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# Home, sweet home?

The effect of return migration support mechanisms on reintegration

*L'effet des appuis institutionnels après le retour sur la réinsertion des migrants sénégalais et congolais dans leur pays d'origine*

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## Introduction

- 1 Since the year 2000, the return of migrants from third countries has become a priority in the policies of European countries which are designed to manage international migration [Cassarino, 2008a]. Among other measures, policy makers implement various programs to assist the reintegration process of return migrants, with the belief that it will prevent them migrating again, and will also enhance their involvement in the development of their origin country [Kabbanji, 2013]. Migrants from Africa are especially targeted by return migration support mechanisms, with Africa identified as « the first geographic priority' by the European Union [Flahaux and Kabbanji, 2013: 242]. The topic of return was among those discussed in November 2015 at the Valletta Summit on migration, the first meeting between African and EU heads of states to focus exclusively on the topic. During this summit, the leaders adopted a political declaration and an action plan in order to work more closely to improve, among other things, reintegration after return [European Council, 2015]. While network and transnationalist theories have highlighted the importance of social links with the origin county during migration and Cassarino the role of « return preparedness » for the reintegration process [Cassarino, 2004; 2008a], policy makers seem to adapt a structuralist approach by implementing reintegration programs in order to support migrants after their return. By doing so, they suppose that the context (or « structures ») are a determining factor for reintegration, and they seem to ignore the role of « agency » in this process.
- 2 On the one hand, the implemented reintegration programs target irregular migrants and asylum seekers who « wish » to return « voluntarily »<sup>1</sup> to their country of origin by

providing them with return and reintegration assistance allowing them to set up an income generating activity in their origin country. These assisted « voluntary » return and reintegration programs are presented as an alternative to expulsion [Black et al. 2004]. The assumption is that better conditions in the origin country will reduce the desire to migrate again and prevent further irregular migration [Sinatti, 2015]. On the other hand, other programs encourage the return of migrants who are in regular situation in Europe, by offering them financial and logistical assistance in order to support their activities or investments. These migrants are considered « actors of development » because they are likely to transfer to their origin country the skills and the financial capital they acquired abroad [de Haas, 2005].

- 3 The empirical literature has focused on the decision of irregular migrants and asylum seekers to benefit from assisted « voluntary » return and reintegration programs, and casts doubt on their efficacy, highlighting the programs' lack of attractiveness to migrants [Black *et al.*, 2004]. According to previous research, this is due to the fact that the objectives of these programs are far from reflecting those of the migrants themselves, who consider the assistance as « a sweetener that does not make up for the advantages of migration » [Linares, 2009: 6]. Another study indicates that most of the beneficiaries had actually already planned to return, considering the funding as a bonus rather than an impetus [Daum, 2002]. There is little evidence on the decision of regular migrants to return and to benefit from programs supporting their economic investment projects, but they do not seem to particularly foster returns. Returnees often have little knowledge of state-led initiatives [Boccagni, 2011]. Further, migrant entrepreneurs who benefited from an investment support program mentioned that their return was motivated firstly by family reasons, and secondly by the desire to work in their home country [Flahaux and Kabbanji, 2013].
- 4 This paper investigates the effect of return migration support mechanisms on the reintegration of migrants in their country of origin. Several studies have explored how programs assisting irregular migrants to reintegrate have helped them after their return [van Houte and de Koning 2008; Linares 2009; Ndione and Lombard, 2004; Quiminal, 2002; Ruben *et al.*, 2009; Black *et al.*, 2004; Lietaert *et al.*, 2014], but there is less evidence on the role of programs for regular migrants, despite a growing literature on the migration-development initiatives addressing the return of entrepreneur migrants [Åkesson, Eriksson-Baaz, 2015]. Generally, there seems to be a gap between the positive picture of reintegration depicted in the institutional discourses and evidence on the beneficiaries' experience [Lietaert *et al.*, 2014]. Among the cited reasons for the difficulties experienced by the beneficiaries are: the limited financial support actually granted [van Houte and de Koning, 2008]; training not adapted to particular contexts and insufficient to transform unskilled migrants into entrepreneurs able to manage their project alone [Linares, 2009; Ndione and Lombard, 2004; Quiminal, 2002]; monitoring taking place over a too-short period [van Houte and de Koning, 2008]; and the lack of preparation of the project before return, irregular migrants having for example not had the opportunity to visit their country of origin beforehand to conduct a feasibility study [Linares, 2009; Ndione and Lombard, 2004]. As a result, many of them wish to migrate again [Schuster and Majidi, 2013].
- 5 Aside from the institutional assistance provided to return migrants, the legal status they had before returning and the context in their origin country are both likely to play a role in their reintegration. Legal status is often linked to willingness to return. Irregular

