Developing Lifeworld Oriented Perspectives for Return Migration

Needs, Vulnerabilities and Support of Refugees in Germany

Study of the "Project Migrants Interested in Return" (PRIM)
An Analysis of the Target Groups of the Programme "Returning to New Opportunities"

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PRIM
Projekt Rückkehrinteressierte Migrant*innen

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Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung

Programm **Perspektive Heimat**

SHORT SUMMARY

Abstract

The research report "Developing Lifeworld Oriented Perspectives for Return Migration", presents the results of the "Project Migrants Interested in Returning" (PRIM), which was carried out at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) in 2019 on behalf of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The study focuses on refugees from the 13 countries of origin of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities", which GIZ is implementing on behalf of the BMZ. Based on a quantitative data analysis of the target group and qualitative interviews with refugees and various support actors, data was collected on the needs, living conditions and future orientations with regard to the topic of return in Germany. An analysis of the options of return as well as the respondents' own perspectives on a potential return is the main focus of this study. In addition, the analysis gains insight on the awareness and use of support services for coping with everyday life as well as the planning of a return. To adequately address the needs of the target group of refugees and to further develop the sector of return assistance accordingly, recommendations for the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" as well as for return policy actors were developed on the basis of the study's results. The programme aims to facilitate a successful new start in the countries of origin. The central finding of the PRIM study is that hopes for a better future first require the development of return perspectives oriented towards the lifeworlds of the respective individuals.

1   Introduction

The sharp increase in asylum applications in 2014 and 2015 has led to an increasing concentration on measures of forced and supported departures from Germany. As of December 31st, 2019, almost 250,000 persons were obliged to leave Germany, of which approximately 80 per cent have a suspension of immediate deportation due to various reasons. Of the approximately 47,000 persons obliged to leave the country without toleration permit/short-term permit, slightly less than half are rejected asylum seekers (BT-Drucksache 19/18201).

The Federal Government's aim is to increase the number of people leaving the country, in particular through measures of so-called "voluntary return" (BMI 2018: 20). The main target group of these return programmes are people who are obliged to leave the country, with or without a toleration permit, and people who are in the midst of the asylum procedure. Between 95 and 99 per cent of the funding provided by the national German return programme "Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany/Government Assisted Repatriation Programme" (REAG/GARP) are directed towards the respective groups under the residence law (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik 2017: 21). Thus, the "voluntary return", understood in this way is, in many cases, an alternative to forced repatriation. Within this framework, Germany relies primarily on incentives in the form of financial support for voluntary departure.

Since 2016 the regulatory focus of German return policy has been supplemented by a development policy component. The return promotion measures initiated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI) have been combined with the approach of reintegration assistance provided by the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since 2017, the programme has been implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH as part of the programme "Migration for Development" by 25 bilateral projects in a total of 13 partner countries. These include Afghanistan,

Albania, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Iraq, Kosovo, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Serbia and Tunisia.

2   Research Assignment and Findings of the Analysis

2.1   Research assignment

Despite numerous studies on return and reintegration, there is a clear research gap in terms of the ideas and perspectives of refugees on this topic (Grawert 2018: 4). The aim of the research assignment was therefore to further develop existing approaches while taking the lifeworld experiences of refugees into consideration. To address these experiences, the study examined the needs for and access to support services. Particular attention was paid to include the day to day realities of vulnerable groups from the perspective of the field of social work.

Based on the widespread approach of lifeworld orientation in the field of social work, especially in Germany (Thiersch 2014), the PRIM study was based on the presumption that support services work best when they adequately address the views and problem-solving strategies of the recipients of support and incorporate the social structures of their everyday life. In relation to the objectives of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities", this more or less success means that the recipients are supported in developing sustainable future perspectives. Accordingly, the main research question of the PRIM study is the following:

> "How can refugees from the 13 countries of origin be supported in developing a professional and social perspective for the future?

