

**The Sustainability of 'Voluntary Assisted Return':
The Experience of the Balkans**
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WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION

This workshop was organised by the Development Research Centre (DRC) on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty. The DRC is a partnership funded by the UK's Department for International Development to promote a programme of research, training and capacity building. This workshop was organised by the UK and Albanian partners, SCMR (Sussex Centre for Migration Research) and CESS (Centre for Economic and Social Studies). The DRC's work encompasses three themes and the workshop is one of three activities under the theme "New approaches to migration" which is concerned with sustainable return. Most activities are workshops and discussions leading to a briefing and policy paper but in addition CESS will be conducting future research in this field in Albania.

In his introduction Professor Black outlined the rationale for the workshop. There is considerable but diverse experience of return in the region, including mass return after war in the context of international civil administration in Bosnia and Kosovo, forced return of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants in several other countries, and possible voluntary return of migrants at the end of the migration 'project', not least in Albania. In this context the purpose of the workshop is to bring together these diverse experiences and to have some discussion about definitions with the aim of producing some conclusions of value to researchers and policy makers covering:

- Does it make sense to talk about 'sustainable' return
- What does it mean and can it be measured
- What influences whether return is sustainable

Most importantly a process of on-going dialogue should be maintained, to inform the research of CESS, the DRC's continuing work in this area and finally the practice of development and return agencies.

WHAT IS 'SUSTAINABLE RETURN'

Sustainable return can be defined in a number of ways. However, two key elements to sustainable return emerge from both post-conflict return and return of economic migrants which suggest that it is both more and less than actual return.

More than return because physical return may not be sustainable on its own, and policies to promote return should seek a sustainable solution.

Less than return because integral to a sustainable solution for returnees and countries of origin like Albania is the re-opening of choice. This may include the choice to stay away in the country or place of destination, to come and go or, in the post-conflict situation of Bosnia and Kosovo, to sell regained property and move on.

WORKSHOP REPORT

This report provides a précis of each presentation given on the day encompassing the key points made by each speaker. There is also a summary of the discussion at each session. Appendices provide the agenda and a list of participants.

SESSION 1: MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable return to the Balkans – Professor Richard Black

This presentation provided an overview of issues of return in public policy and of recent experience of return internationally and regionally and went on to identify some ways of thinking about sustainable return, informed by a pilot research study conducted in Bosnia and Kosovo amongst returnees¹.

In public policy, return has become the dominant 'durable solution' as integration and resettlement have become more difficult. Arguably more important to the rise of return is the political context of receiving countries. Countries of destination have also invested in voluntary return schemes building on evidence that these are more cost effective (as well as more politically acceptable) than forced removals. There is also another area of policy deserving of attention, return as part of reconstruction including a genuine need for skills and a genuine desire to re-mix communities separated by force.

In the last decade return was initially seen as part of the post-cold war peace dividend, but more recently international force has been used to resolve conflicts, whilst destination countries have felt over-burdened leading to a change in attitude to return. In the Balkans the issue of minority return has come to be seen not just as a benefit of peace but fundamental to achieving a just peace and a genuine reconciliation. This wide array of returns means it can be difficult to disentangle different degrees of voluntariness. It is important to remember that despite the increase in the number of voluntary return programmes, many returns are involuntary.

The success or failure of return affects communities as well as individuals and can have benefits for development as unsuccessful return can have negative effects. The extent of this success can be considered as its 'sustainability'.

The 'right' to return has emerged forcefully in the aftermath of the Balkan wars when return was made a central element in resolving conflicts. In Kosovo UNMIK has extended this to a right to 'sustainable' return and it is useful to look at what that consists of:

- A right to access public and social services
- A right to property
- A right to freedom of movement

However, there are other ways that the sustainability of return can be measured. For example two extremes are individual sustainability and aggregate sustainability:

- Individual sustainability could be seen as meaning that re-migration is no higher than the general desire to migrate
- Aggregate sustainability suggests return causes no significant worsening of economic or political conditions in the community.

A pilot study in Kosovo and Bosnia involving 30 interviews with a non-random sample in each country can only provide illustrative examples not firm conclusions but it showed that by some measurements of sustainability, return was not sustainable as there was a high desire to re-emigrate and returnees were poor or very poor. However this coincides with the experience of

¹Richard Black, Khalid Koser, and Karen Munk. 2004. "Understanding Voluntary Return." in *Home Office Online Reports*. London: Home Office

the general population; the situation might be more truly unsustainable (in terms of the stayee population) if returnees were better off.

Is it justifiable to try and monitor returnees on a scale required to draw meaningful conclusions? Returnees disperse, they are difficult to find, life histories are complicated and different parts of families do different things. One advantage of attempting this monitoring is to pick out outcomes and link to previous circumstances, including those influenced by policy.

In a more theoretical context, looking at the aggregate sustainability of return we could consider the role of sustainable livelihoods: livelihoods that are maintained without external inputs and that can withstand external shocks. In this context a sustainable return would decrease rather than increase reliance on external inputs and decrease vulnerability to external shocks. We could also consider if return diversified or narrowed livelihood options.

Finally we must consider if a return that is 'sustainable' precludes rather than assumes 'permanence' or 'durability'. If sustainable return widens livelihood options it may need to imply some continued flexibility in terms of location of the returnee.

Return of regular and irregular migrants: Indicators for sustainability – Flavia Piperno

Ms. Piperno presented the findings of an on-going study looking at the impact of forced repatriation on individuals and the communities they belong to. The study was co-financed by the EU budget line B7-667 and is a small part of the ALNIMA project aimed at assisting the repatriation and integration of disadvantaged migrants repatriated from Italy. Disadvantaged groups of migrants include ex-detainees and trafficking victims. The research is being carried out simultaneously in Albania, Morocco and Nigeria via in-depth interviews with 100 returnees and 50 returnees' families. Interviews were structured in a similar way so that results could be compared but particular stories should be regarded as independent examples to highlight specific aspects rather than as having statistical value.

