

## Global Listening Sessions: Lessons Learned on Supporting Returnees' Reintegration in Rural Areas

6 July

9:00-10:00 CET and 16:00-17:00 CET

English, Spanish, French and Russian

### Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered migration back to rural areas. In addition to returning migrant workers from overseas, a significant amount of reverse migration took place internally, from urban centres to rural areas<sup>1</sup>. The unexpected and unprecedented magnitude of the reverse migration of migrant workers induced by the pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on their communities of origin. This has set the daunting task for under-resourced local governments to meet and accommodate the socio-economic needs of returnees amidst a crisis-stricken and undeniably challenged rural economy. Returning migrants and their families are facing lack of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, reduction or loss of income and, in some cases, ensuing rise in debt, and reduced household food security.

While an important share of migrant workers who returned to rural areas intend to move back to cities or go back abroad, when it is safe to do so, others may not have the opportunity to migrate again or may wish to stay. For those, we ask: how can the socio-economic reintegration of returnees in rural areas best be supported? At the same time, further heightening of structural challenges prevailing in rural areas may hamper the rebuilding of pandemic-stricken livelihoods. There is a need to address the immediate vulnerabilities faced by rural returnees and their families, while also investing in medium-to-long-term socio-economic objectives, to allow those who want to stay in rural areas to build sustainable livelihoods.

In order to support the inclusion of rural returnees and consideration of their socio-economic needs in the COVID-19 response and recovery measures as well as rural development and transformation in the medium-to-long-term, we need to learn from experiences in addressing the challenges and opportunities of reintegration, specifically in rural areas.

### Overview of the event

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Network on Migration together with the Samuel Hall Institute are convening two global listening sessions to create an open platform for exchange on examples and experiences with return and reintegration programming in rural areas, sharing trends, challenges, good practices, lessons learned and ongoing collaborations between stakeholders. The sessions will consider both international and domestic returning migrants in rural areas, along the voluntary and forced return spectrum.

Participants and speakers will include **farmworker and agricultural associations, migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, faith-based organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, the media and development partners.**

These events will take place on **Tuesday, 6 July**, with live interpretation (French, English, Spanish, Russian) to allow stakeholders from around the world to join. It is hoped that by having two events at different times in the day, participants from different time zones will be able to attend. One session will take place at 09:00 CET and provide interpretation in French and Russian. A second session will take place at 16:00 CET and provide Spanish interpretation.

Contributions made in the listening sessions will inform the 'Global lessons learned on supporting returnees' reintegration in rural areas' research project, for which Samuel Hall has been commissioned by FAO's Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP). The focus of this study is to explore

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<sup>1</sup> FAO 2021. Reverse migration to rural areas of origin in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic  
<http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/CB4712EN/>

**practices, gaps and lessons learned on the socio-economic reintegration of returnees in rural areas, to support rural development actors in the implementation of effective, sustainable reintegration practices.**

The study will also be complemented by a COVID-19 lens, to understand needs and challenges that have emerged for returnees and rural communities of return as a consequence of the pandemic.

In addition to the global lessons learned research report, the listening sessions will also inform a "how-to" toolkit with practical guidance that can support rural stakeholders in effectively integrating reintegration in policy and programming efforts.

By focusing on return and sustainable reintegration in rural areas, FAO and the Network aim to link the priorities and objectives of sustainable reintegration with the goals of reducing rural poverty and supporting local development and rural development stakeholders.

### Focus of the Global Listening Sessions

1. Provide a platform of dialogue between migration/reintegration and development stakeholders to exchange on strengths and weaknesses of programming efforts, challenges and opportunities for further collaboration and coordinated impact, prevailing needs and capacities.
2. Complement the data collected in the research project and inform the final outputs - the "Global Lessons Learned" report and the Practitioner's Toolkit - by gathering participants' insights into the specificities, challenges and opportunities of rural reintegration.

So as to elicit genuine and honest contributions from participants, the session will adopt the "Chatham House Rule", i.e. the information received will be reported and used to inform our final outputs, but the source of that information will not be identified, unless otherwise requested.

### Guiding questions

1. What challenges exist in supporting returnees (internal or international) specifically in rural areas? What approaches have been developed to address these challenges and what are the lessons learned?
2. How can COVID-19 response and recovery measures as well as agricultural and food-systems related development programmes successfully include rural returnees and support their successful reintegration?
3. What are the specificities of rural returnees – including based on gender and age - that should be taken into account by stakeholders in rural areas to ensure sustainable reintegration and maximise the benefits to rural development?
4. How can different stakeholders work together to support sustainable reintegration goals, e.g. between migration and rural development actors?
5. How can the link between national and local strategies and programming be reinforced to support effective sustainable reintegration efforts in rural areas?

### Participation

**The sessions will feature the participation of farmworker and agricultural associations, migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, faith-based organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, the media and development partners involved in early recovery and transitions to development programmes, and development partners, at the global, national and local levels.**

*In particular, we would like to hear from individuals with practical reintegration experience, to share their insights on existing practices, approaches and lessons learned in reintegration programming **in rural settings.***

## Structure

Speaker	Description	Time
UN Network on Migration	Welcome to the session and ground rules	3 minutes
FAO	Context and rationale for the need to focus on reintegration in rural areas and to further reinforce collaboration between migration and development actors	3 minutes
Samuel Hall	Introduction to the guiding questions	3 minutes
Pre-identified speakers	Participants share and discuss their existing practices, approaches and lessons learned in reintegration programming in rural settings, or in integrating returnees in rural development programming, responding to the guiding questions	~30 minutes
Any other participant who wants to share	Additional contributions and reflections from participants	~15 minutes
Samuel Hall	Linking this discussion with the key findings and final outputs.	5 minutes
FAO	Closing remarks and thank yous	1 minute
UN Network on Migration	Any additional wrap-up needed	1 minute
Total duration = 1 hour		

## Research Team Contact

For any questions on this project, please contact:

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