



The Roles of State and Non-State Actors in The Reintegration of Return Migrants in Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward

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Abstract

This paper examined the roles of State Actors and Non-State Actors in the reintegration experience of Returnees in Nigeria. It further explores the challenges encountered by State and Non-State Actors in the process of reintegrating return migrants in the nation. The paper concludes with salient recommendations for policy makers and relevant actors in the return migration process in Nigeria.

Keywords: State Actors, Non-State Actors, Return Migrants, Reintegration

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Introduction

Movement of people, otherwise known as "migration," is as old as humanity itself as the people in the prehistoric period moved from one place to another in search of greener pastures, better means of survival, security, better economic opportunities, and fair weather among others. Migration is the temporary or permanent movement of individuals or groups of people from one geographic location to another for various reasons ranging from better employment possibilities to persecution (Hagen-Zanker, 2008).





Migration aspirations and actual migration (Carling, 2020) for most people are driven by factors such as educational attainment, employment opportunities, contextual factors (such as the quality of public services, levels of violence and insecurity). These form the theoretical basis for migration. The "migration aspirations" theory is used as an umbrella category for various forms of the belief that leaving would be better than staying. The migration aspirations encompass desires, intentions, expectations, ambitions, attitudes, expectations, plans, preferences, wants and wishes, dreams, hopes, longings, and yearnings; as well as the seemingly more hesitant, uncertain or neutrally oriented notions of considerations, imaginings, needs, necessity, obligations, and willingness to migrate and so on (Carling 2019). These aspirations are sustained by value-expectancy including economic rationalities (Carling & Collins, 2018) for individual migrants. Thus, resulting in a person's mindset about migrating; the locational destination and identifying border-crossings and routes (Grabska, de Regt, & Del Franco, 2019).

In Nigeria, a number of citizens had migrated to the western nations through regular and irregular means, especially due to factors such as economic hardship/challenges, insecurity, high level of unemployment and/or underemployment, poor standard of living, poor education system, poor public healthcare system among other major challenges, either through a legal means or illegal route. In the last 5 years, Nigeria has experienced massive migration of citizens to developing and developed countries, in search of greener pastures. The modern trend and phenomenon of migration is popularly referred to as 'JAPA' Syndrome among the Nigerian Youths.

Return Migration on the other hand may refer to repatriation, removal, deportation, assisted return as well as return on an individual's own initiative to his or her country of origin (Carling, & Collins, 2018). Return migration is a "situation where the migrants return to their country of origin, by their own will, after a significant period of time abroad" (Dustmann & Weiss, 2007,p. 238). This sometimes results from unmet needs for voluntary returnees. Immigrants with a 'pull' incentive (e.g., labor migrants) who migrated mostly for economic or sometimes educational reasons rather than the immigrants who are forced from their own countries and 'pushed' (e.g., political refugees) into a new environment (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2020)

Theoretically, Neoclassical economics perceives traditional migration as an outcome of the migrants' striving to increase his or her income and wage differences between the sending and the receiving



countries (Todaro, 1969). Moving from this perspective, in this framework, return is perceived as a failure of the migration experience either through miscalculation of the costs or failing to keep the benefits of the migration. Additionally, the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) perceives return as a rational result of a calculated strategy for the household as well as a consequence of a successful achievement of the intended migration goal (Cassorino, 2004). Therefore, NELM extends the context of economic analysis, incorporating the individual within his/her family unit and blending income maximization with risk aversion (King & Christou, 2008).

Besides these theoretical propositions, factors sustaining return migration to developing nations like Nigerian include remittances, failure, conservatism, retirement, and innovation. Remittances play an important role in return migration (Collier, Piracha & Randazzo, 2011). The inflow of remittances to developing countries can take different forms and they are the key mechanism that enables individuals to transfer a part of the gains from migration from the destination to the origin country. The motivations that generate these flows of income may vary from supporting the family at home to buying a property or realizing other investment projects (Collier, Piracha & Randazzo, 2011b) especially by low-skill, illegal migrants. Remittances have been used to foster investments in education (Edwards and Ureta, 2003; Yang, 2008 & 2009; Calero et al. 2009 and Alcaraz et al., 2012), productive assets (Adams, 1998) and innovative production technologies (Mendola, 2008), but also in financial development (Aggarwal et al., 2011), housing (Adams Jr and Cuecuecha 2010; Osili, 2004), social capital (Gallego and Mendola, 2013; Maggard, 2004) and family prestige (Auriol and Demonsan, 2012).