The presentation addressed the question of what sustainability is, particularly in the context of increasing expulsions from Western European countries. It is important not to simplify sustainability and it must not be identified with simple durability which does not look at the experience of returned migrants but merely the length of their absence from the receiving country.

Once return is looked at from the perspective of the country of origin, duration is not relevant. Instead the opportunity for returnees to become part of the community once more is more important. Looking at it in this way, the creation of a marginalised layer of society that is not integrated is not 'sustainable' not only because of the desire for re-emigration but also because of the psychological and social impact on individuals and communities.

The concept of integration has mainly been related to socio-economic and political factors which can to some extent be measured through selection of objective indicators. In contrast this study highlights more qualitative aspects which are rarely considered. With regard to disadvantaged groups of migrants it is particularly important to focus on emotional, relational and cultural elements of return. The effects of trauma during emigration, or if returnees are stigmatised on return may jeopardise integration and hence sustainability.

This research introduces the notions of social and personal sustainability and looks at how to develop indicators to measure them.

Social sustainability refers to relations between the returnees and the receiving community. In countries where social services are ineffective, the community can be the only way to receive financial support or help finding a job or housing. Returnees can be excluded by the community if they are seen to have 'wasted' the opportunity of being abroad, an opportunity that is not universally available. Indicators for this type of sustainability – or lack of it - include discrimination in access to work, difficulties in the 'wedding market' or the end of relations with friends, relatives and neighbours.

Personal sustainability is defined as the emotional effect of the return on migrants themselves. Feelings of inadequacy or depression, or a feeling that the migration project is not yet at an end can lead migrants to keep themselves separate from the community of origin.

It is difficult to identify indicators for measuring this type of sustainability but it could be possible to consider some questions such as actual attempts to find a job or inclination to accept current salaries or job conditions.

The presentation reviewed the findings of research in terms of social and personal sustainability for Albanian migrants compared to the other countries surveyed.

Identification of best practice is difficult as situations differ so widely. However, a subsidy for returnees (independent from employment) could enable them to rebuild relationships and identify a strategy consistent with their new situation. A salary subsidy could be provided to those who find a job autonomously but this will only benefit those who are more willing to reintegrate and who are more able to do so. A human dimension to assistance programmes is important, giving orientation and psychological support in the countries of destination and origin. This must have an element of continuation, with contact between each country maintained (perhaps via email). The creation of social spaces for returnees with comparable experiences is also important (as demonstrated by the popularity of the programme operated by Hope for the Future). In this way discouraged people can also access reintegration programmes.

Policies addressed at people particularly stigmatised in their countries of origin should identify specific measures. Systems that aim to create employment for the whole community rather than trying to find existing jobs for people can be particularly effective in this regard, as can the involvement of the whole community. This is seen in the setting up of social cooperatives by IOM which bring together a range of actors from Albanian society both public and private, but where beneficiaries of the initiatives take full ownership.

Session 1 discussion

The first question concerned whether the structure of return on an international basis has created problems in post-conflict Balkans. Instead the emphasis should perhaps be on encouraging regional mobility. A comment was made that concern about return causing instability should be addressed on a more region-wide basis as return to a small area might cause instability, but without that return there could be more instability caused by large numbers of displaced people across a wider area. Another speaker raised the point that the risks of instability should be de-emphasised, as those who are politically opposed to return use it as an excuse. In response the benefits of cooperation between areas of destination and origin in preparing people for return was emphasised. This was illustrated by an anecdote about a taxi driver in Tirana complaining that he has to go to a French mechanic who is very

expensive, while at the same time there is high unemployment in Albania. A questioner asked if those seeking asylum abroad should be treated differently to the locally displaced. In the response it was stressed that assessing the sustainability of return on aggregate should look at the region as a whole and not just individuals, but that internal and regional return differs, and those forced to return from abroad are more likely to have to return to positions of danger. The point was made that the region is transforming itself towards market economies with the aim of joining the EU, eventually people will have the right, not only to live in their own home but anywhere in the EU. Although return is focussed on righting the wrongs of the war, not enough attention is being given to people on the right to move. The respondent noted that the war was one where people were trapped in places as much as forced to move, so attention should also be focussed on not making people live where they do not want to.

SESSION 2: THE FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE RETURN: PROPERTY, INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND RETURN OF IDPs

The Legacy of War: Minority Returns in the Balkans – Bogdan Ivanisevic

Bogdan Ivanisevic presented a study of minority return to Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, which has been published in the Human Rights Watch annual report January 2004. His presentation took the view that although not a 'complete failure' minority return in these countries was more of a failure than a success. In Croatia only 20-35% have returned to where they lived before the war. In Bosnia only 25-30% of minorities have returned and in Kosovo less than 5% of non-Albanians have returned. Of those who did return, many are the elderly who returned to rural areas which mitigates against populations re-establishing themselves. Few more returns are likely to be seen and the number of returns is continuing to decline; after the violent events of March 2004 returns to Kosovo have virtually stalled. The prospect for improvement in return figures are poor. It is now 10 years since displaced Bosnians and Croats have lived in their former homes and those who have created new lives will be unlikely to want to return now.

The presentation looked at obstacles to return and concluded that there are some inherent difficulties that are almost impossible to remedy such as the final political status of Kosovo, the structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the poor economic situation in many areas and the fact that a large percentage of the political leadership is ambivalent or hostile towards return. However national and international actors should do everything they can to assist those who want to return or risk legitimising forcible expulsions as an objective of war.

