



Migration is often perceived as a one-way journey, starting from one’s homeland to a new country of destination. The reality can be more complex, however. For some, the need to go back home is felt at a certain point, triggered by the desire to reunite with family, changed conditions in either host countries or countries of origin, or the lack of legal status and work opportunities.

Since 1979 IOM, the UN Migration Agency, has been implementing Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes worldwide, assisting more than 1.5 million migrants. For IOM, AVRR is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management.

Every year, IOM provides tailored AVRR assistance to tens of thousands of migrants returning home voluntarily under diverse circumstances.

Beneficiaries may include stranded migrants in host or transit countries, irregular and regular migrants, asylum seekers who decide not to pursue their claims or are found not to be in need of international protection, as well as migrants in vulnerable situations, such as victims of human trafficking, unaccompanied and separated children, elderly migrants or those with health-related needs.

The successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including the migrants, civil society, private sector, academia and the governments in host countries, transit countries and countries of origin.

IOM believes that migration which takes place in a safe, orderly and dignified manner is beneficial for migrants, governments and societies.

IOM’s Migrant Protection and Assistance Division (MPA) provides protection and assistance to migrants in need, including trafficked persons, smuggled migrants with protection needs, (rejected) asylum seekers, migrants in irregular situations, stranded migrants, unaccompanied and separated migrant children, and migrants subjected to violence, exploitation or abuse.

Together with its partners MPA has:

- Helped more than 1.5 million migrants return voluntarily to their countries since 1979.
- Supported returning migrants to reintegrate within their communities.
- Assisted close to 100,000 victims of human trafficking since 1994.
- Assisted more than 60,000 vulnerable migrants in 2017 alone.



EVOLVING GLOBAL TRENDS

Initially conceived in Europe, from where the majority of assisted voluntary returns supported by IOM originate, AVRR programmes have progressively expanded both geographically and programmatically over the past four decades. The range of regions where AVRR activities are implemented has steadily grown and today includes Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas and Oceania.

In the context of transit migration, AVRR has proven to be an effective tool to assist stranded migrants who are in distress and often destitute, or who lack the means to continue their journey. Along with increased geographical diversity, a growing number of actors is involved in providing AVRR related support and there is increasing interest from development actors for sustainable reintegration.

AVRR PRINCIPLES

IOM's AVRR activities are delivered following a tailored and individualized approach, putting the needs of the returnees at the forefront, allowing them to retain their dignity and take responsibility for and ownership of the return process.

In implementing AVRR, IOM observes several important principles:

1. Voluntariness
2. Migrant-centred response
3. Safety
4. Sustainability of reintegration
5. Confidentiality
6. Dialogue and partnerships
7. Evidence based programming

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE AVRR FRAMEWORK

Adapting to the changing migration landscape, IOM has developed a comprehensive AVRR Framework, which goes beyond IOM's own engagement and is designed to guide both policy-makers and AVRR practitioners.

Considering the diversity of AVRR projects' eligibility criteria, available resources, national policies, implementation partners and operational contexts, the Framework proposes a roadmap to address AVRR in a holistic manner. Calling for the adoption of coordinated measures, policies and practices between stakeholders responsible for migration management and development at the international, national and local levels, it aims to respond to the needs of the individual returnees, the communities to which they return as well as to priorities of concerned governments.

IOM supports migrants in need to return voluntarily, safely, and in dignity and to achieve sustainable reintegration in full respect for human rights, regardless of their status.

SUPPORTING ATTAINMENT OF THE SDGs

AVRR primarily contributes to Target 10.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by (1) facilitating voluntary returns, which form part of the cycle of international migration and are essential to comprehensive migration management, and by (2) assisting returning migrants as well as Member States to address challenges associated with return migration and re-inclusion.

In addition, AVRR contributes to Target 10.2 by supporting returnees in their economic, social and psychosocial reintegration process in their countries and communities of origin.

Through local partnerships and cooperation for implementation and referrals, AVRR is also relevant for Target 17.17. Furthermore, by engaging and building the capacity of all relevant stakeholders at the local, regional and national levels, AVRR programmes foster a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the importance of well managed return policies, thereby addressing Target 17.9.

DIFFERENT STAGES OF AN AVRR PROGRAMME