Return of failure occurs when the immigrants cannot adapt to the destination countries due to social or political factors. The difficulties in integrating to the immigration context (e.g., discrimination, language issues) motivate them to return. Those returnees are perceived to make little developmental impact on the countries of origin. These 'failed' return migrants can also easily readapt back at home as they returned before they were adjusted to the new context, although the return often comes with considerable loss of face because of the failure.

Return of conservatism pertains to the migrants with an initial return intention after saving some money during the migration period. They tend to stay longer in the migration context than the previous group, transfer remittances, and realize their financial plans like buying properties in the country of origin. They stick to the values of the home

society; therefore, rather than changing the social structure, they reinforce it back at home.

Return of retirement, as reflected in the name, refers to returnees who aim to spend their old age in the home countries after they ended their working life. They are considered to make almost no developmental impact back at home.

Return of innovation occurs when immigrants are fairly well integrated abroad, having acquired new skills and being involved more in the society of the host country. The returnees constitute a dynamic group perceiving themselves as 'agents of the change' and aim to return and change the homeland, bringing new ideas and values as well as using the knowledge and skills acquired in the host country.

Return migration is an important phenomenon for State and Non-State Actors who significant roles in the reintegration and empowerment of Return Migrants in Nigeria. In view of the nature and drivers of return migration, this paper attempts a review of the literature to explore the roles of State Actors and NSAs in the reintegration experiences of return migrants in Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Return Migration is the act of or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilised combatants; or between country of destination or transit and country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers (Douglas, Cetron & Spiegel, 2019). Return Migration can be as a result of economic hardship experienced by the returnee in the former host country, Security condition of the former host country, the Returnee's desire to return to home country, Abuse/Slavery of the Returnee by Sponsor/Employer, Crime among other factors.

Essentially, there appears to be a dearth of literature on the contributions of state and non-state actors to the reintegration experience of returnees in Nigeria. It is worthy to note that the process of return migration would be incomplete without proper and sustainable reintegration of the return migrant into the society/traditional family system. This process would normally involve empowerment and support of the returnees by the various relevant actors which include state actors, non-state actors, family and the society at large. The inability of returnees to get support for proper

reintegration end up taking unplanned migration decision like going back to their abusers/former sponsor who trafficked them, embark on illegal migration when they are frustrated and/or do not have means of livelihood that can sustain them in their home country. Others too who have acquired skills in their former host country in which the skills are not relevant in the home country are oftentimes frustrated and depressed, due to the fact that they are unable to meet their daily needs and that of family members. The academic parlance is yet to fully appreciate the roles of these state and non-state actors in receiving the return migrants at the airport, rendering of psychosocial support to the returnees, provision of secured accommodation and shelter homes, and medical needs of the returnees among other things.

Study Objectives

The main objective of this study is to determine the roles of State Actors and Non-State Actors in the reintegration of Return Migrants in Lagos State.

Other specific objectives of the study are to:

1. harness the understanding of key terms in migration;
2. highlight the roles of State and Non-State Actors in the reintegration of return migrants in Nigeria;
3. outline of the challenges faced by the State and Non-State actors in the process of reintegrating returnees in Nigeria; and
4. highlight strategies and approaches to address the challenges faced by State and Non-State Actors in tackling the reintegration experience of return migrants in Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This one-time study adopted qualitative research design of a survey type. It specifically utilized desk review of literature for obtaining secondary empirical information and Key Informant Interviews to generate first-hand information on the roles of State and Non-state actors and their challenges while reintegrating return migrants into the nation. The desk review of literature focused on scholarly articles, research reports and News updates related to the issue of state and non-state actors' contributions to the reintegration experience of returnees in Nigeria.

Study Location:

The Study was carried out in Lagos State, Southwest Nigeria. Lagos State serves as one of the reception points for returnees in Nigeria, alongside Abuja.

Sample Size:

A total of 2 State Actors (Migrant Resource Centre - an agency of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Domestic Violence Unit of the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation) and 4 Non-state actors were selected in Lagos State, Nigeria for the survey. The Non-State Actors are: ISAFE Organization, Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), Girls Inspired Development Network and Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON)

Sampling Techniques:

The State and Non-State Actors were purposively selected based on their engagements and interventions in the reintegration of return migrants in Nigeria. Ease of availability and willingness to participate in the study was also an added consideration for selection as they could be located. All precautions were taken to ensure confidentiality and protection of the identity of the key informants. Overall, a total of 6 (six) Key Informants were interviewed which consisted of 2 (two) state Actors and 4 (four) Non-State Actors.