migrants are more likely to have been constrained to return, without preparation, which causes financial difficulties for their reintegration [Ruben *et al.*, 2009; Cassarino, 2004]. As a result, these migrants become a burden for their family [Quiminal, 2002]. Psychological and social costs are also important when migrants are forced to return [Golash-Boza, 2014; Schuster and Majidi, 2015]: they experience feelings of shame in relation to their relatives and feel considerable psychological pain [Chappart, 2008]. These difficulties push them to intend to leave their country again and they even may do so [Schuster and Majidi, 2013; 2015]. On the contrary, migrants who had prepared their return do not wish to migrate again [de Haas and Fokkema, 2010]. The context in which migrants return may also influence their reintegration. As S. Ammassari [2004] says, the return is more likely to be a success if the situation in the country of origin is suitable. If the migrants do not see a positive future in their origin country, they are likely to intend to migrate again [Cassarino, 2008b].

- 6 In this paper, I analyse the effect of institutional assistance on the reintegration of beneficiaries, taking into account the legal status they had abroad (and therefore the type of program from which they benefited) and the context in their origin country. I focus on reintegration in two different contexts: in Senegal, a relatively stable country economically and politically, and in DR Congo, a country that has experienced manifold troubles over recent decades. Comparing these two different contexts provides an opportunity to highlight the potential role played by context in reintegration after return, which policy makers do not take into account when designing the programs. Moreover, existing studies have examined only the experience of beneficiaries back in their origin country; they have not compared their reintegration with that of migrants who have not received institutional support after their return. However, in order to rigorously assess the effect of the assistance programs after return on how return migrants reintegrate, it is also necessary to compare the case of beneficiaries with that of non-beneficiaries with a similar profile. I use this approach and combine a thematic qualitative analysis of interviews with a quantitative assessment of the different dimensions of reintegration. While there has been, over the last few decades, a fragmentation among migration scholars coming from different disciplines, with their studies adhering to either a quantitative or a qualitative approach, this paper responds to an appeal for the adoption of more mixed methods approach in the field of migration studies in order to better apprehend the realities and mechanisms at play [Bakewell, 2010]. The analyses carried out here thus provide an innovative and original insight into the effect of programs supporting the reintegration of return migrants.

## Institutional assistance for reintegration

- 7 Among the programs aiming at supporting the reintegration of return migrants, we must make the distinction between those targeting regular migrants and those targeting irregular migrants, as they do not provide the same support to their beneficiaries. This section particularly focuses on programs implemented in Senegal and DR Congo.

### Programs supporting the reintegration of regular migrants

- 8 Programs supporting the economic investment activities of return migrants are part of wider co-development initiatives, aiming at supporting their transfer of financial and

human capital to origin countries. Even if it is not explicit, these programs are designed for those regular migrants who already plan to invest in their origin country [Flahaux and Kabbanji, 2013].

- 9 In Senegal, since 2006, the « Programme d'Appui aux Initiatives de Solidarité pour le Développement » (« program to support solidarity initiatives for development ») (PAISD), is funded by France and implemented by a Senegalese team based at the Senegalese Presidency. This program provides beneficiaries with training about business creation and management, as well as offering technical and financial support. A non-refundable grant of € 4000–7000 is awarded, depending on the project. Migrants have to apply before their return or within the six months following their return. Various companies have been created in many different fields (dentistry, consulting, construction, etc.) as a result of this program.
- 10 In DR Congo, since 1999 various programs have succeeded each other in supporting the economic projects of return migrants: « Retour positif » (« Positive return ») in 1999, « Migration et développement » (« Migration and Development ») between 2000 and 2003, « Valepro » in 2004 and 2005, and « Projet Migration Initiatives Économique » (« Project Migration Economic Initiatives ») from 2005 to 2010. Funded by the European Union or the Belgian development agency, these programs were implemented by an NGO (Cedita-Entreprendre) in partnership with French or Belgian NGOs. The support varied according to the program; it generally consisted of an administrative, technical and financial assistance. The amount provided varied between € 1000 and 5000 according to the program and the project. Unlike in Senegal, training was not offered.
- 11 The actual number of beneficiaries in general is (very) small in Senegal [Kabbanji, 2013], and even smaller in DR Congo.