Therefore, looking at the actors involved does not only mean dealing with individual competences, but rather understanding how people with a history of forced migration can maintain or regain their own ability in Germany. In the examination of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities", "working on opportunities" means to understand the way all the actors involved deal with the structural framework conditions as a productive act that is driven by the desire to influence or shape the future of refugees in a positive way. Within the framework of the research assignment, the study does not only include those who have already made the decision to return to their country of origin. Rather, the term "interest in returning" in a broader sense also includes people who might sooner or later return to their countries of origin. In the partner countries the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" targets the local population, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants and returnees from Germany (BMZ 2019: 6). Although the programme is basically open to all migrants from the above-mentioned countries of origin, in Germany however, migrants with little or no prospects of remaining in Germany represent the core of the target group. This indicates that the majority of refugees from the 13 countries of origin interviewed in the PRIM study are also persons in asylum proceedings and persons obliged to leave the country who are confronted with the issue of return due to their residence situation. The study used a mixed-method design consisting of a quantitative data analysis and a qualitative interview-based data collection.

2.2. Quantitative data analysis

The analysis of statistical data on the target group systematically outlines the living conditions of refugees with the aim of structurally describing their objective living conditions. The secondary data analysis was carried out using various data sets from the Federal Statistical Office and the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2019).

As of December 31st, 2018, a total of 1,781,750 persons seeking protection (open, recognised, rejected protection status) are located in Germany, of which 599.515 persons stem from the partner countries of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities", and thus belong to the target group

(see Figure 1). All three protection status groups belong to the target group of refugees in the PRIM study, whereby the main target group of the research are those seeking protection with an open and rejected protection status, namely persons in asylum proceedings as well as tolerated and directly deportable persons.
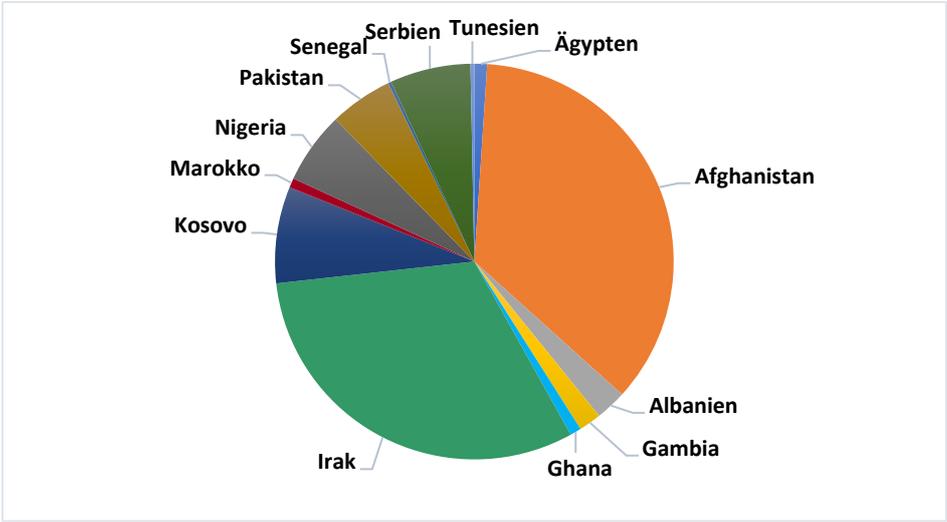

Figure 1: Distribution of the target group by countries of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" (Status 31.12.18, Statistisches Bundesamt 2019: own presentation)

The entire target group is made up of 358,480 persons with a recognised protection status, 148,435 persons with an open protection status and 92,580 persons without a protection status, i.e. persons who are obliged to leave the country. 73,310 of whom, i.e. about 80 per cent, have a suspension of immediate deportation, so a so-called toleration status:

Tolerated persons are not directly facing forced return because their deportation is temporarily suspended. However, due to the legal situation in many federal states, they are less likely to be integrated into the education system or the labour market. With regard to a potential interest in return, however, it must be taken into account that the proportion of tolerated persons is high for all countries of origin of the target group. Even for persons with an open protection status, it is uncertain whether they can remain in the country of destination, which above all depends on the current protection rate of their country of origin. For these persons, a return is therefore proportionate to an uncertain perspective for the future in Germany.

The data demonstrates how an interest in return may differ substantially considering the heterogeneity of the protection status. In the PRIM study, therefore, the protection status and the prospects of remaining in Germany were included in the interpretation of the qualitative data.