Purposively Selected State Actors:

- a) Migrant Resource Centre is an arm of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment that has been working on the reintegration of Return Migrants for about 7 years. The Centre works with both Voluntary and Forced Returnees. MRC alongside other implementing partners like Immigration, NCFRMI, IOM, Ministry of Health are usually at the Airport to receive the Returnees whenever they are being assisted to return to the country. IOM gives the returnees business education and some money (grant) after which Shelter, Food, Economic Empowerment is also given to them. MRC profiles the returnees and provides psychosocial support. MRC do Labour profiling so as to do economic re-integration, profile them on the kind of job they will like to do, which is sustainable.
- b) The Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation is another State Actor that was interviewed. The

Ministry has been actively involved in the reintegration of Return Migrants for over 10 (ten) years and the Ministry works with both Forced and Voluntary Return Migrants in the process of reintegration. The ministry is part of the personnel that receives returnees at the airport and at the stage of receiving them, returnees' information are gotten so that they can be tracked later for follow-up. When the ministry cannot provide the empowerment needed to the Returnees, the Ministry refer to the implementing partners that work with the Ministry like UN Women, UNDP - they provide livelihood support. The ministry provides the following forms of support: Financial support/ grant, empowerment/skill acquisition program, the ministry does not offer legal support but they can refer to the office of public defender, some return migrants return with children and the children are enrolled in school show the Ministry of education. The key informant mentioned that the State government does not have shelter specifically for Return Migrants but the ministry collaborates with NSA's that have shelter, and the IOM to provide shelter for them. Also, the Lagos State government signed MOU with the IOM to put up the return migrants in the Relief Settlement Camp situated at Igando for few days.

Purposively Selected Non-State Actors:

- a) ISAFE is a Non-State Actor based in Lagos. The organisation has been involved in the reintegration of return migrants since year 2018 and they work with both Forced and Voluntary Returnees in the reintegration experience. According to the representative of the organization, the organisation focuses on economic reintegration for return migrants through provision access to skills development, job opportunities, entrepreneurship training and support with start-up packs or funding or equipments after training based on their Identified need or the skill of interest. The returnees are oftentimes trained on garment making, business development, digital skills, etc. The gaps are identified, especially for persons who already have skill but need startup kits/equipment or up skilling/refreshers training. Returnees that need shelters are being referred to organisations that can provide Shelter for them as the organisation does not provide shelter. The organisation also provides psychosocial support to an extent.
- b) Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) is a non-state actor that has been working with

return migrants for about 6 (six) years. According to the representative of the organization, the organization work with both Forced and Voluntary Returnees who are all Women because the organization focuses more on women than men. The key informant further states that the organization provides the following supports for return migrants: financial support/Grant, education, empowerment/skill acquisition program, legal support, psychosocial support, business startup kit and Grant, mentoring session, the organisation does not have shelter for return migrants but provides money to support their rent, tabs were also provided to the beneficiaries so that they can exhibit their skills and product on social media, some of the beneficiaries were taken to hospital for proper healthcare in case the need arise, access to protection, informal wage labour.

- c) Girls Inspired Development Network is an organization that has worked with return migrants for the past 3 (three) years. The key informant expressed that the organization works with both Forced and Voluntary Returnees in the reintegration of returnees in Nigeria. The organization provides to the returnees Grants- mini grants, financial literacy, digital literacy, fashion designing skills, psychosocial support, business startup kits.
- d) Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) is an organization that has been working on the reintegration of Return Migrants for about 27 (twenty-seven) years. The key informant mentioned that the organization works with both Forced and Voluntary returnees. The organization provides for the return migrants the following supports: Empowerment/Skill acquisition program, Legal support, Formal education plus career & entrepreneurship education, Shelter (REFERRAL), Psycho-social, Business startup kits and grants, Health care services (REFERRAL), Access to protection & remittance services, small businesses, Other.

