

## **GUIDELINE 14: Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives**

The dislocation and disruption created by conflicts or natural disasters can have significant and severe consequences for the socio-economic wellbeing of migrants and their families. Migrant workers often support themselves and their immediate and extended families, whether they are with them in the host State or in States of origin. Conflicts and natural disasters can stem the flow of income to migrants and curtail remittances to their families. Technical facilities to remit money can be disrupted. Currency devaluations and changes in exchange rates can affect migrants' savings and assets. Education opportunities for student migrants can be indefinitely suspended. Xenophobia and discrimination against migrants may increase. Post-crisis conditions in host States and States of transit may allow trafficking of persons and other exploitative arrangements to thrive.

Migrants and their families who return to States of origin after prolonged stays in a host State can experience difficulty finding employment and housing and reintegrating. Reintegration may be especially difficult for victims of trafficking, individuals who experienced sexual and gender-based violence in the host State, children born to migrants in host States who have no experience of the culture in the parents' State of origin, and migrants who have been abroad for extended periods of time. Possible interventions include cash assistance to address immediate needs, psychosocial counseling, health care, physical rehabilitation, family tracing services, assistance to recover outstanding wages, assets and property, compensation to address losses, and much more. Efforts to restore income for those migrants who return to their States of origin may include certification and recognition of skills, education, and training acquired abroad. Many migrants may seek opportunities to acquire new skills upon return. For various reasons, including to revive their incomes, others may seek opportunities to remigrate back to host States once the crisis has subsided or migrate to other countries.

Migrants who remain in their host States can also experience difficulty resuming their previous lives. They will require many of the same support services as migrants who return to their States of origin, such as cash assistance, health care, psychosocial and other counseling, family tracing, compensation, assistance to recover outstanding wages, assets, and property, and efforts to restore income, employment, and education opportunities. Like citizens, migrants' post-crisis needs should be factored into host State recovery plans and programs at the national and local levels. States may decide to review immigration and visa rules to provide latitude for migrants who wish to remain in the host State to do so legally. Efforts that leverage the solidarity of migrants who remain in host States towards their host communities and societies could counteract xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes.

### ***Sample Practices***

- *Access to remedies to recover lost property and assets, outstanding wages, pensions, and other benefits.*
- *Engagement of migrants in host-State reconstruction efforts.*
- *Flexible immigration procedures to enable migrants to retain regular immigration status.*
- *Registration, assessment, and recognition of returned migrants' needs and skills.*
- *Immediate reintegration support, including cash and medical assistance.*
- *Income and employment regeneration assistance, including assistance with remigration.*
- *Certification mechanisms for skills, education, and training acquired abroad.*

## **PRACTICES TO IMPLEMENT GUIDELINE 14:**

### **Address migrants' immediate needs and support migrants to rebuild lives**

#### **Multiple Stakeholders**

##### ***Access to remedies to recover lost property or assets***

Stakeholders can assist migrants in accessing avenues to recover lost assets or property, including outstanding wages in the host State by providing legal support, including legal representation in the host State. Stakeholders can also advocate on behalf of migrants with host State authorities, employers, recruiters, and placement agencies to provide redress.

#### **Host States**

##### ***Temporary relaxation of immigration procedures***

Crises may have disrupted normal immigration processes and affected migrants' ability to receive or renew visas or otherwise maintain a regular immigration status. Migrants or their employers may have lost identity documents, visas, or other paperwork during a crisis, or such documents may have been destroyed as a consequence of the crisis. Temporary relief for migrants and their employers include:

- Lifting enforcement of sanctions for employers or migrants who are unable to produce work permits or other documents as a result of the crisis;
- Allowing migrants to apply for temporary measures, such as an extension of regular immigration status even if the application was filed after the status had expired;
- Extending deadlines for regularization and rescheduling appointments;
- Extending humanitarian status for migrants previously granted this status;
- Expediting adjudication of employment authorization applications;
- Issuing work authorizations for student visa holders experiencing severe economic hardship;
- Replacing documents on an expedited basis, including to ease access to recovery assistance;
- Allowing fee waivers in relevant situations.

##### ***Engagement of migrants in local recovery and reconstruction***

The engagement of migrants in post-crisis recovery efforts has several benefits: supporting migrants in the restoration of financial losses or related compensation, facilitating the reconstruction process, creating conditions for stronger future inclusion of migrants in crisis planning and preparedness, and filling any labor market gaps resulting from the crisis. It can be problematic, however, if conditions are unsafe and migrants are hired because citizens are unwilling to work under these conditions. Measures to ensure migrants are safely included in recovery programs include:

- Improving the understanding and awareness of migrants' contributions to the socio-

- economic vitality and resilience of host communities;
- Facilitating the re-entry of migrants who had to be evacuated during the crisis and are willing to return, including through multiple entry visas;
- Incorporating labor migration in post-crisis recovery programs;
- Extending or renewing on a timely basis expired visas or visas nearing expiration for migrants who stayed during the crisis;
- Monitoring working conditions to help ensure the safety of migrants engaged in recovery efforts.