Overall, the target group consists of considerably more men (380,710) than women (218,795). The average age of the target group is 28.4 years. Nigerians (23.1 years) and Gambians (24.8 years) represent the youngest groups. The oldest groups are on average women from Kosovo (37.7 years) and Serbia (32.4 years). The majority of the target group are single (357,980; approx. 60%). Only about half as many people are married (174,880) and a total of only 550 people live in a civil partnership. The average length of stay in Germany is 7.1 years. It varies greatly depending on the country of origin (see Figure 2). The length of stay in Germany plays a major role when considering return, and will be explained later on.
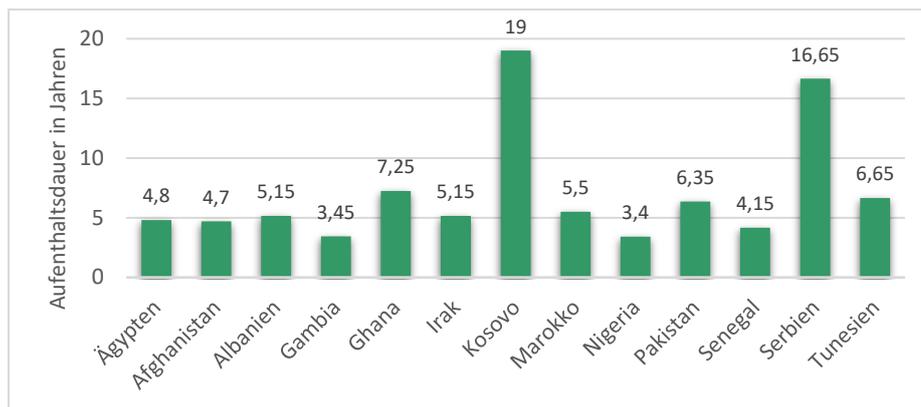
Figure 2: Average length of stay of the target group by country of origin (Status 31.12.18, Statistisches Bundesamt 2019: own presentation)

2.3. Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative analysis is based on 37 interviews with refugees from the 13 partner countries of the programme ‚Returning to New Opportunities'. In this analysis they are referred to as the "target group".

Three criteria were essential for the sampling strategy of the target group: country of origin, protection status and gender. The partial focus on gender ensures that the situation of women despite their comparatively low number is not neglected. In addition, the selection of interviewees focused on people with particular vulnerabilities, thus further differentiating characteristics were used in a varied manner, such as age, state of health, gender identity and belonging to a minority group.

The sample of the target group is composed as follows: 27% are male, 38% are single, the average age is 33.8 years, the average length of stay in Germany is 4 years, 65% live in shared accommodation, 35% belong to a minority, 78% have an open or no protection status and 59% are without protection status and therefore obliged to leave the country.

In addition, 25 interviews were conducted with various actors who offer support for this target group, here referred to as the "intermediary target group". These were conducted with representatives from the following areas: return counselling (4), qualification measures preparing for reintegration (RMV) (4), social and procedural counselling (3), migration and refugee social work (5), migrant women's organisations (3), child rights organisations (1), self-organisations (1), and volunteers (4).

Gaining access to the target group in the field was very difficult. The intermediary target group was less inclined to refer clients for interviews for research purposes on the topic of return. The assumption is that participating could damage the relationship and trust with the target group as well as the fact that the organisations are often critical regarding the topic of return, or because the target group is too vulnerable from the point of view of the intermediary target group. The target group itself was generally sceptical about participating in interviews on the topic of return; hence, the willingness to participate in an interview was very low. Due to associations with forced returns, people without a secure residence status are afraid to talk about this topic. There was little confidence to discuss the topic of return without fearing consequences.