### Programs supporting the reintegration of irregular migrants

- 12 Assisted « voluntary » return and reintegration programs implemented by European countries since the beginning of the 1990s aim at « orderly and humane return and reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries and wish to return voluntarily to their countries of origin » [IOM 2016]. The term « voluntary return » is contested in the literature. It is used as an opposition to « forced return » or expulsion, but it results from heavy constraints, as migrants have no legal alternative or face the threat of force [van Houte and de Koning, 2008; Webber, 2011]. European countries increasingly use these types of programs, as they are less costly than expulsions, require travel documentation only, and are considered in the public opinion as being more humane, which allows collaboration between the states and NGOs for their implementation [Black et al., 2011].
- 13 In Senegal, depending on their previous country of residence in Europe, « voluntary » return migrants are assisted by IOM, Caritas, or the French program based at the Senegalese Presidency, which delegates the supervision of reintegration to a consultant or an NGO (Ascode). In DR Congo, IOM is responsible for the implementation of the assisted « voluntary » return and reintegration programs. These programs may provide return migrants with socio-economic support to promote their self-sufficiency and contributions to their local communities. The support varies from one origin and destination country to another. For instance, France offers the possibility for irregular migrants and asylum seekers to benefit from € 4000 to 7000, the United Kingdom from

€ 5445 to 6050, and Belgium from € 700 to 2000. These amounts, however, vary according to the period. The monitoring period is usually one year.

- 14 More Senegalese than Congolese migrants benefit from these reintegration programs, but the numbers of beneficiaries are generally low. Between 2009 and 2011, the number of Senegalese migrants who benefited from an assisted «voluntary» return and reintegration program increased from 30 to 60 every year, while in Congo, it varied around 10 to 40 every year only.

## Data and methods

### Qualitative interviews with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of institutional assistance

- 15 In order to assess the effect of institutional assistance on reintegration, qualitative interviews were conducted in the regions of Dakar (Senegal) and Kinshasa (DR Congo) with 68 migrants returned between 2000 and 2010 who benefited or not from the support of the different organizations after their return. The contacts of returnees who benefited from institutional assistance were obtained through the organizations that implemented the programs described above. They were randomly sampled from a list of beneficiaries where possible or by «snowball», in order to limit the potential biases linked to the fact that the organizations may have wanted to share only the contacts of their successful beneficiaries. The contacts of non-beneficiaries were provided by people met during journeys on public transport, who were asked whether they knew individuals who would agree to tell me their return experience. The respondents had to have left Africa (for Europe or North America) after the age of 18 for at least one year and have returned to Senegal or DR Congo for at least one year.
- 16 I analyze four categories of returnees according to their legal status abroad and whether or not they received institutional assistance after return: (a) Those who had a regular status before returning and who benefited from assistance (=the beneficiaries of a program supporting their economic investment); (b) those who had a regular status before returning but who did not benefit from assistance; (c) those who had an irregular status or were asylum seekers before returning and who benefited from assistance (=the beneficiaries of an assisted «voluntary» reintegration program); (d) those who had an irregular status before returning and who did not benefit from a reintegration program (=most often expelled migrants). Table 1 shows the number of Senegalese and Congolese interviewees by category.
- 17 Table 1. Number of interviews carried out with returnees in Senegal and DR Congo, by status before return and by institutional assistance after return or not.

	Return migrants in Senegal		Return migrants in DR Congo		Total
	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular	
Assisted by an institution after their return	7	7	3	8	25

Not assisted by an institution after their return	18	9	12	4	43
Total	41		27		68

- 18 The objective of the interviews was to collect the subjective point of view of return migrants about their experience abroad, the circumstances of their return and life since their return. The responses of the respondents could have been influenced by my status as a foreign researcher, and it is possible that some stressed their difficulties and exaggerated their difficulties, hoping that I could help them. However, some of them told me that they were very happy to share their experience with me, as they cannot often do so because their relatives generally have a false picture of life in Europe. Almost all the interviews were conducted in French, except a few which were conducted in Wolof by a Senegalese interviewer in Dakar.

