



The Bali Process

on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime

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Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration

Co-Chairs' Statement

1. The fifth meeting of the Technical Experts Group on Returns and Reintegration (TEG-RR) of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) was held virtually on 15 and 17 November 2022 and co-chaired by Australia and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
2. The 5th TEG-RR was attended by officials responsible for returns and reintegration from Bali Process member states and organizations, other working groups of the Bali Process, and members of member organizations with complementary expertise.
 - Member state participants were from Australia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.
 - Participants representing member organizations came from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and International Labour Organization (ILO).
 - The Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO), Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (TIP WG), and Working Group on Disruption of Criminal Networks with People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons (Disruption WG) also attended the meeting.
3. The Co-chairs reviewed progress and developments made in returns and reintegration across the Bali Process since the fourth meeting of the TEG-RR, held virtually on 28 and 30 September 2021. It was noted that the worldwide and regional irregular migration landscape continues to change in reaction to the remains of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as responding to the re-opening of global travel corridors.
4. Due to the evolving nature of the forum, feedback and discussion on members' opinions were sought regarding the need to upgrade the TEG-RR Terms of Reference (TOR), TEG-RR Objectives and the 2019 policy guide on returns and reintegration. Consequently, a call for volunteers was made for a sub-working group to review:
 - TEG-RR TOR; and
 - Bali Process Policy Guide on Returns and Reintegration.

Separate surveys will be sent to members to gauge member preferences on these issues. Additionally, volunteering member states were encouraged to contact the Regional Support Office to participate in a future review sub-forum on these issues, with a view to report back findings by end of Q2 2023.

5. RSO and IOM officials updated the TEG-RR on current trends and challenges, priorities, best practices, lessons learned, and the future state of returns and reintegration work.

The RSO reminded the group that it can assist Bali Process member states in their implementation of the policy on returns and reintegration by:

- capacity building, preparation and publication of materials;
- translation of related documents in local languages;
- providing assistance to parties preparing memorandums of understanding (MoU) on returns and reintegration; and
- assisting in monitoring and evaluation of returns and reintegration programs.

6. IOM officials provided updates about IOM's work supporting mass returns in South and South-East Asia where there were approximately seven million total returnee migrants registered. IOM reported that current barriers to return, such as exploitation, personal debt, administrative and legal complexities, remain challenging to overcome. A number of best practices in destination and transit countries were highlighted. This included the national verification of migrant workers in Thailand, and a mechanism to regularize undocumented migrant workers and reduce overstay fees in Malaysia, where the government also allowed fines to be paid on departure to avoid prosecution.

7. IOM also promoted:

- the need to continually assess the efficiency of return programmes and understanding of vulnerabilities, need for protection, the role of data monitoring and evaluation around reintegration
- the use of new tools (such as skills databases) to support monitoring, evaluation and reintegration of migrants
- the need for international, regional and local cooperation to strengthen returns frameworks, so member nations may respond to the emerging trends in mobility and trafficking
- addressing the barriers of return through the multi-stakeholder consultations; and
- the maintenance or development of Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes to ensure all migrants have access to returns assistance where required.

8. ILO officials shared their experiences of the impact COVID-19 had on governments due to the mass return of migrants to origin countries. Specifically, ILO reflected on the need for the governments to be prepared for future mass movements, with the labour market system set up to provide opportunities to, and sustainably reintegrate, workers. ILO updated how this impacted India, Nepal and Bangladesh. ILO advised that that United Nations Migration Network has digitalization tools, checklists and guides that may be adopted by TEG-RR to build mechanisms to deal with issues, rather than trying to duplicate the work or trying to reinvent existing concepts and tools.

9. On day two, TEG-RR members were provided the opportunity to update the working group with the current trends, challenges, priorities and examples of good practices. Key themes that were identified across national updates included:

- ongoing development of national returns frameworks
- sharing experiences and developments on returns and reintegration post COVID-19
- appreciation of the Bali Process and commitment to work together
- importance of collaboration between countries and how MoU agreed between two members could assist the process on returns and reintegration
- need to develop return and reintegration guidelines aligning with international and local laws

- need to encourage public awareness through education
- need for programs such as AVRR
- rise of exploitation of vulnerable migrants and online scams requires governments and the private sector to work co-operatively.
Members provided evidence of effective cooperation between government and civil society and non-government organisations to improve reintegration outcomes; and
- need to merge returns and reintegration together with social and health assistance, along with preventative measures.

10. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) presented on durable solutions to displacement through returns and reintegration. UNHCR advised that voluntary repatriation may be promoted, but to meet the standards of international protection, repatriation must continue to be voluntary. Furthermore, UNHCR highlighted the importance of tailoring returns programs to suit the needy, such as focusing on common barriers like housing, land and property, civil documentation and livelihood development. Best practice examples were provided on this aspect for Sri Lankan refugees returned from South India.

11. Colleagues from the Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons (TIP WG) and the Disruption of People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons Networks Working Group (DWG) shared their insights, knowledge and achievements. Both of these groups had Forward Work Plan (FWP) and in their FWP they have an intention to work with TEG-RR to strengthen cross-thematic cooperation under the Bali Process and to share knowledge and expertise. It was agreed that TEG-RR would collaborate with other WGs and coordinate a meeting with the intent of working together in the near future on related issues.

Future Priorities – Forward Working Plan

12. The Co-chairs proposed, for members' consideration, to identify volunteers to develop the work plan and to commence development of the FWP through a survey that will be sent through members. It was suggested that one of the first work items of the new plan could be a desktop review of existing policy guidelines.

13. It was agreed that the members will be sent a survey requesting ideas after the TEG-RR 2022 and will call for volunteers to form a sub-working group to work on TEGRR FWP. The details of the TEG-RR FWP will be sent to members in 2022-23 with the intent of further development and progression prior to end Q2 2023. This would be a key element of the TEG-RR's focus going forward.

14. The Co-chairs thanked all TEG-RR members, observers and member organisations for their enthusiastic participation over the event.