Management and Reintegration of Return Migrants: The Role of Return Programmes

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Overview

- Voluntary Return Programmes
- VARRP
- Return to Sri Lanka
- Questions for Discussion
Voluntary Return Programmes

- Vary according to
  - Status of migrants targeted
  - Amount of money offered
  - Means of transfer of money

- Research findings always similar
  - Extremely small uptake
  - Resulting behaviour change limited
  - Development effects irrelevant
Migrant worker return: European initiatives

- Netherlands
  - REMPLOD (1974 - 1986)
- France
  - Aide a la reinsertion (1983- )
- Spain
  - Returns (2008 - )
Migrant worker return: country of origin initiatives

- Bangladesh
  - Return migrant support (2005 PRSP)
- Philippines
  - Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (www.owwa.gov.ph)
- Sri Lanka
  - Focus on credit schemes through state banks (SLBFE)
VARRP

- Provides travel support, relocation grant (£500) and in kind support
- Asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers and people with ELR or discretionary leave are eligible.
- ‘Return and Rebuild’ component specifically for Afghanistan and Iraq
- No overall statistical picture available
VARRP in Sri Lanka

- 989 returnees Dec 2002 to Jan 2008
- Security situation initially positive but deteriorating
  - Ceasefire Feb 2002
  - State of Emergency declared Aug 2005
  - GoSL withdraws from CFA Jan 2008
- Rising cost of living/transport
- Shrinking ‘humanitarian space’
Why return?

- Family
  - Majority of returnees interviewed married men migrated alone
- Improvement in political situation
  - Numbers of returns follow political context
- Lack of success of migration project
  - Would not have returned if claim had been successful
Why return on VARRP?

- Documentation problems
  - Return otherwise near impossible
- Reintegration assistance
  - helpful, but not significant enough to prove decisive
- Positive contact with IOM
  - Almost universally praised
- Possibility of Return
  - Widely misunderstood
Impact on development

- Business development very low success rate
  - 80% VARRP funded ventures failed or failing
  - 10% able to sustain themselves
  - 10% too early to judge
- Other problems typically overwhelming
  - particularly for Tamil/Muslim returnees
Issues for Discussion

- What is the goal of voluntary return programmes?
- Which actors have an interest in the design of return programmes?
- What concerns might these actors have?
- What policies might address these concerns?