Three obstacles to return were identified as areas where more could and should be done to enable minority return to proceed; security and freedom of movement for returnees, impunity for war crimes and discrimination and property repossession.

Security

In terms of security, in Kosovo, a failure to deter organised violence from the beginning has led to its proliferation, and despite a fall in life-threatening attacks on minority communities in 2002-3, ethnic relations have not improved. In Bosnia and Croatia the situation has improved but it is now 10 years since people left and the passage of time will not encourage return.

Discrimination

The failure to bring to justice war crime suspects and the selective nature of prosecutions has perpetuated the ethnic divide and deterred return in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Discrimination in access to social rights also persists, including employment in public

institutions and generally, educational policies and access to social services, pension rights and healthcare.

Property and reconstruction

Most minority refugees and IDPs have not been able to repossess occupied housing, nor have they received compensation. This is particularly an issue for those living in socially owned housing (having the right of tenancy) where they had most of the attributes of ownership. Slow and discriminatory reconstruction of damaged homes is another obstacle to return. In Croatia and Kosovo discriminatory allocation of assistance has impeded minority return while in Bosnia lots of money has been spent on repair and reconstruction but over 200,000 are still damaged or destroyed.

The presentation concluded with some suggestions as to why there has not been enough progress on minority returns in the region. International actors have a role to play but the responsibility lies mainly with local political structures. Internationally, political conditionality could have been greater, especially with regard to Croatia joining the Council of Europe. There was not enough screening of reconstruction opportunities, many rebuilt houses remain empty while others who need assistance cannot get it. Although the situation in the three countries covered is very different, many of the problems can be traced back to the critically important post war period and often there has been too little done, too late.

The Significance of Property Restitution to Sustainable Return in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Rhodri Williams

Rhodri Williams presented a paper looking at the success of property restitution in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as related to sustainable return. 200,000 residential properties have been returned to those who fled and as such this programme represents a success. However, there are two main caveats:

- Despite the success of restitution, this did not always lead to physical return of claimants.
- The level of success in BiH is to a great extent the result of the influence of international resources, commitment and power which would not necessarily be available in other contexts.

In 1998, after establishment of basic security and freedom of movement, attention turned to property as the main remaining obstacle to return in BiH. Laws were passed and amended, weighting them heavily in favour of claimants and allowing for the forcible eviction of temporary residents. Subsequent implementation and enforcement of these laws afforded claimants the choice of whether to return or to resettle on the basis of selling, exchanging or renting their properties. Although there has been significant return, the picture remains very mixed. Actual return is hard to measure as it is not possible to link the UNHCR statistics on return with the statistics on property restitution.

The emphasis placed on rule of law in property restitution was meant to overcome highly politicised arguments about what return meant. For instance, while some parties asserted that displaced people should be forced to return collectively, others insisted that return obligations could be met through a scheme of compensation in lieu of return. Emphasis on the law focussed attention on each individual's choice, not on group determinations, contributing to the success of restitution.

In Bosnia the most common definition of sustainable return is return to the pre-war home of origin, based on the principle of righting the wrong of ethnic cleansing. As such, access to property is an important first step to return, in many cases, but property restitution by itself does not create conditions for sustainable return and thousands have opted instead to relocate after repossession. The effects of property restitution differed across the country, often in response to local economic and political factors.

Looking at the relationship between property restitution and sustainable return to BiH itself rather than to homes of origin takes on a different significance. For many families pre-war homes were the only asset practically recoverable after the conflict and as such the use of recovered property either as a home or as an asset contributes to a durable solution - whether to the home of origin or internal resettlement - for refugees and IDPs.

Session 2 discussion

One participant asked whether reconstruction assistance had actually undermined sustainability as many of the 130,000 houses that were rebuilt in Bosnia were in areas that were now deserted as the new economy was establishing itself in different areas. There were still 200,000 houses damaged and people were frustrated that the money was going elsewhere. He asked if more investment should have been made in the economic infrastructure allowing people to use their assets/money rather than having a house and being unable to use that asset. He said that reconstruction had prevented investment in new housing schemes, which in turn created problems for internal mobility. In effect some return was forced on people as the shortage in housing meant it was too expensive for people to rent the few flats in areas they do want to live. In response it was noted that only focussing on restitution is problematic as it isolates those whose property was destroyed but who weren't alienated and also those who did not own property. The dual approach to return from Serbia was discussed, whereby Serbs were encouraged to return to Kosovo but were discouraged from integrating with the Albanian population. It was pointed out that Serbs were financially assisted by Belgrade to discourage integration. It was reiterated that it is not possible to equate return and property rights as not everyone owned property. Delegates were also referred to the paper written by Anneke Smit for the conference, which also makes the point that in Kosovo rights are not linked to actual return.

SESSION 3: RETURN POLICY AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF RETURN: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

The Swiss Experience of the Kosovo Return Assistance Programme – Eric Kaser

Eric Kaser presented a review of the assisted voluntary return programme for refugees from Switzerland to Kosovo. The review was carried out by the Swiss Federal Audit office to address the following three questions:

- What role did cooperation between the different parties play?
- What effect did the individual repatriation assistance measures have on the return of those entitled to take part?
- To what extent could Switzerland reduce costs?

The review found that there was good cooperation between the agencies and that this resulted in a clear and transparent communication of different aspects of the programme, creating high levels of acceptance of the programme as well as the humanitarian and developmental goals, pursued.

It seems that the individual measures of the repatriation programme had little effect on whether people returned but it did have some bearing on when they returned. Return itself was an effect of the changed circumstances in Kosovo. The most influential of the Swiss activities were advisory services and the financial incentive. Participation in return oriented educational projects in Switzerland was low (1%). The structural assistance components had scarcely any influence on the decision to return or when to return although it accounted for by far the largest expenditure (109m francs). Instead it was aimed at making the return policy more acceptable at the international level and to critical players such as relief organisations and the church.