Research Instruments

Key Informant Interview (KII) Guide: The qualitative instrument used for the key informant interviews was a semi-structured interview Guide which allowed for open-ended inquiries and in-depth conversations with the interviewees. It consisted of five (5) sections. Each of the sections sought information of state and non-state actors' contributions to the reintegration experience of returnees seeking

empowerment in Nigeria. Section 1 has three (3) items and sought information about the role of the respondents in the organization. Section 2 has four (4) items and sought information about the categories of returnees that the organizations seek to empower. section 3 has three (3) items which sought information about the organizations' collaborative work with State and Non-state actors on the empowerment of returnees in Nigeria. Section 4 has two (2) which sought information about the skill levels of the returnees who received support from the non-state actors. Section five (5) has five (5) items which sought information about the non-state actors' contributions and effectiveness of their support to the reintegration experience of returnees in Nigeria.

Data Collection

Most of the key informant interviews held with state and non-state actors were conducted via telephone interview. For the qualitative data collection, the researchers had phone conversations with the state and non-state actors to seek their approval before the KIs were conducted. As state actors, Key Informant Interview was held on the 19th day of July 2023 with the Director, Migrant Resource Centre, an arm of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment based in Ikoyi, Lagos state. Also, KI was held with the head of Domestic Violence Unit, Lagos State Ministry of Women's Affairs and Poverty Alleviation. For the Non-State Actors, Telephone interviews were conducted with key informants from the following 4 Non-State Actors; ISAFE, Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), Girls Inspired Development Network and Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON)

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data

The information generated from the interviews was transcribed and triangulated thematically in line with the study objectives and then juxtaposed with the findings obtained from the respondents of the structured instruments in Lagos state.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual Meaning of Key Terms in the Study

All the KI participants had a clear idea about the meaning of migration, return migration, returnees and reintegration processes. Below are the responses of the representatives of the state and non-state actors on the key terms used in the study.

a. Return/Return Migration:

The KII respondent from ISAFE described return migration as the process of returning to one's country after spending time in another. Through reintegration, return migrants can be either voluntary returnees, often assisted in their return, or forced returnees. According to a key informant from MRC, return migrants are typically profiled before their return in collaboration with the former host country and partners like IOM. Upon arrival at the airport, MRC and other partners begin the reintegration process. Voluntary return migration involves coordination between the home and host countries, where the home country is informed about the returnees' details. A key informant from WARDC noted that return migration might occur due to dissatisfaction with living conditions in the host country, such as trafficking, harsh economic conditions, or gender-based violence, prompting individuals to seek assistance for their return.

While there is no universally accepted definition of return migration, the participants' views align with those of IOM and existing literature. According to Johnson et al. (2019), return migration is the process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure, which could involve internal or international movement, such as for migrant workers or refugees. It can refer to repatriation, removal, deportation, assisted return, or voluntary return (Levy, 2020).

b. Returnee:

According to MRC, a returnee is anyone who returns to their home country after spending time in another, whether they were forced or assisted to do so. The Lagos Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation notes that due to shame or fear of stigmatization, some forced returnees may conceal their true identity, claiming they were assisted to return until further investigation reveals the truth. The Collins Dictionary defines a returnee as someone who returns to their birth country after a long absence. Return migration, a key aspect of human mobility, involves the act of going back or being taken back to the place of origin, often reconnecting with one's culture, family, and home.

c. Voluntary Return:

During the interview, the key informant from ISAFE highlighted that some return migrants have shared their organization's contact details with vulnerable migrants wishing to return to Nigeria but needing assistance. Both state and non-state actors, in collaboration with



international agencies, support migrants who want to return to their home country, whether or not they need assistance. The respondent also noted that, according to their database, voluntary returnees outnumber forced returnees.

A key informant from MRC added that voluntary returnees often organize their own return, with their former host country and other implementing partners sometimes providing skill training before assisting them in returning to their home country. This aligns with the definition provided by Levy (2020), describing voluntary return as "the assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit, or another country based on the voluntary decision of the returnee." Voluntary return is an organized process in which the returnee decides, plans, and prepares to return home, driven by factors such as loss of interest in the host country, economic hardship, or retirement.

Another form of voluntary return is assisted return, where returnees, after facing challenges like economic hardship, gender-based violence, human trafficking, or slavery, seek help and are supported in returning to their home country. This type of return can be further categorized into different forms, depending on the level of assistance and the circumstances leading to the return. This type of return has been further divided into

Spontaneous return: This is "the voluntary, independent return of a migrant or a group of migrants to their country of origin, usually without the support of States or other international or national assistance" (Levy, 2020).

Assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR): This is the "administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin (Levy, 2020).