### Measuring reintegration after return

- 19 The question of reintegration of return migrants has been addressed by researchers in various disciplines, giving rise to a diversified and growing literature, especially since 2000 (Carling et al., 2011]. Reintegration is a broad concept, made up of several dimensions. It can refer to economic, social and psychological aspects, and can be studied from the subjective point of view of returnees or through objective criteria [Flahaux, 2013]. In this paper, reintegration is analyzed through the perception of returnees about their situation. It is a subjective measurement, based on the satisfaction expressed by individuals about their reintegration. Three dimensions of reintegration are distinguished:
- 20 - the economic dimension refers to the level of well-being perceived by individuals. This is assessed in financial terms, and refers to the sufficiency and stability of income, housing, access to employment and dependency vis-à-vis the family or other people;
- 21 - the psychosocial dimension refers to psychological well-being, the way return migrants view the society of origin, how the population perceives them, and their access to social networks;
- 22 - the physical dimension assumes that migrants intend to stay in their origin country and do not want to migrate again.
- 23 Some methodological choices had to be made and these have some limitations. First, while the optimal approach would have been to compare the satisfaction of returnees about their reintegration after a precise period (one or two years after their return for example), it was difficult for people to remember their subjective perception at a specific moment in the past. For that reason, satisfaction with reintegration is measured as being at the time of the interview. Second, the migrants who left their origin country again after their return could not be interviewed, and the sample is therefore not representative of all the return migrants in the regions of Dakar and Kinshasa. The data rather represent returnees who have not yet migrated again, either because they are satisfied with their situation, because they have family constraints, or because they have not yet had the time or the resources to do so.

## Methods to assess the effect of institutional assistance after return on reintegration

- 24 A thematic qualitative analysis of interviews was conducted to investigate the reintegration of return migrants in Senegal and DR Congo. I compare the reintegration of individuals who have benefited from assistance with that of those who have not benefited but who had the same legal status before returning. In addition, I create a quantitative assessment of each dimension of the reintegration of the return migrants who were interviewed.
- 25 First, I evaluate each dimension of the reintegration of each respondent on a scale from 0 to 3, « 0 » meaning that the individual faces significant challenges to reintegrate and « 3 » corresponding to the absence of difficulties, values « 1 » and « 2 » being intermediate. Therefore reintegration is considered optimal in economic terms if the returnee is happy with his situation in this respect, and it is considered difficult when he is not satisfied. Likewise, reintegration is psychosocially optimal if the individual feels a certain well-being and integration into his society of origin, but is hard when he feels rejected or not understood by his relatives. Finally, an individual whose reintegration is going well is likely to want to remain in the country of origin, while he will intend to migrate again if he experiences difficulties. Thus, returns are considered the most optimal when they give rise to satisfaction in economic and psychosocial terms, and do not involve the desire to leave the country again.
- 26 Then, I calculate the average scores of reintegration for each dimension, before calculating average total scores corresponding to the average of the average scores for the three dimensions of rehabilitation. T tests are performed to compare the total average scores of the different categories of returnees in order to know if they are significantly different. Analyses are performed separately for Senegalese and Congolese migrants.
- 27 This quantitative assessment of the qualitative interviews aspires to go beyond the qualitative analyses, but I am aware that it has two limitations. The first limitation is related to the sample, which was not drawn completely randomly, and the second relates to the sample size, which is not high. However, it gives a quantitative insight that provides first main trends, in order to support the qualitative analyses.

## The reintegration of return migrants in their origin country

### A first quantitative insight

- 28 Before focusing on the effect of assistance programs themselves, let us start by questioning the role of the context in the origin country on the reintegration of returnees. The total average scores of the reintegration of returnees in Senegal and DR Congo are similar and not significant, which indicates that the perception of the reintegration for Senegalese returnees is not better than the one of Congolese (tables 2 and 3).