The questions of whether costs could have been cut cannot be conclusively answered, as the costs that would have ensued without the programme cannot be calculated. The audit office calculated that the programme may have saved up to CHF 100 million.

The programme was judged to have been successful based on the number of voluntary returns (32,000) and the fact that they avoided legal complaints procedures. They were also pleased that by the end of 2002 only 200 people had returned to Switzerland. This success was attributed to the clearly defined attitude of Switzerland from the arrival of the Kosovars and the short time frame of their stay in Switzerland. It was felt to be important that once a decision was taken it should be communicated and then implemented, which happened in this case.

In conclusion Mr Kaser said that return is most likely to be sustainable when it comes as the free and informed choice of the individual.

Small and Medium Enterprises as Incentives for Return: The IOM experience – Teuta Grazhdani and Arlinda Baci

Teuta Grazhdani (IOM Tirana) and Arlinda Baci (UNOPS/TAULEDA)² gave a presentation looking at the IOM experience of return and reintegration programmes in Europe and how the possibility of starting up Small or Medium Enterprises (SME) may act as incentives for sustainable return, in the case of Albania. An IOM definition of sustainable return was presented as 'achieved when returnees are able to integrate in the community of return, without immediate inducement to leave again' and a definition of reintegration as 'the process of individuals making an effort to adapt to circumstances in their country of origin after returning from abroad, as determined by objective and subjective factors and encompassing both the micro level of returnee and the macro level of the whole community and the home country as a whole'.

Several studies have attempted to link reintegration in the home country with the sustainability of return, even though it has been difficult to measure the objectiveness of such links³. However, at a European level only small scale return schemes have been analysed, with the aim of understanding what influences the patterns of reintegration and the broader sustainability of the return process. To address the issue of return as well as to seek best practices of sustainable return, several Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) schemes have been designed. Today there are more than 20 assisted voluntary return programmes operating in 18 European countries accounting for 10-20% of all returns⁴. In general, the reintegration support

² IOM: International Organization for Migration, UNOPS: United Nations Office for Project Services, Tauleda is a local economic development agency in the region of Durres, established with the support of UNOPS.

³ For definitions and more on IOM's contribution to this issue see *Identification of sustainable approaches to voluntary return and reintegration of asylum seekers and persons with temporary protection status: Albania, Romania and Russia* – Final Project Report, March 2003, M. Hulst, F. Laczko & J. Barthel, IOM, p9-10.

⁴ IOM. 2004. "Return Migration: Policies & Practices in Europe." Geneva: IOM

incentives offer: pre return information and counselling, vocational information prior to departure, a reinstallation grant, a reintegration grant (including salary supplement) and grants for SME start up or technical assistance.

The drawbacks of the AVR programmes were listed as: AVR only being designed for failed asylum seekers, too small scale, lack of best practices on sustainable return, lack of research about the needs of potential returnees and lack of research about successful reintegration. Key issues for success are identified as early information and counselling prior to return, profiling of irregular migrant populations in the country of destination to tailor returns in a more sustainable way and long term investments to leverage job generation employment and security for at least one year.

IOM is working on two return and reintegration assistance projects in Albania. They offer vocational training, job placement and salary supplement for 9 months, training on the job, community assistance and facilitate financial and technical assistance for SME start-ups. The promotion of SMEs as incentives for sustainable return to Albania is considered in light of utilizing migrants' remittances, enhancing employment and influencing the socio-economic development of the community. A recent IOM research study carried out with potential returnees to Albania, Kosovo and FYROM in four EU member states showed that loans for start up of SMEs is considered as the most preferred form of reintegration assistance, which in the case of Albania will also address the issue of secure employment, outlined as the most important factor influencing the decision to return. INSTAT (Albanian Institute of Statistics) data shows that 1 million Albanians live abroad, 600,000 in Greece and 200,000 in Italy. In Greece many migrants put their savings in Greek banks. They could be encouraged to invest in Albanian projects. Most migrants in Greece work in agriculture or the tourist trade, so they could be encouraged to run similar businesses in Albania

The role of SMEs in Albanian economy was presented and it showed that SMEs account for around 70% of Albanian businesses and on average employ less than 4 employees. The Albanian economy is dominated by agriculture and less than 1% of enterprises have more than 100 employees. In terms of providing credit to SMEs most require loans of \$10,000 to \$100,000, they are indifferent to the currency the loan is made in and remittances are only partly made through the banking system.

In light of exploring the most successful forms of sustainable return in the home country, IOM and UNOPS/TAULEDA are working on an EU High Level Working Group (HLWG) project offering incentives for SME start-ups for would-be returnees. It is aimed at agro-industry, fishing and aquaculture, handicraft and tourism services. They offer advice on local development, economic and entrepreneurial opportunities, technical and financial assistance, assistance with access to international markets, training, networking and marketing. The aim is to target migrants residing in EU countries who would wish to start up an SME in the home country and will need assistance to promote this initiative and realise it.

Readmission and Return Policy in Albania – Elizabeth Warn

Elizabeth Warn gave a presentation on how readmission relates to the development of an Albanian policy on return migration. According to the readmission agreement, the definition of a readmission agreement is 'a bilateral or multilateral agreement between states for the return of all persons who do not or who no longer fulfil the conditions in force for entry to, presence in or residence on, the territory of the requesting member state' and is generally considered as forced return. However readmission is not a prerequisite for forced return; many irregular

Albanian migrants have returned already. IOM does not get involved with forced migration. Instead it promotes voluntary return, but in certain circumstances can provide assistance once people have been forcibly returned.