### ***Access to reconstruction and recovery assistance without discrimination***

States that have experienced crises may offer recovery assistance to individuals who have suffered losses, either with their own resources or in conjunction with international financial institutions or other organizations. Shelter support, loans, housing replacement, and other reconstruction services created for citizens can also be made available to migrants, in particular those who are long-term or permanent residents, or who will contribute to reconstruction and economic recovery in the communities affected by the crisis.

### ***Access to remedies to recover lost property or assets***

As a consequence of a crisis, migrants may lose assets or property, including outstanding wages. Migrants may have legitimate legal claims to recover their assets or property, but if migrants have left the host State, they may not have direct access to redress mechanisms. Factors to consider in assisting migrants to recover assets and property include:

- Establishing administrative processes to examine claims for recovery of assets and property, including outstanding wages from migrants who are no longer resident in the host State;
- Providing assistance, including legal support, to migrants to inform them of their rights and to help them negotiate the systems in place for recovering assets and property;
- Mandating employers to transfer outstanding wages to migrants who have left the host State.

### ***Needs and skills assessments of returnees***

Some citizens may return with few or no assets, while others may return having acquired skills or assets abroad. Assessing returnees' profiles and needs can inform the design of appropriate assistance and reintegration assistance. These assessments can be undertaken in several ways, including:

- Registration systems at borders and points of arrival;
- Creation of dedicated national, local, or municipal structures;
- Analysis of citizens' key socio-economic characteristics, skills, and qualifications;
- National registration and profiling procedures;
- Skills registration databases for returning workers.

### **Reintegration support**

The disruption created by conflicts or natural disasters can severely and negatively affect the socio-economic wellbeing of returned citizens and their families. Upon their return to States of origin, citizens and their families may need diverse and multiple forms of support and assistance to accommodate their immediate and medium-term needs. Reintegration support services for returned citizens (some of which are described below) could include:

- Cash assistance;
- Medical and psychosocial services;
- Counseling;
- Family tracing services;
- Temporary and long-term housing;
- Referrals for specific services;
- Social benefits, including unemployment, disability, and low-income benefits;
- Access to education for children and youth;
- Assistance to reacquire employment and generate income in the State of origin;
- Assistance to remigrate including information dissemination on legal migration opportunities;
- Assistance to obtain identity documents and citizenship (e.g., for children born abroad);
- Targeted services for particularly vulnerable groups, such as women, children, victims of trafficking, and other persons experiencing trauma;
- Assistance to access local services.

Factors that stakeholders may consider in implementing reintegration programs include:

- Mandating a dedicated agency to support return and reintegration efforts;
- Combining several services in comprehensive return and reintegration packages;
- Creating national and local reintegration centers to assist citizens reintegrate.

### **Access to social services and other return assistance**

Citizens may have resided abroad for lengthy periods and not be eligible for or unable to access social services. Some returned citizens may require specialized assistance, in particular children, victims of trafficking, persons who experienced trauma, and those that had been in an irregular immigration status in the host State. Services could include:

- Family tracing services;
- Temporary housing and access to health care and education;
- Referrals for specific services (e.g., medical, psychosocial, and services for unaccompanied or separated children, disabled persons, or victims of trafficking);
- Waivers on residency requirements for certain social benefits, including unemployment, disability, and low-income benefits;
- Assistance to obtain identity documents and proof of citizenship, including for children born abroad.

### ***Psychosocial counseling***

Health and psychosocial counseling can be a crucial service for returned citizens, particularly those who faced trauma during their migratory journey. Citizens and their families who return to States of origin after prolonged stays in a host State can experience difficulty reintegrating into the culture, traditions, and gender roles of host communities. This may be especially difficult for children born abroad. Support programs could include trauma counseling, social counseling, family counseling, and individual counseling. Such counseling can be aimed at helping the returned citizen to adapt to their new reality, defining their role in the community, or ensuring psychosocial stability.

### ***De-stigmatization of returnees***

In some situations, such as when a returned citizen may have been a victim of trafficking or other forms of exploitation, forcibly recruited into extremist or combatant groups, or been victims of sexual abuse, they may experience stigmatization in the community to which they return. De-stigmatization and community reconciliation programs to facilitate successful reintegration could include identifying pressures on returnees, mitigation of family conflicts, or information campaigns in communities to raise awareness of difficulties returned citizens faced.

### ***Certification mechanisms for skills, education, and training acquired abroad***

Returnees who have acquired skills abroad might have lost relevant documentation as a result of the crisis, or their State of origin might not recognize qualifications or certificates acquired abroad. Certification mechanisms for skills, education, and training acquired abroad could include:

- Providing returnees with information about how to register and get their skills recognized;
- Establishing skill certification services through a government agency or setting standards and accrediting private service providers to provide returnees with affordable assessment services;
- Establishing a cooperative process to include employers or workers associations, private employment services, education and training institutions, professional and regulatory bodies, national skills or qualifications certificating agencies, and relevant civil society;
- Assisting returning workers if overseas employers do not provide evidence of skill acquisition;
- Developing skill assessment procedures to recognize and certify non-certificated learning (e.g., in assessment centers through certified assessors);
- Providing gap-filling training leading to full occupational certification;
- Mutually recognizing vocational qualifications between States of origin and host States.

