

Outcomes Statement

Bali Process Technical Experts' Group on Returns and Reintegration

23-24 April 2018 | Manila, Philippines

1. The Philippines and Australia co-chaired a Bali Process *Technical Experts' Group on Returns and Reintegration* in Manila, Philippines on 23-24 April 2018. Representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Viet Nam, International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Bali Process Regional Support Office (RSO) attended the meeting. Canada and United Nations Action for Cooperation Against Trafficking (UN-ACT) attended as observers of the Bali Process to share global experiences on return and reintegration issues.
2. Mechanisms for the return of irregular migrants with no lawful basis to remain in a transit or destination country are an indispensable component of migration management. The return of persons found not to be in need of international protection is important to the integrity and efficiency of the protection system. As migration has become more complex, there is a need for more cooperative approaches to return, that take into account the roles and perspectives of countries of origin, transit and destination.
3. Bali Process Members updated the Group on recent activities concerning their experiences on both returns and reintegration. The Philippines shared their unique experience of managing the welfare of over ten million overseas Philippine workers, providing comprehensive support for those who require assistance in reintegrating into Philippine communities upon their return.
4. Thailand provided a perspective on the need to manage a large population of migrants, most of whom are migrant workers, including appropriate mechanisms for the return of foreign nationals that do not have a lawful right to reside in the country. It was noted that the provision of education to all children up to the ninth grade, regardless of nationality, provides a useful means of assisting their integration into their home country.
5. UNHCR briefed the Group on the underlying fundamental principles involving the dignified and safe return of people, and the challenges that meeting these obligation can pose for some states.
6. Cambodia outlined a comprehensive strategy for assisting and reintegrating victims of trafficking. Key to its strategy is the coordination mechanism led by the Ministry of Interior, ensuring a whole of government and NGO approach to managing reintegration.
7. IOM delivered two separate presentations. The first comprised an overview on its global Assisted Voluntary Returns and Reintegration (AVRR) programs, which continued to be delivered in a safe, dignified and humane manner. IOM noted the changing environment and the importance of early communication to potential returnees, in order to make an informed decision. The second presentation outlined a way forward on an integrated approach to reintegration assistance. The presentation outlined factors affecting sustainable reintegration, and noted the importance of individual assistance, community based initiatives and structural intervention. The second presentation also spoke to the importance of knowledge management.
8. Sri Lanka spoke to the topic of readmissions policy, and the establishment of the National Coordinating Committee for Readmission. The committee provides policy recommendations, procedures and programmes on return and readmission of people to Sri Lanka. A brief update was also provided on negotiations with other states on readmission agreements.

9. The United Arab Emirates provided an audio-visual presentation both on the role of the National Counter Trafficking Committee, and on efforts to protect all victims of trafficking, including foreign nationals and Emiratis. The presentation also provided an update on the bilateral activities underway, including the recent agreement with Thailand.
10. Pakistan spoke to the work of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), in regard to the use of technology to capture large volumes of biometric data to support regional efforts on reintegration, including the biometric registration of 110 million Pakistani nationals. The same technology has been utilised for the registration and return of the millions of Afghans currently residing in that country.
11. UN-ACT provided an overview of its work in the Greater Mekong reintegration on returns and reintegration, and spoke to the challenges faced across those six countries. Access to guidance materials, including a guidebook supporting the reintegration of trafficked persons, can be found on the UN-ACT website.
12. Indonesia provided a short verbal update on activities underway to address human trafficking, through information campaigns. Indonesia has identified a circle of return and re-trafficking, which it is working hard to disrupt, via information in airports throughout Indonesia and in the UAE.
13. The RSO facilitated group discussion on the overriding themes of the meeting. Participants discussed commonalities and differences around returns and reintegration, lessons learned to support policy development, and identified areas for further discussion. The meeting canvassed priority areas for the co-chairs and the RSO to continue to develop in line with the RSO annual work plan.

Outcomes

14. Participants
 - a. Welcomed the draft policy guide and agreed to its further development to provide consistent understanding relating to returns and reintegration.
 - b. Recognized that states have done significant work on returns and reintegration and that sharing relevant information builds awareness of good practices.
 - c. Noted the importance of guidance material to inform national policies.
15. The meeting encouraged states and organizations to continue to cooperate to share good practices and information relating to returns and reintegration. The co-chairs expressed their appreciation to the Government of the Philippines for its generous hospitality in hosting the meeting.
16. Co-chairs called for expressions of interest in participating in a drafting sub-committee. The drafting committee will meet by December, tasked by the RSO, to further develop the draft policy guide, which was circulated and discussed over the course of the meeting.
17. Draft Terms of Reference (TOR) were circulated amongst participants prior to the event, and no objections to their content were raised. Following discussions amongst the co-chairs, the TOR were accepted as drafted. In line with the TOR, it is envisaged that the Group will reconvene in the first quarter of 2019, with the important task of finalising and endorsing the policy guide.