From 2003 to mid 2004 there were 38,000 readmissions or expulsions from EU states to Albania (source: Ministry of Public Order). Assisted Voluntary Return represents quite a small figure compared to this but it does offer individuals the choice to return based on an informed decision.

Return processes must be understood in the context of motives for emigration (i.e. economic or forced migration) and also in the context of spontaneous return which in Albania is often either seasonal, temporary or cyclical. In Albania international migration is also offset by internal migration towards central Albania.

Readmission is important for Albania not only in terms of the numbers of people returning to Albania but also within the terms of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA, towards EU accession). The readmission agreement is being negotiated with the EC and is likely to come into force in 2005 which could result in a greater number of Albanians being forcibly returned.

In terms of Albanian policy there is a commitment to assist returned migrants. However the emphasis is on voluntary return, although there is no definition of voluntary return. The government's focus has been on attracting back qualified nationals, especially graduates. Vocational training is to be targeted at 'returnee migrants in economic need' but further information is needed on how this might be implemented.

It is difficult to predict the effect of the readmission agreement on the numbers of returnees as many Albanians are already expelled through existing arrangements. Identification may be difficult for the authorities as many Albanians register as Kosovars, also possibly hindering provision of reintegration assistance. The registration of returnees at the border is also difficult as records are currently manual and there is no aggregated data. This may make it difficult to provide readmitted or expelled nationals with reintegration assistance.

Within the context of the development of a National Strategy on Migration, Albania is developing a generic return policy covering both forced and voluntary return. People who are forcibly returned should not be excluded from reintegration assistance upon return. Sustainability needs to be viewed from the point of view of the stability and absorption capability of Albania. Forcible return of many individuals each year could be a destabilising factor and may risk marginalising returnees who are more vulnerable than those returning voluntarily. More research is needed to see how the needs of different categories of returnees differ. Finally in order for return to be successful greater collaboration is needed between countries of origin such as Albania, and countries of destination.

Session 3: discussion

The question of the difficulties of monitoring large numbers of people was raised. It is important to consider what type of monitoring is appropriate. A respondent noted that part of the capacity building within the Albanian government to facilitate return will be to monitor three ports, Tirana, Durrës and Vlorë. At the moment only around 10% of irregular migrants are returned. The intention is to link readmission with return assistance through these three ports.

SESSION 4: SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION SYSTEMS

Return of Regular and Irregular Migrants: Effects on Albanian Families – Diana Hiscock

Diana Hiscock presented some findings from her experience of ICMC's work with returned migrants and potential migrants in Albania. ICMC has worked with a broad spectrum of migration issues in Albania and the rest of the Balkans since 1999. Much of the return migration they've seen in recent years is from Greece, but after deportation many re-migrate over the mountains in the south of Albania. There is insufficient monitoring of return and no detailed research looking at the implication of return on the family and community, although there is a clear need for long term research into the migrant's cycle of return and reintegration. Most people are left to adapt without support; those who do get support are very much in the minority. The exception is that returning women and children are now routinely interviewed near the border to monitor for trafficking.

In recent years it is noticeable that return migration is creating socio-economic problems such as family breakdown and there are problems for the youth population as there are fewer external migration opportunities. The main irregular employers of internal migrants are in construction. The role of the extended family in supporting migration is key. Return migrants can have problems accessing the full range of social services. As citizens there are some services they can access but others they cannot. If a young migrant misses out on elementary school they cannot go back to high school and they are not eligible for social assistance or unemployment benefit. In addition there is uncertainty of land tenure for many returning migrants in informal settlements around Tirana or Durres.

The ICMC works with potential young migrants to provide information on migration related issues and life skills. The aim is to allow the young people to make an informed decision about migration through improving access to information about migration and return procedures but also by offering alternatives in education, technical skills or contract work. The most successful approach is through youth groups and summer camp programmes to offer an alternative to migrant peer groups. To highlight the complex and exploitative nature of the migration experience a case study was presented of a young Albanian man.

Case Profile of a Young Man forcibly returned from the UK and Belgium to Keneta, Durres