Voluntary humanitarian return (VHR): This is the application of assisted voluntary return and reintegration principles in humanitarian settings and "often represents a life-saving measure for migrants who are stranded or in detention" (Levy, 2020).

d. Forced Return:

Forced migration involves movement driven by force, compulsion, or coercion (Levy, 2020). According to MRC, many forced returnees, out of shame and fear of stigmatization, avoid being attended to upon

arrival and often "disappear" immediately after entering the country, despite efforts by state actors and implementing partners to receive them at the airport. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation noted that forced returnees rarely disclose their true status during interviews due to these same fears.

e. Non- State Actors:

According to the MRC respondent, non-state actors (NSAs) play a crucial role in the reintegration of return migrants, acting as key implementing partners. The MRC collaborates with these NSAs, as many provide consultancy, psychosocial training, and shelter support during the reintegration process. However, the Ministry of Women Affairs representative noted that the number of NSAs focused on the reintegration of return migrants in Nigeria is relatively small compared to those working in other social intervention areas. Many NSAs depend on specific projects and funding to engage in reintegration efforts.

Non-state actors, as defined by Wagner (2009), are organizations and individuals that, while not affiliated with or funded by any government, often wield significant political influence and territorial control. These NSAs include corporations, private financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others.

Some common and influential types of NSAs include (Ataman, 2003):

- i. Large national or multinational corporations that are authorized to act as single entities (legally as persons) and are recognized as such in law. These are typically very large businesses operating transnationally, such as The Coca-Cola Company, McDonald's, General Motors, Adidas, Samsung, Nestlé, and Toyota.
- ii. Individual business magnates, such as Bill Gates and Elon Musk, may be considered NSAs to the extent that they use their great wealth in seeking to influence national and international affairs.
- iii. Decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) that operate according to rules encoded as computer database programs called smart contracts or blockchains. The crypto-currency Bitcoin is an example of a DAO which since its invention in 2009 has grown to become economically influential worldwide.



- iv. International media conglomerates, which are also usually corporations, report on the social and political situation in countries worldwide, and may therefore be highly influential as NSAs. Examples of such agencies are Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France-Presse (AFP), RIA Novosti, a state-owned Russian news agency, and Al Jazeera, a state-owned Arabic-language international radio broadcaster based in Qatar.
- v. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which include international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), are usually large nonprofit organizations seeking to effect change in humanitarian, educational, ecological, healthcare, public policy, social, human rights, environmental, and other areas. Examples of NGOs are Greenpeace, Red Cross/Red Crescent, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and World Wildlife Fund.
- vi. Some religious groups engage in political affairs at an international level. For example, the Quakers operate offices at the United Nations, where they have long advocated for world peace. The International Islamic Charitable Organization and Catholic Relief Services are examples of religious NGAs that help the marginalized and the impoverished.

f. State Actors:

State Actors are entities that are part of, or which operate licitly or semi-licitly on behalf or in service of a government agency (Crawford, & Schultz, 2019). State Actors working on reintegration of Return Migrants in the country include Ministries, Departments and Agencies like the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD), Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Nigerian Emergency Management Agency among others.

g. Reintegration:

Reintegration is generally understood as a multidimensional process that helps individuals re-establish the economic, social, and



psychosocial relationships necessary for sustaining life, livelihood, dignity, and civic inclusion. Return and reintegration are closely tied to sustainability. According to the IOM, reintegration is considered sustainable when returnees achieve economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being, enabling them to make future migration decisions by choice rather than necessity. The MRC respondent highlighted that the reintegration process starts with labor profiling, which supports economic reintegration by determining the type of work the returnee wants to pursue. Sustainable reintegration is incomplete without economic reintegration.

Roles of State Actors in the Reintegration Experience of Return Migrants in Nigeria

The study reveals the various roles played by state actors in reintegrating returnees. The MRC provides financial support, skill acquisition programs, formal education, career and entrepreneurship training, shelter, psychosocial support, and business startup kits for returnees. The Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation offers financial support, skill programs, and enrolls returnees' children in schools. Although the government lacks shelter facilities, the ministry collaborates with NSAs that provide shelter and refers returnees to public defenders and healthcare services while offering psychosocial support, protection, and remittance services.

The roles of state actors in reintegrating return migrants were demonstrated when around 150 migrants returned to Kano State on February 20, 2023, via charter flight. Upon arrival, IOM, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, FMHADMSD, NCRFMI, NEMA, NIS, FAAN, Kano State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), NSCDC, DSS, the Special Adviser to the Governor, and the Nigerian Red Cross Society, conducted initial screenings, provided emergency mental health and psychosocial support, and offered immediate assistance including food, medical care, overnight accommodation, and orientation for further reintegration support. These actions followed the Federal Government's Standard Operating Procedures for coordinating the return, readmission, and reintegration of returning migrants. IOM also provided counselling and tailored support before departure as highlighted by Wagner (2009).