Guideline-based interviews were used for the qualitative data collection in the PRIM study. The data was evaluated using the methodology of Grounded Theory (Strauss/Corbin 1996). The data material was computer-coded using the program MAXQDA. The results of the qualitative analysis can be divided into three fields: Reasons for flight and migration destinations (1), return not/a topic

(2), and fields of action for building blocks of good "opportunity work" (3). The data analysis is conceptually based on the assumption that both the persons in the target group and those in the intermediary target group carry out "opportunity work". This includes the underlying notion that the persons of the target group are considered as capable actors in the development of perspectives for the futures and thus in finding "new opportunities" for themselves. The coding paradigm developed in the research process for the "agency of refugees" represents the core issue of the analysis (see Figure 3). The term "agency" entails the actors' capacity to act with the aim of supporting themselves in their social and personal development as well as mobilising their resources to cope with life on their own.
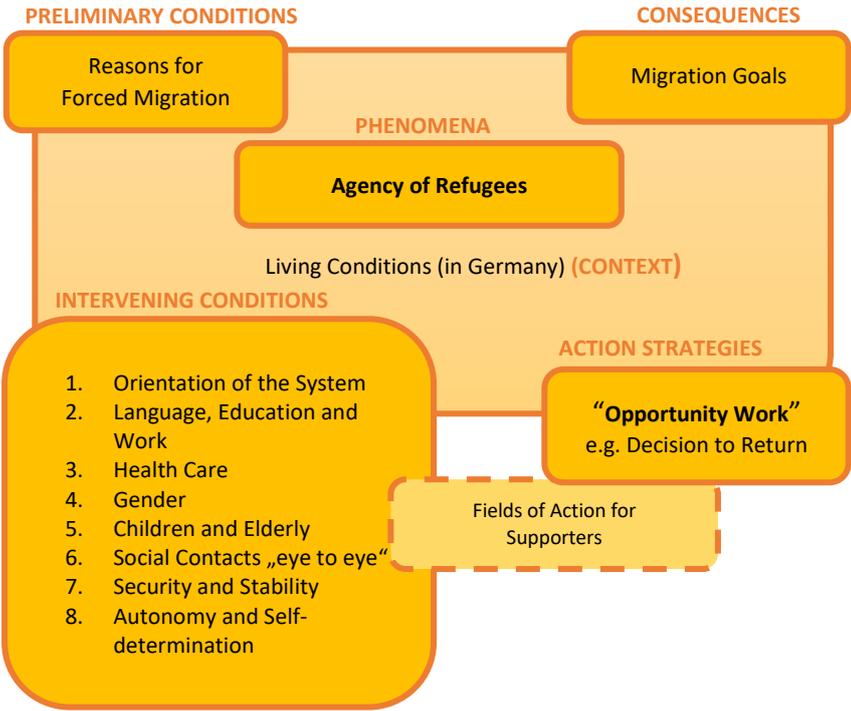

Figure 3: Coding paradigm towards agency of refugees in "opportunity work"

Referring to (1): The reasons why the interviewed persons of the target group come to Germany are as diverse as the closely linked migratory goals. In addition to the desire for security, religious freedom or medical care, these include goals such as education and further training, improving career and family prospects and securing livelihoods, as well as the option for transnational networking.

Referring to (2): Return is not an issue that the refugees deal with proactively. Rather, the fear of being deported to their country of origin against their will is in the foreground, as a young man from Gambia reports.

> "I don't even have [...] to sleep in my [place] because I always think of deportation." (ZG19-m-GAM)

For the 29 interviewees without a secure residence permit, i.e. persons without or with an open protection status, the issue of return plays a very minor role in their future projections and invokes fear and anxiety. The challenges of everyday life are so present that there is no mentioning of the topic of return. At the same time, the issue is fundamentally very present, since a return could take place at any time – even involuntarily – due to the insecure residence status.

Oftentimes it is very difficult for the supporters to discuss the topic of return and to create coping measures, because the target group does not see realistic options of return.

> *"Well, very few of them speak openly about return as such, so that they really now say: "Yes, I have made up my mind to do it. This is the right way for me and I want to return to my country of origin", because this is also a very big taboo topic. So on the one hand among this group and on the other hand also in the country of origin." (MIZ1_RVM)[1]*

For example, the target group often fears that the use of return counselling and qualification measures preparing for reintegration (RVM) means consenting to leave the country, or that data will be passed on to the foreigners' registration office which might lead to further obstacles to create a future in Germany.

While the staff in RVM are trying to use confidence-building methods to convince the refugees that the support offers are not a measure led by immigration authorities, they must at the same time contend with severe disruptions to the services offered by those authorities.