### ***Income and employment regeneration***

Citizens who return will have lost their jobs and potentially their savings and may not be able to support themselves or their families. Finding new sources of income for high and lesser-skilled workers is necessarily a key component of return assistance. Those new sources of income could come from employment locally, new business development, or remigration opportunities. Services to support these ends include:

- Training to develop and upgrade skills, including financial literacy and business management;
- Micro-credit, loans, and grants, business starter kits, and entrepreneurship programs, including tax incentives;
- Incentives for private sector actors to employ returned citizens;
- Coordinating with recruitment agencies to match skills with opportunities abroad;
- Counseling and advice on employment, whether in the State of origin, or through remigration;
- Work fairs, events, and orientation programs to provide information;
- Placement services;
- Establishment of employment centers in regions experiencing high-levels of return to meet multiple needs, including those highlighted above.

### Private Sector Actors

#### *Post evacuation assistance*

The relationship between employers and recruiters on the one hand, and migrant workers on the other, need not end on evacuation from the host State. Employers and recruiters can consider:

- Hiring returned migrants at operations in the State of origin or assisting in their remigration by offering employment in another State;
- Rehiring migrants in the host State after the crisis abates;
- Refunding or waiving recruitment or other fees associated with the previous job or the next;
- Paying outstanding wages, social benefits, or other employment benefits, such as insurance claims.

### International Organizations

#### *Reception and post-arrival assistance*

International organizations can support States to provide reception and immediate post-arrival assistance to evacuated migrants through the provision of services. These can include:

- Temporary accommodation;
- Food packages and non-food items;
- Onward transportation assistance;
- Assistance to have access to identity documentation;
- Health assistance and psychosocial support;
- Servicing water, sanitation, and hygiene needs;
- Identifying migrants with particular vulnerabilities and referring them to relevant services or organizations.

### **Return and reintegration**

Many activities on reintegration support, described above under the section on States of origin, can be carried out by international organizations. In addition, international organizations can support States in improving reintegration support, including through:

- Research and evaluations of existing practices on migrant return and reintegration;
- Developing guidance for States on implementing migrant return with dignity;
- Technical assistance in designing programs;
- Developing guidance on post-crisis return and reintegration of migrants to their State of origin or back to the host State;
- Providing support for community awareness, de-stigmatization, and community reconciliation initiatives where needed.

### **Migrant profiling**

International organizations can support States and other stakeholders in collecting, comparing, and analyzing data on migrants in the aftermath of a crisis. Profiling exercises serve the objective of producing aggregated data on the number of affected migrants, their residual needs and vulnerabilities, and their skills and capacities. This information can inform the design of post-crisis interventions.

## **Civil Society**

*The above-mentioned practices identified for international organizations are also relevant to civil society.*

### **Immediate assistance upon return**

Civil society, especially those operating within communities of origin, may be first responders in supporting returned migrants. The actions they can take include:

- Establishing reception centers for returned migrants, where migrants can stay for a short period of time upon return, investigate options, and develop a plan for reintegration;
- Offering legal and other services to migrants to recover outstanding wages, social contributions, and other assets and property left behind in host States, or to obtain redress for other violations.
- Advocating on migrants' behalf with local authorities to obtain local or national identity documents to access social services, health care, or education;
- Supporting processes of family tracing and reunification;
- Linking migrants to programs for economic support, cash assistance, and livelihood as well as employment agencies;
- Providing information on legal channels for remigration to returnees interested in this option.

### ***Psychosocial support programs for the reintegration of vulnerable migrants***

Civil society can assess and address the needs of particularly vulnerable returned migrants and implement programs that can support their reintegration process. The types of programs they can implement include:

- Assessments, research, and migrant profiling to understand and analyze the reintegration needs of returned migrants, and among them, of particularly vulnerable groups, such as child migrants, youth, and victims of violence and trafficking;
- Psychosocial support and counseling to facilitate reintegration of migrants who do not have local connections, cultural familiarity, or other networks or resources to rely on;
- Social and economic reintegration interventions, especially for youth without ties to communities of origin;
- Health and psychosocial assistance for victims of trafficking, of gender-based violence, and other types of exploitation and trauma;
- Psychosocial support for migrant children facing language and cultural barriers within communities of origin.

### ***Recovery support for migrants remaining in host State***

Local civil society actors can ensure migrants who remain in the host State throughout the crisis get the assistance they need to recover. Activities to support migrants include:

- Providing psychosocial support and counseling;
- Supporting redress mechanisms to recover property or assets, especially where migrants have no legal standing;
- Monitoring discrimination and anti-immigrant and xenophobic conditions.