In Nigeria, state actors play a crucial role in assisting return migrants by supporting, reintegrating, and empowering them. The research highlights those entities such as the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), established by the Federal Ministry of Labour, NAPTIP, Nigerian Immigration Service, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Federal



Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, collaborate with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). IOM, a leading intergovernmental migration agency, works with these state and non-state actors to effectively reintegrate and empower returnees in Nigeria.

The State Actors and NSAs that work on reintegration and empowerment of Returnees in Nigeria, especially in states like Lagos State and Abuja which serve as route to Migrants and/or Reception point upon Return have been playing several roles.

The various roles play by State Actors and Non-State Actors in the reintegration of Return Migrant in Nigeria include:

- a. **State Actors in collaboration with NSAs facilitate Return of Voluntary Returnees:** The study revealed that some state and non-state actors work like Migrant Resource Centre, Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation and Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) among others work in collaboration with organisations and agencies like NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons) IOM (International Organization for Migration) to facilitate assisted Return of persons who are willing to return to Nigeria.
- b. **Financial Support/Economic Empowerment:** State actors and non-state actors (NSAs) play vital roles in facilitating and financing the economic reintegration and empowerment of returnees, complementing IOM's activities. The study found that all interviewed NSAs provide financial support and economic empowerment to returnees. For example, the Girls Development Initiative offers mini-grants, upskilling for skilled returnees, and connections to the Lagos State employment trust fund. WOCON provides entrepreneurship training and skill development in areas like hairdressing, makeup, and fashion design. Additionally, some returnees who are still in school are supported, while others receive financial aid to start businesses and rent shops for trading activities.
- c. **Skill Acquisition program for Returnees/provision of job opportunities:** The major support towards a sustainable economic reintegration is done when the Return Migrant is empowered economically by securing a means of livelihood for the person. NSAs like ISAFE, Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre, Girls Inspired Development



Network, Women's Consortium of Nigeria have made it a core duty to enroll Return Migrants for Skill acquisition/Entrepreneurship program either at the Beginners level or Advanced Level. The Returnees who have no skills are enrolled to learn skills like Tailoring/fashion designing, cake baking, hairdressing, Bag making, according to their choice of career while Returnees who have skills already are upskilled. According to key informant from ISAFE, the organization focuses on economic reintegration for Return Migrants where the Returnees are provided with skills, job opportunities, entrepreneurship training and they are often supported with start-up packs or funding or equipment's after training based on their Identified need or the skill of interest of the Returnee.

- d. **Psychosocial Support:** Psychosocial support refers to actions that meet the psychological and social needs of individuals, families and communities (Díaz, 2013). It was discovered during the study that the first support given to a Returnee after being picked up at the Welcoming point in Psychosocial support. This includes Counseling, Psychologist/Psychiatrist evaluation of the Return Migrant, to determine their psychosocial state so as to know how best to support and reintegrate such Returnee. According to key informant from WARDC, the organization provides psychosocial support at first contact with the Returnees, after which assessment is done to know the kind of empowerment the returnee needs, they are also linked with mentors who will guide them in the skill they will acquire. The study revealed that all the State and Non-State Actors interviewed provides psychosocial support to the Returnees upon their Return.
- e. **Provision of Shelter:** Organizations like IOM, Migrant Resource Centre, Ministry of Women Affairs, National Emergency Management Agency, NAPTIP, and some Civil society organizations provide Transit home for Returnees, especially immediately after their return before they are empowered and reintegrated back to their traditional home/local community. According to the key informant from Ministry of Women Affairs, the IOM used to house the returnees in hotels for a period until they signed an agreement with the Lagos state to house the returnees in the Relief Settlement Camp in Igando, Lagos state for some times before they are reintegrated into the society. Also, the respondent from

WARDC mentioned that their organization provides money to support the Rent of the returnees.

- f. **Healthcare Services:** State Actors like the Ministry of Health take the responsibility of taking medical care of Returnees and their children. Oftentimes, the Ministry is one of the key State actors that receives the Returnees at the point of Reception, at the Airport. The NSAs interviewed revealed that they refer returnees to the Ministry of health or Hospitals whenever the need arises. According to the respondent from WARDC, some of the returnees are taken to hospital for medical care and the hospital bills paid by the organization.

