, 2020.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.



Poor socioeconomic conditions in Member States, particularly in the IGAD region, are at the root cause of many irregular movements observed in the region, and are a hurdle to sustainable return and reintegration. It must be noted that conditions that drove migrants out in the first place need to improve in order for return migrants to be able to develop resilience mechanisms to cope with drivers of irregular movement. Otherwise, a vicious circle ensues, where lack of stable socioeconomic conditions contribute to irregular movements and negatively impact sustainable reintegration, which in turn destabilizes socioeconomic conditions. A stable community with livelihood opportunities, social access and safety and security is required for orderly migration and sustainable reintegration to thrive. Such an environment, which promotes regular, safe and orderly mobility, is currently lacking in the EHoA region. There are efforts to promote better socioeconomic conditions within the region by EAC and IGAD through policy and cooperation frameworks; however, there are still implementation gaps.

#### Lack of return and reintegration policies and policy responses to irregular migration

RRR are part of global commitments on migration such as the Global Compact for Migration.<sup>50</sup> The EAC-CMP and the IGAD-FMP both state the conditions under which both forced and voluntarily return cases might be implemented. Article 18 of the IGAD-FMP and article 7.4 of the EAC-CMP discuss extradition, deportation and voluntary repatriation in situations when nationals of other Member States do not comply with the rules and regulations of the country of destination. Beyond this, however, neither of the protocols addresses the administration of RRR. Return and reintegration issues are left mostly to Member States, and are not yet addressed at regional levels or by RECs. At the continental level, the African Union is in the process of developing a policy on RRR. However, RECs such as the

EAC and IGAD have no policy yet. There is thus a gap and disconnect between framework and implementation at regional and national levels.<sup>51</sup> Further effort is required at continental and regional levels towards the implementation of the policy framework.

A lack of return and reintegration policies has an impact on migrants and their reintegration upon their return to countries of origin.<sup>52</sup> Detention is a common practice in the main destination and transit countries that engage with migrants in and from EHoA countries. Such detentions have long-term implications for migrants after they have returned to their country of origin, different for male and female return migrants.<sup>53</sup> The process of removing detained migrants is complex and entails several steps because there are no RRR agreements between countries to facilitate swift returns in a dignified manner. Migrants therefore often remain in detention for prolonged periods of time, often with profound impacts on their mental and physical health and well-being, which later impact on their socioeconomic reintegration in their community of origin. Irregular migration and the resulting costs involved in detention and removal are clearly cumbersome for all sending and receiving countries. Facilitating orderly migration would enhance sustainable reintegration within the region by reducing the negative impact of detention on the mental and physical health of detained migrants. It would also reduce costs incurred in administering irregular migration cases.

#### Inadequately harmonized migration data and policy

Better migration management requires standards and procedures based on reliable data, law and policy. As evidenced in many studies – such as the African Union’s study on RRR and the IGAD migration framework – EHoA countries could benefit from more data and statistics on migration and return within and outside their territories.

50 ICMPD, African Union and European Union, 2021.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 RMMS, 2015.

Moreover, policies relating to migration governance are different in each Member State; harmonization is required to bring better migration governance in the region. Regional cooperation remains a challenge due to a lack of capacities and resources.<sup>54</sup> Despite this, RECs are currently striving to achieve

harmonized definitions, concepts, indicators and methodologies, as well as strengthening the capacity of national statistical data on both regular and irregular migration, as well as regional data system capacity.<sup>55</sup> Further emphasis is required by the RECs to fill the gaps that remain.

## Conclusion and policy suggestions

This chapter has mapped the current context of return migration and sustainable reintegration in the EHoA region in the context of regional integration. As discussed above, return flows are significant and expected to remain consistent in the foreseeable future. Moreover, returning migrants often require significant support for their sustainable reintegration in the country of origin, due to the context of irregular migration, and the associated protection risks that are prevalent within the EHoA region and in the main areas of destination around it. This makes working towards improving orderliness in migration and sustainable reintegration in the region a priority for Member States and RECs. In this final section, initial recommendations for the EAC, IGAD and their Member States are provided.

### Develop national reintegration policies and implementation frameworks at a regional level

Most States in the EHoA region do not have specific policies on return and reintegration.<sup>56</sup> The absence of policies, as well as of related cooperation frameworks on return and reintegration, has seen Member States adopt unilateral, ad hoc approaches to the subject without a clear framework setting out strategic direction and standards. This gap in policy affects interventions as well as returnees' ability to build resilience and make informed choices, including those related to safe, orderly and regular migration. Using their convening powers, RECs can play a role in facilitating the adoption of regional policies regarding sustainable reintegration

as well as encouraging Member States to adopt national policies on the same topic linked to their national development plans. In practice, this can entail targeting the population strata that are more susceptible to experiencing irregular migration and suffering from the related protection risks, as well as prioritizing investment in areas where the incidence of irregular outflows is highest. This would require having migration data systems in place capable of monitoring consistently return migration, irregular migration and protection risks.

### Strengthen interregional dialogues and collaboration to manage irregular migration

Mobility within Africa enhances the socioeconomic reintegration of return migrants who move within the region. However, such movements need to be orderly and properly managed. To minimize the prevalence of high irregular migration within and outside the region, particularly originating from the IGAD region, RECs could offer returnees new pathways and options for mobility, and coordinate to negotiate as a bloc with other RECs to develop those pathways and options. For example, such negotiations could result in bilateral agreements between the RECs in EHoA and regional entities in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), which are destinations for many migrants from the EHoA region. As indicated in the above two sections, many nationals of the EHoA region are detained in different Member States of EAC countries such as Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Malawi and

<sup>54</sup> Marchand et al, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> IGAD, 2021b.

<sup>56</sup> This notwithstanding, several countries in the EHoA region have adopted standard operating procedures for the return and reintegration of migrants. While these instruments are important for the management of AVRR initiatives in this domain, they only partially meet broader policy requirements.

Mozambique. Inter-REC collaboration between EAC and IGAD, and agreement on harmonization of policies regarding border management and the return and reintegration of migrants, would contribute to the sustainability of reintegration.

### Harmonize migration policies and develop migration data systems at the regional level

As indicated in the second section of this chapter, there are ongoing RCPs by the EAC and IGAD that aim to improve regional information-sharing and policy dialogue dedicated to migration issues. For example, IGAD has already established a regional Migration Data and Technical Working Group, mandated to work on the harmonization

of concepts, methods and definitions concerning migration, and to develop a regional migration data system. IGAD also established key migration priority indicators, and produced the first edition of the IGAD Migration Statistics Report. Such efforts should be strengthened to further realize the objective of free movement and to facilitate better human mobility. RECs as a bloc can play a role in negotiating and collaborating with international partners to develop the institutional capacity of Member States for better migration data management and sharing, which would allow data to be used at a regional level. Integrated data at the regional level are vital to inform migration policies, including those that address orderly migration and sustainable reintegration.

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