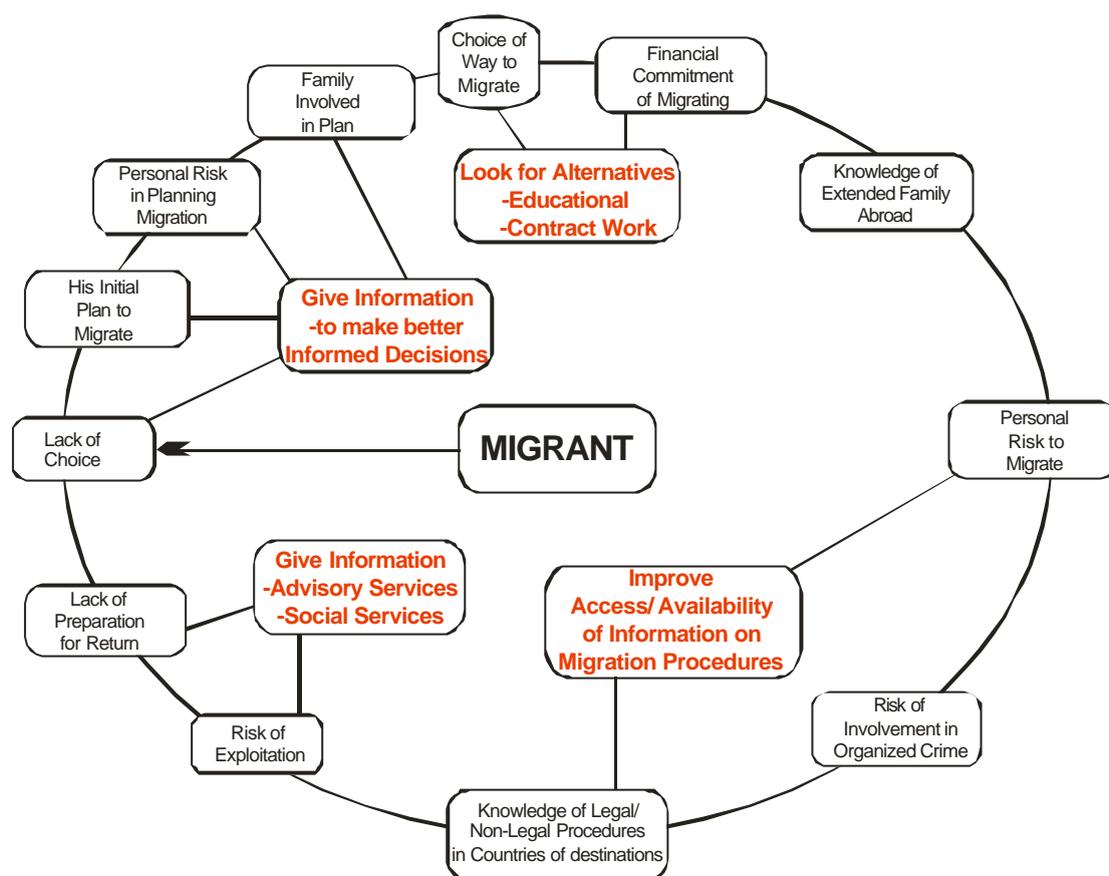
The young man was living in Keneta, one of the irregular internal migration settlements. His family of nine lived in a three roomed bungalow built on government land. There is no water, electricity or drainage. He had inadequate schooling and suffered discrimination through being from Keneta. His employment prospects were limited to earning 3 euros a day doing casual work in construction.

Aged 15 in 1999, inspired by stories of his peers sending back money he decided to leave school and go to the UK. He borrowed 1800 euros from friends to pay for his 5 days travel, by boat to Italy and then train to France and Belgium and then to the UK in the back of a truck. On arrival he contacted a cousin who put him in touch with a lawyer and he submitted an asylum claim as a Kosovar. He received sheltered housing and social support, he was allowed to ring home twice a month and received £25 a week. He studies English for 1.5 years. He started to train as a mechanic but left to work as a driver in the black economy earning £50 a day. He sent home £3000 via Western Union in 4 months. He was refused housing support and so moved in with his cousin.

At 18 he paid £700 to get his asylum claim re-opened but this was refused and after being held in detention he was deported to Pristina in 2003 from where his parents collected him and took him back to Keneta. He again borrowed money (£4,000) and set off into Greece via the hills of Devoll. In a month he had paid 900euros for a false passport and French visa. He travelled by train to Belgium to join a cousin and tried to find a truck to take him to the UK, he was quoted 3000euros but this was too much and so he found an Albanian driver to take him. The truck was stopped on the way and he was arrested and sent to Sangatte in France. Within 2 months he was flown to Albania.

He now lives in Keneta with no work and no prospects. About 15,000 internal migrants have come to Keneta since his departure. He is taking driving lessons to find work as he did in the UK. He doesn't want to stay but does not see any choice

The chart below shows where some interventions could help break the cycle of migration:



In conclusion it was pointed out that the young man will not wait for a National Migration Policy and that young men like him are forced to look outside their own country until socio-economic conditions improve within Albania.

Kosovo: Migration, Sustainability of Return and Remittances – Shakir Issa

Shakir Issa presented some data on remittances and the economic situation of Kosovo. Despite scarce and incomplete data it was revealed that remittances are the second most important source of income in Kosovo consisting on average 15.2% of total income. For households who receive remittances this is the most important source of income. Rural households rely more on remittances than those in urban areas. In 2004 estimates put the total value of remittances at Euro 548 million or 28.9% of GDP.

While Kosovo still has an uncertain final status its economic development and integration with Europe will be limited. At the same time other sources of foreign transfers such as humanitarian assistance and donor grants are declining. Policy makers in Kosovo should focus on sustainability of remittances, as sustainability of return has been a failure. However this sustainability can be deceptive if it creates dependence among recipients and encourages migration of unemployed young people in Kosovo.

Session 4: Discussion

It was asked if these economic systems are sustainable in themselves. If not people returning could have a positive or negative effect on economic development. It was acknowledged that there was widespread agreement that local economic development has been ignored by UNMIK in favour of macro-economic stability but how does return fit into that? Majority return

to Kosovo has not been monitored at all and the returns framework is solely focussed on minority communities. Several categories of migrants were identified as being registered in Albania including expellees (anyone with any kind of irregular documentation) and victims of trafficking. It was pointed out that although each return project has an income generation project to ensure sustainability, this is in rural areas only. The assumption is that in urban areas there is waged employment but a huge percentage of this is in the public sector. It was also acknowledged that UNMIK had not set up any kind of body to advise returnees on how to invest their money. As a result the main highway has far more gas stations and motels than it needs.

SESSION 5: THE EXPERIENCE OF RETURN AND SUSTAINABILITY

Fostering Sustainable Reintegration in Albania, Kosovo and FYROM through reinforcing local NGO capacity – Mendel Sosef

Mendel Sosef (IOM Tirana) gave a presentation of research done within the framework of the HLWG project entitled 'Fostering sustainable reintegration in Albania, the Kosovo province and FYROM by reinforcing local NGO capacity service provision to returnees'. This project is funded by the European Commission. IOM conducted research with irregular migrants from Albania, Kosovo and FYROM in 4 EU countries of residence to analyse push and pull factors. 211 questionnaires have been collected, nearly half from Kosovars, 32% from Albanians and 17% from FRYOM.