> "*Until recently, this was not the case. But then they came, heavily armed with EIGHT people. We thought there was someone here (.) Serious criminals and they wanted to deport someone. (.) And Daaa (...) we from v/ really were stunned, because / eeh, stunned [...] Then the eight of them circle a completely different (.) person who comes to our school, and, eh, ALL OTHERS who saw this, it took us WEEKS to calm them down again. WEEKS. I saw our WORK at that moment, our OTHERHALF years of work, falling deeply. All that mistrust. [...] And now they bring that into our action [...] And we are still fighting. That was last month.*" (MIZ3_RVM)[2]

In the example shown, deportation in the seemingly protected space of the measure is a massive loss of trust of the target group and undermines the credibility of the social support service.

Referring to (3): Building blocks of good "opportunity work" include the ability to develop a sustainable perspective for the future. This is influenced by a system orientation and thus by knowledge of and access to bureaucratic, legal and social structures of the current and future place of living, hence Germany and the country of origin. Good future prospects are also based on language skills, vocational qualification, employment opportunities and education. The approach towards gaining an education to promote development and return perspectives is adopted by the RVM of the programme "Returning to New Opportunities". These measures are designed to enable potential returnees in Germany to obtain vocational qualifications before they return. The offers are considered as positive by the target group. However, enrolment in such a measure is independent of a concrete wish to return.

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[1] Translation of the German original quote: " Also die wenigsten sprechen offen über die Rückkehr an sich, also dass sie wirklich jetzt sagen: »Ja, ich habe mir das vorgenommen. Das ist für mich der richtige Weg und ich möchte in mein Herkunftsland zurückkehren«, weil das eben auch ein sehr großes Tabu-Thema ist. Also einerseits unter dieser Gruppe und andererseits auch im Herkunftsland." (MIZ1_RVM)

[2] Translation of the German original quote: "Bis vor kurzem war das nicht. Aber dann kamen die hier mit ACHT schwer bewaffnete Menschen. Wir dachten es ist hier jemand (.) Schwerverbrecher und die wollten jemand abschieben. (.) Und Daaa (..) da sind wir von v/ wirklich, weil / eeh, fassungslos gewesen […] Dann umkreisen die zu acht 'ne komplett andere (.) Person, die zu uns zur Schule kommt, und, eh, ALLE ANDEREN, die das gesehen haben, haben wir WOCHEN gebraucht, um die wieder zu beruhigen. WOCHEN. Unsere ARBEIT in dem Moment, unsere ANDERTHALB Jahre Arbeit, hab' ich tief fallen sehen. Die ganze Misstrauen. […] Und das bringen sie jetzt in unsere Maßnahme […] Und da kämpfen wir immer noch. Das war letzten Monat." (MIZ3_RVM)

> *"I really love the programme. I love the programme because of how I stay I do this moment I think this is the only help. For number one they make brain, revise my brain back. I think about my work and not thinking about worries or any other thing. So I really like the programme and that is why since when I joined them I have not maybe said no I will not continue. No, I just keep on working with them. Trying to know what will come out of it because me, I'm the kind of person that always like to learn. So it's helping a lot, I like that."* [ZG9-Ml-NIG]

The RVM thus fulfil the desire to acquire education in general and therefore are perceived rather to compensate the deficits in access to education in Germany in the form of language courses and vocational training. They distract from everyday worries, have a motivating and day-structuring effect, instead of optimising a return incentive.

In addition, vulnerabilities such as illness, gender discrimination or the age of those affected (children and elderly people) must be taken into account when developing future prospects. The desire of the target group to actively improve their own situation and that of their family members, is sometimes contrasted with the enforced passivity in the country of arrival, namely Germany. Supporters report that oftentimes vulnerabilities of refugees stem from experiences in an inability to act, from racism and discrimination and from the lack of structures in everyday life in Germany. Having an own apartment, work and school can counteract the lack of structure, since the living situation in community accommodations is perceived as extremely stressful by the target group. Feelings of powerlessness and lack of control dominate especially in the arrival phase, which is usually followed by a long period of waiting and forced passivity in Germany.