Roles of Non-State Actors in the Reintegration Experience of Return Migrants in Nigeria

The roles of NSAs as discussed by ISAFE in view of their mode of operations and interventions for returnees include facilitation/provision of financial/economic empowerment such as facilitation of grants, enrolment in empowerment/skill acquisition program, facilitation of psychosocial support, and provision of business startup kits for the returnees. According to respondent from WARDC, their roles in the reintegration experience includes provision of financial support/grant, education, empowerment/skill acquisition program, legal support, psychosocial support, business startup kit and grant, mentoring session, tabs were also provided to the beneficiaries/returnees so that they can exhibit their skills and product on social media, some of the beneficiaries were taken to hospital for proper healthcare in case the need arise, access to protection, informal wage labour. Although the organisation does not have shelter for return migrants, the organization provides money to support the rent of the returnees. The organization has set up Project operational policies and identified the project beneficiaries. They deal with more of forced returnees than the voluntary returnees, do assessment first to know the category of returnee and also determine the vulnerability status. As at the time the research was conducted, WARDC had empowered 100 women at foundational and advanced level, whereby 32 persons learnt catering, 38 learnt fashion designing while the remaining 30 learnt hairdressing. The key informant from Girls Inspired Development Network (GIDN) revealed the roles played by the organization which includes provision of Grants- mini grants, financial literacy, digital literacy, fashion designing skills, psychosocial support, business startup kits to the Returnees. WOCON, an organization who has been working on the reintegration experience for about 27 years mentioned that the roles played by NSAs include but not limited to provision of



Empowerment/Skill acquisition program, Legal support, Formal education plus career & entrepreneurship education, Psycho-social, Business startup kits and grants, Access to protection & remittance services, Small businesses, among others.

Challenges of State Actors and NSAs

The following challenges were revealed in the course of the study.

1. **Limited Funding/Financial Incapacity:** Funding is a major factor in any intervention or empowerment process, and it cannot be overemphasised. Lots of NSAs working on assisting Return Migrants to return to home country and also reintegrate them into the society are oftentimes limited by Financial Resources/funding. This limited capability/incapacitation has rendered a lot of Return Migrants who look up to the State Actors and Non-State Actors for economic empowerment or set up almost hopeless and frustrated, especially when their needs are not being met. According to the respondent from ISAFE, while there are lots of activities and support interventions to be done, the organization cannot implement some of the activities due to the organization's limited financial resources/capacity.

It was also discovered that budget was allocated for the support of Return Migrants but the support does not usually get to some of them as the budget is low compared to the numbers of interventions to be done, and sometimes, due to Corruption, the money allocated to the funding of Returnees reintegration and empowerment are usually diverted to other needs which may be unrelated to the purpose of allocation. Most of the time, getting funding for empowerment activities of all forms for this group of people is always a major challenge

2. **Abandonment of Empowerment and Reintegration process by the Returnees:** Some of the Returnees abandon the camps (training camps/transit home) where the State Actors or Non-State Actors have put them during Reintegration and Empowerment process, thereby frustrating the efforts of the NSA. According to one of the NSA personnel, some of the Returnees abandon the Transit home/training camps due to Threats and counteractions from their abusers/people who trafficked them initially. It was discovered that some of the abusers/people who trafficked the Returnees still have ways to manipulate the Victims (Returnees) even when they have been assisted to return from the former host country and have been rescued.



Also, the fact that the expectations of the Returnees were not met also frustrates the Returnees and makes them abandon the reintegration and empowerment process.

3. **Non-Availability of Data Profiling:** There's no adequate data profiling for Return Migrants. This has aided some Returnees who are not satisfied with supports received from the organisation that supported them, but rather decided to move from one organisation to another, benefitting from the different organizations thereby depriving other Returnees who ought to benefit from the support given. The respondent from ISAFE expressed that due to lack of data profiling, especially to track beneficiaries who have received support from one organization, the beneficiaries/returnees approach several organizations for support at the same time. This act deprives others who have not benefited from getting support needed.
4. **Refusal of Returnee to open up and give true information about their situation:** It was discovered in the course of the Study that some of the Returnees do disclose the true position of their status, probably out of fear or because they want to get financial help from the State Actor or NSA during intervention. Some of the Returnees lie about their status. Some of the Forced Returnees especially Deportees usually lie that they were assisted to return until they are thoroughly interviewed. Also, some of them hide their financial status from the State Actor/NSA with the belief that they will receive financial support/grants from the intervening organisation.
5. **Difficult Reintegration Process:** Some of the Returnees usually make the Reintegration process difficult. Some of the Returnees are not satisfied with supports they have received but rather chose to return to the people who trafficked them and/or migrate illegally to another country in search of 'greener pasture' when they are facing hardship in their home country after the Return. Some would constantly lament and express their regret for coming back as a result of unmet expectations. Some of the Returnees have expectations, and when these expectations are not met, they become frustrated. As expressed by the respondent from WARDC, some of the returnees are not interested in the due process of reintegration because they want quick empowerment and money.
6. **Unmet Expectations:** Most times they appear frustrated because when they return, their expectations are not met. Some of them