- 29 Then, the quantitative assessment indicates that the legal status migrants had before their return matters for their reintegration after their return. In both countries, migrants reintegrate better when they had a regular status abroad (total average scores of 2.6 in Senegal and 2.7 in DR Congo on a scale of 3) compared to those who did not have a regular status (total average scores of 1.3 and 1.1 respectively). These differences are significant. It is possible to think that the irregular migrants have more difficulties in reintegrating due to their lower level of education, but this reasoning is not valid, as the majority of Congolese migrants who were irregular abroad had a high level of education [Flahaux, 2013]. Instead, what distinguishes migrants who had a legal status and those who did not is the degree to which they have been able to prepare their return. While regular migrants could choose to return at the time that suited them best, this was much less possible for those who were undocumented and so forced or encouraged to return.
- 30 The quantitative results also reveal that return migrants who were undocumented before their return and who did not benefit from institutional assistance after their return are those whose reintegration is least successful (total average scores of 0.3 and 0.7). In other words, among migrants who were undocumented abroad, those who benefited from institutional assistance seem to reintegrate more easily. This result should however be interpreted with caution, as undocumented migrants who benefited from an assisted « voluntary » return program have not returned in the same circumstances than those who were expelled. Even if these two categories of migrants faced similar legal constraints abroad, preventing them acquiring resources likely to be useful after their return, those who returned through an assisted « voluntary » return program had information and followed steps to benefit from this assistance. In that sense, they were much more proactive than those who were expelled. This selection effect is actually likely to explain the difference in the total average scores between undocumented migrants who benefited or not from institutional assistance after their return.
- 31 Finally, regarding migrants who were documented abroad before their return, the quantitative results reveal high total average scores of their reintegration in Senegal and DR Congo, but there is no significant difference between those who did or did not receive institutional assistance after their return. It suggests that the institutional assistance documented migrants receive does not determine a smooth reintegration process.
- 32 Table 2. Total average scores of returnees' reintegration in Senegal and DR Congo

	Return migrants in Senegal		Return migrants in DR Congo	
	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular
Legal status before returning				
Assisted by an institution after their return	2.6	1.9	2.7	1.7
Not assisted by an institution after their return	2.6	0.7	2.7	0.3
Average by status	2.6	1.3	2.7	1.1
Average by country	1.9		1.9	



33 Table 3. Significance of the difference between total average scores of reintegration for the different types of returnees in Senegal and DR Congo

	Return migrants in Senegal		Return migrants in DR Congo	
Legal status before returning	Regular	Irregular	Regular	Irregular
With the support of a program after their return	Non-significant difference	Significant difference at the 5 per cent level	Non-significant difference	Significant difference at the 1 per cent level
Without the support of a program after their return				
Average by status	Significant difference at the 1 per cent level		Significant difference at the 1 per cent level	
Average by country	Non-significant difference			

34 Despite the small numbers preventing deeper analyses, this quantitative assessment gives the main trends of the effect of institutional assistance after return on the reintegration of return migrants in Senegal and DR Congo. The qualitative analyses allow a deeper examination of the economic, psychosocial and physical dimensions of reintegration. First I will address the case of migrants who were documented abroad before their return, and then that of those who were undocumented.

### The effect of programs supporting the reintegration of return migrants who had a regular status abroad

35 Migrants who were documented abroad and benefited from institutional assistance after their return already intended to resettle in their country of origin before returning. They were prepared to return, which helped their reintegration.

36 From an economic point of view, the activity the Senegalese beneficiaries undertake in their country of origin corresponds to the one they had planned before returning, and they are satisfied with the living conditions they have since their return. These migrants benefited from support from France to invest in their professional activity. With this support, for example, Kader opened a dentist surgery, Fallou a concert hall, Diallo a consultancy office, and Salimata an employment agency. They all work full-time. On the Congolese side, the main activity of return migrants is not the one for which they received funding. For example, Bertrand received financial support to renovate a hotel owned by his mother in Kinshasa, but he rapidly started working for a telecommunications firm as a salaried worker. Gustave was assisted in starting a pigsty in a farm, but he became at the same time a professor at the university and a civil servant in