> *"And they come here and have nothing at first. And you always have to wait. One waits for a counselling appointment, one waits for the asylum procedure for the answer, one waits for a doctor's appointment, one waits for an apartment, one waits for a German course, one waits for everything. And you're so powerless and have so little control."* (MIZ6_SA).

Increasing feelings of security and stability is therefore of particular importance. Peace of mind and time by attaining a residence permit is considered a prerequisite for the development of return prospects.

> *"So, until I obtain my residence permit status one six months ago or seven months ago now I can decide what to do."* (ZG5-m-GAM)

Therefore, the analysis concludes that a stable position established through a residence permit of the target group facilitates discussions on the topic of return.

Autonomy and self-determination as well as the development of one`s own networks with social contacts at eye level, strengthen the abilities of people with flight experiences to shape their own future.

> *"[...] So social care in the sense that you look, okay certain things are arranged here so and so and so and so and so, I can help you with that, but not everything. So it's a super difficult task, but it's actually about making people independent again. And not to take all the responsibility for it yourself. It's actually about activating people again, so they can do their own thing somewhere else."* (MIZ18_SA)[3]

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[3] Translation of the German original quote: "[…] Also Sozialbetreuung in dem Sinne, dass man guckt, okay gewisse Sachen sind hier so und so und so und so geregelt, ich kann dir dabei helfen, aber nicht alles. Also ist eine super schwierige Aufgabe, aber eigentlich geht es darum Menschen wieder selbstständig machen zu können. Und nicht alle Verantwortung dafür selber zu übernehmen. Es geht nämlich eigentlich darum die Menschen wieder zu aktivieren, damit sie ihr eigenes Ding irgendwo anders machen können." (MIZ18_SA)

The (re)establishment of independence and agency in various areas by the target group in Germany is of central importance for the subsequent development of future perspectives.

The analyses of the "opportunity work" from the point of view of the target group and the intermediary target group show which aspects are relevant for the development of lifeworld return perspectives. Identifying the needs and perceptions of the target group of refugees while dealing with the topic of return, it becomes clear that there are various factors influencing the decision to return. Factors that impede a return decision are a return with empty hands and the associated lack of prospects, structural problems in the country of origin, psychosocial factors, the fear of burdening the family, the general lack of social contacts in the country of origin and discouraging experience reports from returnees from their circle of acquaintances. The fear of immobility after a return is also mentioned as a great challenge. Changes in oneself and the country of origin as well as the people living there, has the effect that return is not necessarily experienced as a re-encounter with something old and familiar, but instead as a first migration. Influencing factors that favour a decision to return are the longing for "home", the achievement of set goals, the prospect of a secure income and wealth as well as the desire to contribute to the development of the country of origin. The challenges that arise from these insights for the support actors and for the supply level are related to long-term return planning, the capacity to make return decisions independently, the break-off of support after return and general doubts about existing return programs.

> "*Because sometimes, many people think that it, you are supported here and also supported in their home country, in their home country, uh, supported, so that is not burdened, can very safely start over there. But many, they have gone to Afghanistan [...] and they have complaints because you don't get any support there. And then they slipped into problems again, and then they, they thought, okay, we'll think again about coming back to Europe, to Germany, because they were not, yes, helped. "* (ZG-m-AFG)[4]

3   Recommendations for the programme "Returning to New Opportunities" and for return policy actors

3.1   A new definition of return for return policies

While return may be linked to the intention to settle permanently in the country of origin, it does not necessarily have to be final. A transnational approach towards return takes on the notion that return is not the final stop, but rather an ongoing process (Cassarino 2004), a transREmigration (Olivier-Mensah 2017). Accordingly, return should not be conceptualised as an endpoint of migration. If return is no longer framed as final, the frightening image of a "dead end" can be avoided and decisions on return can be made with less risk. Temporary return visits, so-called "go-and-see visits", as carried out by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). In allowing psychosocial factors and life in the country of origin to be temporarily tested such as through visits could serve as decision-making support for long-term return processes. It is therefore necessary to adapt to the needs of the target group and to enable opportunities for mobile future plans also after return, outside the country of origin.