The respondents were selected through NGO networks (including diaspora associations) focussed on/working with irregular migrants in EU countries and contacts of IOM Missions. Most of the respondents are between 19 and 29, 57% are single and 70% are male. Half the respondents had worked abroad and half of these had had a work permit. Most respondents had left their country of origin between 1997 and 1999. They claimed to have left because of political reasons, poor living standards or general insecurity.

When asked if they wanted to return to their country of origin 46% of Kosovars said yes, compared to 21% of Albanian respondents. However this also differed widely by country of destination with 55% of those in Germany saying 'No' but 49% of those in Belgium saying 'Yes'. Most respondents said that secure employment, acceptable living standards and acceptable level of security were the most important conditions for return. In terms of reintegration assistance needed, most mentioned loans for starting a small business, housing allowance or job seeking assistance.

To tailor services to the needs of returnees, this research suggests that assistance with housing allowance, 'start-up assistance' and loans to set up a small business and job seeking assistance in term of brokering and placement are likely to be most useful. However, further research is needed addressing for example whether a small business does secure employment. Little is known about the success and fail factors of starting small businesses in countries of origin. The IOM is currently doing qualitative research to reinforce this quantitative research.

Return Migration to Korce – Ilir Gedeshi

Ilir Gedeshi reported on some research being carried out by CESS. 1,200 migrants were interviewed via a questionnaire at three ports of entry during December 2003. They were mainly returning to Albania on holiday. So far their findings include the fact that remittances have a role as a coping mechanism. This has an impact on macro-economic stability but little

impact on local economic development. The problem is that remittances are often not invested, so migration creates the need for further migration. People who are intending to invest want to invest in construction, bars and restaurants. After 2-3 years remittances tend to decline as people become more settled in the country of origin. In the future remittances will decline further as family reunification in the country of destination increases.

Most migrants want to stay away for 13-14 years so those who left in 1992 want to return in 2-5 years time and those who left in 1997 in 5-10 years time. About 20% of those who plan to return intend to live in another region, not their region of origin. Another 20% expect to move to another country.

Session 5 – Discussion

Some examples of the effects of migration were given, via an account of two villages in Kukes, northern Albania. In Kukes there is little employment and few services so there is a great deal of internal migration. In one village of 300 households there are only 40 left. Migration to the UK has funded internal migration to Tirana. A village 30 kilometres away still has 300 households as no international migration means that these households cannot afford to move to Tirana.

SYNTHESIS

Although discussion at the workshop was quite wide-ranging, and touched on a number of distinct return processes, nonetheless some key elements emerged from the various sessions of the day and are summarised below.

Return is both a political and a technical issue even in disparate circumstances

Political

- In post conflict situations return is seen to reverse ethnic cleansing and it is a public challenge to nationalism. In this situation political achievement is arguably more important than the detail of return.
- For countries of economic migration there is a political sense of stressing the ability of people to return and the readiness of a country to accept returnees and the contribution they can make.

Technical

When return is politically contentious, stressing the technical aspects of return may make it easier to implement since:

- A technical approach suggests there is no need to talk about it – just do it
- It forces local officials to accept property restitution and eviction across the board
- It supports the development of multiple projects, schemes etc such as reintegration, assisted return or restitution.

The return of refugees/IDPs is focused on property and the return of other migrants on economic development. Is this a valid distinction?

- This is partly because property issues are not relevant for economic migrants
- But perhaps post-conflict return should pay more attention to economic development?

- The return of economic migrants could also focus more on opening free and informed choice. This has been a focus for refugees and IDPs in Bosnia and Kosovo.

“Sustainable return” is or should be a free and informed choice

- But what about returns that are forced?
- Or when the choice is one that policy makers and commentators do not approve of?
- Should reintegration assistance be offered to people when return is forced?
- If there is no assistance there is a risk that return will be destabilising

Should assistance be to individual returnees or to the places they return to?

- Could regional development agencies play a role to promote sustainable return and link the individual and the region together?

KEYNOTE SPEECH – DR DASHAMIR SHEHI

Dr Dashamir Shehi gave an overview of migration in the region based on his years of experience. He noted that 30-40% of Albanians will come home, but not for a decade. This is likely to coincide with Albanian entry into the EU (although Albania will have problems joining the EU as it has too many people, 45% of the population, in the agricultural sector). He believes return is a cyclical or generational thing and that projects, like those run by IOM may be helpful but that they are too limited to make a major impact when there may be 1 million Albanian migrants. The Greeks had 1 million migrants in Germany but with the EU accession they came back.

There are 3 major factors that influence the migration of Albanians; economic factors, curiosity as they were so close and yet so far from other countries for 50 years and demographic pressure, as Albania has such a young population. This was helped by the Balkan wars as the Kosovo refugee programme made a connection with the UK. Albanians claimed asylum as Kosovars. However, Dr Shehi said that though Albania has many things in common with the rest of the Balkans, migration is not one of them. Yugoslavia had a 40-year emigration story of economic migration before the conflicts and asylum during the conflict and Albania has a 14-year history of economic migration only.

Albanian migration has taken place in two stages; from 1990-1997 ‘normal’ migration to neighbouring countries followed by more selective migration since 1997. Since 1997 migrants are more likely to be educated and speak English, they are wealthier and more likely to move permanently. They may sell a house to emigrate. The destination countries have been widened to include USA, Canada and UK. Remittances collapsed in 1997.

The influence of elite migrants is felt in the Albanian economy. Investment in housing and elsewhere in Albania is often from those who have emigrated abroad. Those who work in the banking, mobile telephony and insurance sector have often studied abroad, especially in Italy and often these industries are owned by foreigners. The priority is for economic development for the country. However, this growth will only be possible if there is a common market with the neighbouring countries as Albania alone is too small for investors to be interested.