- a ministry. The support these beneficiaries received was an additional opportunity, but they did not anticipate it being their main activity.
- 37 The assistance received is qualified as « useful' for some of the beneficiaries in Senegal who could access a bank loan thanks to it. But most of the respondents said that the assistance was not crucial for their reintegration. Ibou, who opened a consultancy office in Dakar, says: « I wanted to come back (...) It [the financial support] helped, but it wasn't the deciding factor. I knew what I wanted'. Diallo also explains that he would have been able to start his activity without assistance: « I knew I wanted to create my agency. I developed it over many years, and when I started it, it ran like clockwork ». These migrants had prepared their return project by saving money and acquiring specific skills, and the financial support they received was a « bonus', not a necessity. Whatever it be, these beneficiaries all have a fruitful professional activity, live in comfortable conditions and are able to fulfil the needs of their family.
- 38 The documented Senegalese and Congolese migrants who did not benefit from institutional assistance are also happy with their situation. They invested in independent activities or in firms such as cattle farming, poultry business, carpentry, restaurants, clothing stores, pharmaceutical company or molecular biology centre. Others have joined governmental, international and non-governmental organizations or multinational companies where they have senior positions. They are satisfied financially, and some of them even say that they have a more comfortable lifestyle in their country of origin than they could have had abroad.
- 39 On a psychosocial level, whether they benefited or not from assistance after their return, the migrants who had a regular status abroad are overall very satisfied with life in their origin country, even if it is not always easy for them to deal with the various requests they have from their friends and relatives who considered that they are coming from El Dorado, and sometimes face problems related to slowness, disorganization and corruption. But they say that they experience great satisfaction when they perceive that they contribute to the development of their country. In this respect, Celestin, a Congolese working for a governmental organisation, explains why he is satisfied: « My ideal is to work, to help this country develop'. Dr Fall, a Senegalese biologist, also declares: « I am particularly satisfied because I feel that I can do a lot of things for Senegal'. David, a Congolese entrepreneur, says: « It is rewarding (...). Aside from my salary I'm happy to have people around me and my activities and that makes me happy.'
- 40 The migrants who declare themselves as experiencing difficulties in their reintegration are those who had not prepared sufficiently their return, even when they benefited from the assistance of a program of reintegration. Economically and psychosocially, Aminatou, a Senegalese woman who opened a restaurant in Dakar, explains that she has a bad relationship with the consultant in charge of assisting her in her activity, and recognises that her savings were insufficient to start her activity. She considers her reintegration as a failure because of the lack of preparation: « My mother [in France] told me that I was making a mistake [by returning], that you don't go back just like that, from one day to the next [...] I came back like a cowboy'. For Ali, who is trying to start a business in Dakar without benefiting from any assistance, his difficulties are linked to the fact that he lacks social networks in Senegal: « I am realising that it's not enough to have skills, knowledge and know-how; you must also have connections. I'm trying to work on that, but it isn't easy'.

- 41 Regarding the physical dimension of reintegration, it appears that the few migrants who consider their reintegration as a failure think about the possibility of migrating again. The main reason is the lack of preparation of the return. This is the case of Aminatou, who had however benefited from institutional support: « I'm planning to leave [for France], to step back in order to make a better comeback (...) I will come back [to Senegal] with greater savings, my own savings. And not counting too much on that [the financial assistance]'. In DR Congo, where the context is more unstable, private schools more expensive, and health care not guaranteed, migrants are aware of the difficulties of living there in the long-term with their family, even if their reintegration is a success. Therefore, many of them mention the fact that they will probably leave their country again later for their children's benefit, thanks to the residence permit or citizenship they have abroad that allows them to circulate easily.

### The effect of programs supporting the reintegration of return migrants who had an irregular status abroad

- 42 For migrants who were undocumented before their return and benefited from an assisted « voluntary' return, particularly from support to start an activity after their return, it appears that their reintegration is difficult because they had not planned to return, or at least not at that time.
- 43 On an economic level, the beneficiaries complain about the small amount they received in the framework of the program, which does not allow them to develop an activity in the mid- and long-term to fulfil the needs of their family. Elimane, a Senegalese for whom assistance allowed the creation of a cosmetic shop for his wife, explains: « The situation is worse than before. At the moment I have no income (...). The shop is even going bankrupt. The family's expenses are too great. The shop is emptying. Frankly, what I had thought before returning here doesn't match what I expected. (...) I've found the IOM funding to be worth nothing. You can't do much with 1 600 000 [€ 2460] (...). I'm the father of the family, if the situation doesn't improve I have no solution, it'll be terrible [sighs]'. The life that Pierre-Paul is having since his return is not easy neither, as the funding he got corresponds to half of what he needed to start a poultry business. As a result, he is forced to sleep next to the henhouse, in a room without roof, and he has to stay with the chickens when it rains. The effect of assistance is called into question by most of the beneficiaries, who raise not only the insufficient amount of money provided, the lack of freedom in the choice of activity, but also the lack of monitoring and the long duration between the return and the implementation of the activity. Most of the respondents mention that they had not anticipated so many problems and difficulties, and that they regret having returned.
- 44 Migrants who were also undocumented before their return but who have not benefited from a program supporting their reintegration experience similar difficult realities. They were effectively expelled from destination countries and arrived empty-handed in Senegal and DR Congo. They live in very precarious conditions: Grégoire, a Senegalese who does not manage to make ends meet, cannot pay the education of his daughter anymore, and struggles to pay his transportation to the harbour to try to work as a day labourer. William, a 40-year-old Congolese who was expelled from France to Kinshasa, explains the difficulties of having no resources: « I live with my parents, a fully grown