have participated in more than one empowerment project, yet they still find they are not able to sustain themselves or afford to pay their bills. They are usually aggressive and stubborn, which makes it difficult to work with them or to provide meaningful solutions to their problems while some are faced with severe trauma arising from stigmatisation. According to the respondent from WARDC, some of the beneficiaries of the NSA's intervention sell off the startup kits/equipment provided to them by the NSA, thereby killing the project as their act will greatly affect monitoring and evaluation process of the outcome of the project.

Conclusion

This Research carefully examined the roles of state actors and non-state actors in the reintegration of return migrants, the challenges faced by the actors in the reintegration experience and recommended way forward in addressing the highlighted challenges. It is important to note that Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached a level of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being.

State actors and non-state actors in Lagos play major roles in the reintegration of return migrants in Lagos Nigeria, especially as they work collaboratively with one another.

The Reintegration of Return Migrants in Nigeria should not be considered responsibility of State Actors and Civil Society Organizations solely, but the general public which includes the local communities, traditional family and institutions. They should be educated and sensitized on how to accept, support and to be part of the system that will reintegrate, support and empower Returnees in the Nigerian society.

Recommendation/Way Forward

This study after carefully examining and highlighting the roles of State and NSAs in reintegrating Returnees and the Challenges faced by these NSAs recommend the following:

1. **Data Profiling:** The Data/Information of the Returnees that have received support from NSAs should be profiled, kept and shared with other NSAs who are working on the empowerment and reintegration of Returnees. Data Profiling will not be for record keeping only, but this will enhance



effective Monitoring and Evaluation of the supports given to the Returnees, and this will also aid other NSAs in determining who has received support and who needs further supports and intervention.

2. **Provision of Adequate Security:** It is not only the responsibility of the NSAs to provide security for the Return Migrants, it is the core duty of the State Actors, to ensure that the lives of the Returnees and their family members are safe upon return. It should be noted that some of the returnees who were victims of Human Trafficking and/or Gender Based Violence needs adequate care and security, as this will make their reintegration sustainable, free of fear of being recaptured and re trafficked again.
3. **Funding/Financial Support for NSAs:** NSAs who are either self-funded or donor funded have been limited in their empowerment activities as they have limited access to funding. NSAs rely on funds from donor agencies, fellow NSAs like Charitable organisations, private individuals/philanthropists among others before they can provide most of the support to the Returnees/beneficiaries and oftentimes, the support is limited because the funds determine the extent to which intervention can be done. State actors should consider allocation of significant financial aid/grant to the NSAs that work on Reintegration and empowerment of Returnees as this will not only improve the interventions and activities and activities of the NSAs in the reintegration experience, but will also enhance the trust and confidence Returnees/beneficiaries have in the system.
4. **Public education/awareness on Reintegration of Return Migrants into the Society:** NSAs should create awareness and sensitize the public on the Reintegration of Return Migrants into the Society. Sensitization programs like these will aim at enlightening the general public on the need to embrace Return Migrants and to end stigmatization of these Returnees, whether they are Forced Returnees or Voluntary Returnees and will encourage the Return Migrants to return to their local community and/or traditional home after receiving supports from NSAs. This will aid Acceptability of the Returnees into the Society.
5. **Capacity Building:** The Welcoming process and Reintegration process of Return Migrants are not mere activities which

should be handled anyhow, but should be done with highest level of professionalism whereby core ethics of the profession which includes Confidentiality, Professionalism are required from the NSA's personnel. This study recommends that there should be a time-to-time Training programs for relevant actors working on the reintegration of Return Migrants as enhanced capacity and upskilling will improve their activities and interventions, especially when having face to face interaction with the Returnees.

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