The IOM return scheme first started in 1994 where they ran a scheme copied from Honduras but it failed completely as it was going totally against the current, although in 1994-6 a few people, perhaps 4,000 did come back. Migration to Greece is declining, partly as cross-border

salaries have only a 25% differential. There are also more jobs available in Albania, especially in hotel or pizza businesses run by people who have been in Italy for 2-3 years.

Currently the balance is still more in favour of emigrants than returnees, especially due to family reunification from those who have been abroad for a while and are now settling. However, in three to four years the balance is likely to shift, although return will not necessarily be to the exact place of origin, as many people may want to return to urban areas.

NOTES

CESS

CESS was established in 1995 in Tirana, Albania as a non-governmental, politically unaffiliated organisation, dedicated to the study of economic and social problems in Albania. It has already undertaken research on agricultural development and migration in the Balkans, and emigration of the intellectual elite from Albania. CESS is able to draw on research resources from the Albanian Academy of Sciences and Tirana University, as well as its own offices in five major regional centres within Albania.

SCMR

The Sussex Centre for Migration Research is one of the first and largest interdisciplinary centres in the UK working specifically on migration issues. Founded in 1997 the centre has the UK's only Masters and Doctoral programmes in Migration Studies, edits the interdisciplinary Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies and is a member of the European Network of Excellence in International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe (IMISCOE). The SCMR is the coordinating partner of the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

APPENDIX 1 AGENDA



The sustainability of 'voluntary assisted return': the experience of the Balkans Hotel Mondial, Tirana 14th September 2004

- 8.30-9.00 Registration**
- 9.00-10.00 Session 1: Measuring sustainability**
1. Sustainable Return in the Balkans
Richard Black, Sussex Centre for Migration Research
 2. Return of Regular and Irregular Migrants: Indicators for Sustainability
Flavia Piperno, CeSPI, Rome
- 10.00-10.30 Break**
- 10.30-11.45 Session 2: The framework for a sustainable return: property, international action and the return of IDPs**
3. The Legacy of War: Minority Returns in the Balkans
Bogdan Ivanisovic, Human Rights Watch, Belgrade
 4. The Significance of Property Restitution in Sustainable Return in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Rhodri Williams, Ex-Human Rights Department, OSCE
- 11.45-1.00 Session 3: Return policy and the sustainability of return: international experiences**
5. The Swiss Experience of the Kosovo Return Assistance Programme
Eric Kaser, Deputy Head of Section on Return, Federal Office for Refugees, Switzerland
 6. Small and Medium Enterprises as Incentives for Return: The IOM Experience
Teuta Grazhdani, IOM, Tirana, and Arlinda Baci, UNOPS/TAULEDA
 7. Readmission and Return Policy in Albania
Elizabeth Warn, IOM, Tirana

- 1.00-2.00 **Lunch**
- 2.00-3.30 **Session 4: Sustainability in the context of migration systems**
8. Return of Regular and Irregular Migrants: Effects on Albanian families
Diana Hiscock, International Catholic Migration Commission, Tirana
9. Kosovo: Migration, Sustainability of Return and Remittances
Shakir Issa, Former Economics Expert, UNMIK
- 3.30-4.00 **Break**
- 4.00-5.30 **Session 5: The experience of return and sustainability**
10. Fostering Sustainable Reintegration in Albania, Kosovo and FYROM through Reinforcing Local NGO Capacity
Mendel Sosef, IOM, Tirana
11. Return migration to Korce
Ilir Gedeshi and Xhilda Preni, Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Tirana
- 5.30-6.00 **Session 6: Closing keynote address**
12. Dr. Dashamir Shehi
Minister of Labour and Migration 1992 – 1994, Minister of Tourism and Territory 1994 - 1996
Member of Parliament since 1992, Member of the Economic Parliamentary Group
Head of the Defence Parliamentary Group, Member of CESS.

APPENDIX 2 DELEGATES

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF 'VOLUNTARY ASSISTED RETURN': THE EXPERIENCE OF THE

BALKANS

TIRANA 14TH SEPTEMBER 2004

ATTENDEES LIST

<u>NAME</u>		<u>ORGANISATION</u>
Baci	Arlinda	UNOPS + TAULEDA
Birath	Thomas	MARRI Regional Center/
Black	Richard	University of Sussex
Bozic	Rajko	Citizen's Pact for SEE
Busatti	Maurizio	IOM
Castaldo	Adriana	Migration DRC
Clignon	Christine	CARITAS
Dono	Irene	Hope for the Future
Gedeshi	Ilir	CESS
Gent	Saskia	University of Sussex, DRC
Grazhda	Teuta	IOM
Gressman	Wolfgang	MARRI-RIE
Grillo	Iva	ALNIMA
Harvey	Joanna	UNMIK
Hiscock	Diana	ICMC Albania
Hafizi	Majlinda	Govt of Albania MPSS
Issa	Shakir	ex-UNMIK
Ivanisevic	Bogdan	Human Rights Watch
Kaser	Eric	Swiss Federal office for refugees
Kleinschmidt	Kilian	MARRI
Kola	Jonuz	Kukes Economic Reintegration and Development
Komberi	Geron	Soros Foundation
Morris	Saul	DFID
Onorato	Marta	European Delegation
Piperno	Flavia	CeSPI
Qesku	Arben	DFID Tirana
Shehu	Deshira	IOM
Shahollari	Luan	Ministry of Economics

Smit	Anneke	University of Reading, School of law
Warn	Elizabeth	IOM Tirana
Westerberg	Anders	EC-CARDS
Williams	Rhodri	International Committee for Human Rights