man [he is in his forties]... I had a life elsewhere before (...). My parents have to buy my bread ... So I'm like a little boy ».

- 45 On a psychosocial level, the reintegration of the beneficiaries of an assisted « voluntary » return program proves to be difficult when the return was rash, as was the case for most of them. Their relatives do not understand why they are back, so much so that some hide from their families the fact that their return is not a visit but is permanent.
- 46 Psychosocially, the reintegration of expelled migrants is even more difficult. They have to face their family. Grégoire, who was expelled from France to Senegal, explains: « My uncle's wife asked me what caused it [my return] and I told her: « Bad luck ». Everyone cried. Coming home without luggage, without anything, it was difficult'. Returning in these circumstances is lived as a trauma. These return migrants experience feelings of shame for a long time after their return, which makes finding their place in society again a challenge. Several respondents mentioned they do not want to live in their previous neighbourhood again, where everybody knows them, because they do not want to endure people's mocking. Reintegrating after an expulsion is very tough and difficult to get over. Daniel, expelled from the US to DR Congo, says: « It was as if I was in the desert, having lost my bearings, without any resources, it was hard (...). There was a break with my family [in the United States], with my wife and my young daughter, it was hard to bear the shock (...) It was hard for morale. »
- 47 Some return migrants who were undocumented abroad do not experience difficulties when returned. For example, Demba, returned to Senegal, is strongly supported by his religious community and interprets his forced return as God's will. Souleymane, who also had an irregular status in Europe, was not expelled to Senegal but came back by himself after having acquired savings and prepared his return, and he has experienced a smooth reintegration.
- 48 Regarding the physical dimension of reintegration, the qualitative analyses clearly reveal that the migrants who experienced a certain failure in their economic and psychosocial reintegration wish to migrate again. It is the case of the migrants who had a bad experience of the support for reintegration received from the assisted « voluntary » return program, but particularly of those who were expelled and had no room for manoeuvre about their decision to return. Migrants who were expelled to DR Congo are desperate about the situation of their country. Barnabé, a Congolese expelled migrant, says: « Here there is no future: even those who work die. There's no future here (...), it's hard, it's hard ». They really hope to have the possibility of a new departure. Antonin, for example, is clear about the fact that he has to leave DR Congo again: « That's my primary concern; I can't live here. There is nothing here, nothing. Politics, health, the economy: everything is trampled here ». While these Congolese intend to leave their country definitely, Senegalese who were expelled instead wish to leave their country again temporarily, intending to come back later, after the acquisition of savings in order to invest in a sustainable activity.

## Conclusion

- 49 This article investigated the effect of institutional assistance on the reintegration of return migrants, taking into account the legal status they had abroad, the type of program they benefited from, and the context in their country of origin, either Senegal or

DR Congo. A comprehensive and original approach was implemented to that purpose, combining a thematic qualitative analysis of interviews with a quantitative assessment of the economic, psychosocial and physical dimensions of reintegration.