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[4] Translation of the German original quote: "Weil manchmal, viele denken, dass es, man wird hier unterstützt und auch in ihrer Heimatland, in seinem Heimatland, äh, unterstützt, damit nicht belastet wird, kann sehr sicher dort neu anfangen. Aber viele, sie haben nach Afghanistan gegangen […] und sie haben Beschwerden, weil man bekommt keine Unterstützung dort. Und dann sie haben wieder gerutschen in Problem, und dann sie, sie dachten, okay, wir überlegen nochmal ein, nach Europa, nach Deutschland wieder zu kommen, weil wurden sie nicht, ja, geholfen." (ZG-m-AFG)

3.2   Specific support services for diverse vulnerable groups

People with an increased vulnerability usually need specific support services to develop future prospects in their country of origin. The development of future prospects for vulnerable groups does not appear possible and return seems questionable from a humanitarian perspective without respective needs being met.

This requires specific knowledge of the special needs of children, youth, elderly and people with health restrictions. For example, further training in child protection is needed (Bozay/Özfırat/Nahali 2017) and additional funding must be provided. People with illnesses can, for example, apply to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) for medically-related additional costs, such as financing additional equipment or accompanying staff. When families return, the question arises how the children living with the family can be prepared for return. Uncertainties exist, for example, as to whether younger children have learned the language of their country of origin in addition to German, and whether they have the opportunity to attend school in their country of origin and develop their own perspectives for the future. Appropriate family concepts must be used to ensure that all family members are involved in the counselling process in Germany and in the decision to return. Hence, child-appropriate surveys and participation procedures such as visualisations and drawings are necessary in order to enable needs-oriented strategies of reintegration preparation.

3.3   Increased attention towards the topic of addiction

The use of addictive substances, which is described in particular by men travelling alone, appears alarming especially in the context of developing future opportunities. Offers of return preparation, return counselling centres and RVM must deal with prevailing addictions and create a space in the return and preparation process, as well as pointing out healing options. In addition to professional counselling and medical/therapeutic offers, this can also consist, for example, in initiating self-organised networking in the sense of self-help (Duscha 2018) in order to strengthen one's own potential for action. In the event of a return, specific rehabilitation approaches of drug and addiction counselling, e.g. in the form of treatment facilities for abstinence therapy, substitution treatment, medical care and therapeutic measures, should be offered or arranged by "counselling centres for jobs, migration, reintegration" in the countries of origin and adequate funding must be secured.

3.4   Embedding advice on return in the field of social work

Offers of support that specifically address return itself often have a deterrent effect. By covering not only the issue of return, but also other everyday problems and challenges as well as alternative perspectives for the future such as the possibility of staying in Germany or migrating to another country, return becomes one option among many others and could thus more consciously be dealt with by the refugees themselves. Social work provides open future counselling based on the life-world approach. This illuminates topics relevant to the everyday life of their clients. Essentially, the principle of social work is to help people to help and to empower themselves (IFSW/IASSW 2014) and to advise relevant actors in a way that facilitates self-determined return decisions (Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein/Landesamt für Ausländerangelegenheiten Schleswig-Holstein 2018). Return counselling should therefore not be offered in isolation, but integrated as part of this life counselling. Return counselling should be carried out by qualified staff from the field of social work and be based on professional approaches of counselling, such as client-centred communication or systemic counselling.

Although RVM are in principle seen as positive and provide a good basis for structuring everyday life, they do not fulfil the intended purpose of specifically preparing for return or even sparking an

interest in returning. Rather, they compensate for the denied access to the German education system. Instead of pertaining to return, qualification measures preparing for reintegration (RVM) could be converted into future preparatory measures (ZVM).

The cooperation of reintegration scouts with professional return counselling centres within independent social work agencies should be intensified by employing more scouts in counselling centres and promoting regional exchange formats between scouts and counselling centres. In this context, the further training courses offered by Integplan (an integrated return planning network) should also be further expanded in order to convey detailed knowledge on country-of-origin-specific information to social workers. This applies in particular to the offer of excursions to the respective partner countries. The thematic focus of the training courses should also be extended to other countries of origin. Reintegration scouts should also continue to be consulted in the implementation of the training courses for the purpose of exchange.