- 50 Firstly, the research highlighted the limited impact of institutional assistance on the reintegration of both Senegalese and Congolese return migrants. On the one hand, migrants who were documented before their return and benefited from the support of an investment program enjoy similar reintegration conditions to those who did not get any institutional support. On the other hand, for migrants who were irregular abroad, the assisted « voluntary » return program a priori seems to have a positive effect when the situation of the beneficiaries is compared with that of migrants who did not benefit from it but were expelled. However, it is unlikely that the difference comes from the assistance provided after return. There is indeed a selection effect among the beneficiaries of an assisted « voluntary » return program, who had a more proactive approach to benefit from the assistance to return, while expelled migrants did not have any flexibility regarding their forced return. The degree of will for return therefore plays a decisive role for the reintegration. As a result, the reintegration of expelled migrants, who did not prepare their return or did not want to return is much more difficult economically, psychologically and socially, and gives rise to a desire to migrate again.
- 51 Secondly, the research shows significant differences in the reintegration of migrants who had a regular or irregular status before returning. Regular migrants, who returned when they wished, whether they benefited or not from institutional assistance, are those who are most satisfied with their lives after return; irregular migrants, who were more constrained to return, experience more economic and psychosocial difficulties and declare that their desire is to leave the country again. Nevertheless, some migrants who were undocumented abroad reintegrate more smoothly, because they were actually not expelled but choose to return on their own or were ready to return. Conversely, some migrants who had a regular status abroad experience difficulties in their reintegration process, which they explain by the fact that they had not sufficiently prepared their return.
- 52 Thirdly, the satisfaction of Senegalese and Congolese migrants regarding their reintegration is globally similar. They differ only at two levels, reflecting the role of the more unstable political and economic situation in the DR Congo. The return of Senegalese does not give rise to the desire to migrate again if reintegration is successful, but Congolese may always plan to migrate again in order to provide their children with a more secure environment for their future. Also, while Senegalese who struggle to reintegrate wish to leave the country temporarily because they expect to live in better conditions in Senegal in the future, Congolese experiencing difficulties instead intend to leave their country permanently.
- 53 When policy makers implement programs to assist the reintegration process of return migrants, they assume that this assistance will prevent them migrating again and enhance their involvement in the development of their origin country. However, this paper shows that policy makers underestimate the return migrants' agency and the structures in which they are involved [Bakewell 2010]. The preparation of their return is essential, as J. P. Cassarino [2004; 2008a] already highlighted with his concept of « return preparedness », where both « free will » and « readiness » are required for a successful reintegration. In addition, the context in the origin country is also a determinant for

reintegration after return, while the effect of the institutional assistance provided is more questionable.

- 54 To conclude, in order to better address the question of return and the implementation of assistance programs, policy makers should recognize and understand that when migrants do not return voluntarily, when they have not prepared their own return, and when the context in their origin country is not stable, the chances of successful reintegration are low, even if institutional assistance after return is provided.

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## NOTES

1. The terms « voluntarily » and « voluntary » are explicitly put in quotation marks because migrants do not freely decide to return; the return rather results from constraints.

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## RÉSUMÉS

À partir de 68 entretiens qualitatifs réalisés au Sénégal et en République démocratique du Congo avec des migrants de retour bénéficiaires ou non de programmes d'appui après le retour, cet article analyse l'effet de ces programmes sur la réinsertion de ces migrants. De façon originale, il combine une analyse thématique des entretiens avec une évaluation quantitative des dimensions économique, psychosociale et physique de la réinsertion. Les analyses révèlent que l'appui institutionnel après le retour n'a pas d'influence positive sur la réinsertion des migrants de retour. La recherche apporte de nouvelles preuves empiriques aux décideurs politiques en démontrant que, lorsque les migrants ne retournent pas volontairement, qu'ils n'ont pas préparé leur retour et que le contexte de leur pays d'origine est instable, les chances de réussite de leur réinsertion sont faibles, même si un appui institutionnel après le retour leur est fourni.

Based on 68 qualitative interviews carried out in Senegal and DR Congo with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of programs assisting migrants after their return to their origin country, this article investigates how these programs affect the reintegration of those migrants. It uses an original approach, combining a qualitative thematic analysis of the interviews with a quantitative assessment of the economic, psychosocial and physical dimensions of the reintegration experience. The analyses show that institutional assistance provided after return does not have a positive influence on the return migrants' reintegration. The research brings new empirical evidence to policy makers, demonstrating that when migrants do not return voluntarily, when they have not prepared their return on their own, and particularly when the context in their origin country is not stable, the chances of successful reintegration are low, even if institutional assistance after return is provided.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés** : migration de retour, réinsertion, Sénégal, République démocratique du Congo, programme d'aide au retour volontaire

**Keywords** : return migration, reintegration, Senegal, Democratic Republic of Congo, voluntary return program



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