3.5   Strengthening the target group's autonomy and return at the right moment

Support to develop stable social networks is an important aspect for gaining independence. In addition, counselling structures must be in place with the primary goal to strengthen the autonomy of the target group and to promote an intrinsic motivation to return.

Early initial information (but no specific return counselling on return funding opportunities for asylum seekers), provided by migration and refugee social work and accompanied by reintegration scouts, could be beneficial (Feneberg/Olivier-Mensah 2018). This way the target group is addressed openly and at an early stage, far from pressure and hopelessness.

However, a decision to return needs not only planning, but also time, peace and security – factors that persons with an open protection status lack. Having to make life decisions under pressure is a conceivable and unfavourable prerequisite for personal success and well-being. Therefore, a return at the right time is required. At what time and date this should happen, should be determined by the persons themselves.

The autonomy of the decision enables the target group to act as a bridge to the local population in their countries of origin, for example with regard to the dangers of flight and on the basis of their experience in Germany. Thus, they could take on key positions in local support services, for example as counsellors in the "counselling centres for jobs, migration, reintegration" in the country of origin or, in addition to the role of reintegration scouts, as mentors in godparents models between people who already have return experience and those who are interested in returning from Germany, or people who are currently still trying to cope with the return in the country of origin. In order to qualify for this task, GIZ should design appropriate training and further training courses.

3.6   Transnational management of return and focus on arrival situations

For the target group, the length of absence from the country of origin is a major challenge in dealing with return. The conditions in the country of origin have changed since leaving the country and some of the interviewees do not perceive a return as a return but as a journey to a foreign country. Return is generally perceived by the refugees as a break-off in support and there is great doubt about successful support after return.

Especially the arrival and initial phase is characterised by great challenges. Emotions upon arrival in the country of origin have a major impact on well-being and future prospects. In this context, the "counselling centres for jobs, migration, reintegration" in the country of origin should act as a kind of "welcome centre". If no personal, local social network is available, the task of welcoming and

picking up at the airport should also be performed here. It is important to create opportunities to ensure that returnees do not feel left alone, but are welcomed into a family, community and society from day one on.

A profiling of reintegration support (Lietaert 2017) is necessary that involves the returnee(s), the local family and the local community and thus provides tailored support by identifying the already mentioned vulnerable groups. Transnational social work practices and a transnational case-management are therefore needed (Bartley et al. 2012; Negi/Furman 2010; Olivier-Mensah/Schröer/Schweppe 2017), which can be carried out online, by telephone or even through face-to-face visits. The initial approach of transnational accompaniment of the GIZ should be expanded, e.g. in the case of the return of children and unaccompanied minors or sick people. Also, transnational counselling services such as the pilot project "virtual counselling" of the IOM should be further developed.

3.7 Strengthening connections between return policies and diverse actors of support

For the target group, the complex and different funding structures are often confusing and unequal conditions create mistrust and doubt. Unified standards and good cooperation at the micro, meso and macro levels between Germany and the countries of origin should be sought. A ‚whole-of-government approach' (WGA) (Ohliger/Mesghena 2018), which includes the responsibility of governments in the countries of origin, and a "wraparound model" of social work (Furman et al. 2008), which is characterised by the networking of formal social services and informal support services at all levels and across national borders, are needed.

Not only return counselling and RVM are important in terms of support structures in Germany and for the development of a needs-oriented reintegration preparation strategy, but also various support actors such as social and procedural counselling, (migration) social work, migrant organisations and volunteers. These and other actors, such as doctors, must be made visible for the target group and their potential for support must be promoted.

Closer cooperation on social work contributes to the expansion of networks, because in addition to the above mentioned professional counselling and care services for refugees, it also coordinates voluntary work in Germany (Han-Broich 2012). Further, social work is a leader in the field of setting up and supporting self-organised initiatives in coping with the tasks of self-help through so-called self-help contact points. It could thus act as a link between governmental services, social support structures of civil society and migrant self-organisations (Olivier-Mensah 2018) and be a relevant cooperation partner for the program "Returning to New Opportunities". Through the bottom-up approaches of these actors, better access to the target group and low-threshold support services both in Germany and in the country of origin can be further facilitated.

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Suggested Citation