**V.TRAINING MANUAL FOR FRONTLINERS: Mapping of R&R services for persons returning from conflict areas**

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**Introduction**

***Rehabilitation and Reintegration (R&R) Programs for Returnees from Conflict Zones***

Developing and implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs for returnees from conflict zones is a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional process that requires a comprehensive and inclusive approach. While so far there is no unified and coherent model of providing R&R programs for the category of people returning from conflict areas, the support provided goes beyond the humanitarian response to meet the most urgent and basic needs. The design, implementation and monitoring of R&R programs should take into account the coordination of multi-stakeholder intervention addressing the specific personal and family needs of returnees. R&R programs can offer, among others, vocational education and training, employment opportunities, religious, psychological or family counseling, vocational training and employment as well as cultural and entertainment activities. Such an intervention aims to improve the mental wellbeing, the re-socialization and reintegration of persons in the economic, social and cultural life of the society. Although the legal framework in Albania does not clearly stipulate whether returnees from conflict zones, and in particular women and children, are part of vulnerable groups, their multiple vulnerabilities due to wartime trauma, physical harm, and the difficulty of adaptation make these groups more in need of special R&R support and programs. For this reason, it is important that frontline officers are as vigilant and prepared as possible during the process of identifying their health, educational, psychological and social needs. Relevant institutions should guarantee the provision of appropriate services according to age and gender. The inclusion of returnees from conflict zones in R&R programs aims to:

* Help individuals adapt to their new reality through social rehabilitation;
* Help returnees overcome challenges and emotional traumas;
* Increase community resilience and provide opportunities for returnees to engage positively with the community;
* Make it possible for returnees to be as independent as possible in the community to which they return, through successful reintegration into social life, the education system and the labor market;
* Strengthen the personal resilience of returnees to violent extremism.

Effective reintegration approaches require engagement and work with communities, local and central institutions, frontline workers, individuals and families of returnees, and individuals who might be more likely to be influenced by extremist ideologies. Effective programs to rehabilitate and reintegrate returning foreign fighters are crucial not only to preventing acts of violence, but also to mitigating further radicalization among the youth population and building overall community-level resilience to violent extremism.[[1]](#footnote-1) This module target frontline workers, local government officials, social workers, psychologists, health professionals, teachers and the police, who should facilitate access to services for individuals returning from conflict zones.

The practice so far has shown that multi-sectoral cooperation ensures the continuity and sustainability of R&R interventions. This training module aims to inform frontline workers about the types of R&R programs and the access of returnees to these programs. The module provides step-by-step instructions that guide the work of the frontline workers during the process of service delivery. These programs include access to rights and services organized according to the following areas of intervention:

1. Legal (civil registration, citizenship, legal issues);
2. Socio-economic (housing, employment, vocational training, healthcare, psycho-social assistance);
3. Social cohesion (education, language learning and social orientation, promoting participation and inclusion in the community).

The module is structured in five major sections:

* The first part of the module provides an overview of VE in Albania, focusing on the importance of R&R programs for returnees from conflict zones.
* The second part of the module sheds light on the profile of women and children returning from conflict areas as vulnerable groups with special needs.
* The third section describes the general principles for R&D program delivery and the importance of an integrated multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder approach.
* Chapter four describes some positive cases and practices of R&R programs in different countries.
* The last section maps R&R programs by main areas and sub-areas of the intervention. The intervention plan provides a brief description of the service focusing on the needs of the group under consideration, the legal and sub-legal framework, scope of work, responsible institutions and persons as well as the steps and procedures to be followed to access the service.

**Implementation of R&R Programs in the Municipality of Tirana [[2]](#footnote-2)**

Following up on the process of repatriation of Albanian citizens from the conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, local self-government units and central institutions have taken respective measures for their rehabilitation, reintegration and re-socialization of returnees, under the coordination of the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism. This process was carried out in cooperation with special structures of the Albanian State Police, the Anti-Terror Directorate, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the State Social Service. By means of the Prime Minister’s Order No. 169, dated 01.11.2018, the Inter-Institutional Action Plan “On the Reception and Treatment of Albanian Citizens Returning from Conflict Zones in Syria and Iraq” has been drafted to set forth measures for all Albanian institutions with regard to concrete tasks and services, such as medical, psychological, social, economic assistance, as well as building logistical and human capacity for the reception, accompaniment, as well as measures for their rehabilitation, reintegration and re-socialization in the community. Pursuant to Law No. 18/2017, “On the Rights and Protection of the Child” and the Council of Ministers’ Decision No. 578, dated 03.10.2018, “On the Referral and Case Management Procedures, on Drafting and Content of Individual Protection Plan, Financing the Costs for its Implementation, as Well as the Enforcement of Protection Measures", the child protection officer who performs the function of case manager for children in need of protection, from the moment of identification or referral, during the design and implementation of the protection measure and until their completion, evaluates the cases that are in need of protection and long-term accommodation.

The provision of comprehensive services is ensured at the border crossing point through preparatory measures and the presence of professionals of various fields. Returned women and children are initially accommodated, against their consent, in a Reception Center, where they stay temporarily for a period of time while the placement of returnees to a certain community is conceptualized and planned, and decided upon in cooperation and with the consent of the returnees. In accordance with their competencies and area of responsibility, the responsible structures coordinate all actions of relocating the individual from the reception center to the community. In any case, the best interests of the child will be a primary consideration. The structure responsible for social services at the municipality is also responsible for child protection issues in general. Through its subordinate structures and in cooperation with other directorates of the municipality, with local protection mechanisms, and other local institutions, the structure responsible for social services takes all necessary measures to ensure and guarantee the protection of children in the territory of the municipality. The process of reintegration of people returned from conflict zones is built based on a working methodology by placing the child at its center, because comprehensive legislation is applicable in Albania, which aims to establish an integrated child protection system.

During the design and development of individual protection plans for families in the process of reintegration, the principle "the child is not managed separated from the family, but the individual protection plan is established, including interventions for the family" is taken into account. Addressing the situation of returnees based on a holistic approach places particular focus on providing adequate protection for the rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees also in the context of efforts to prevent and counter the phenomenon of radicalization and violent extremism. In the process of rehabilitation and reintegration of returnees from conflict zones, the focus on security issues and those of their socio-economic reintegration is of equal value from a law enforcement perspective. Throughout the process of managing repatriated families, it is important to emphasize that the intervention for the provision of services becomes coordinated and intertwined among professional stakeholders, local and central structures where an important role in the whole coordination process is played by the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism. The Child Protection Officer is the person responsible for the case and periodically meets with the Crosscutting Technical Group in whose meetings the Individual Protection Plan is designed and reviewed for updates and/or improvements. The cases are managed under the coordination of the CVE centre. Based on an ongoing correspondence with the CVE Center and other partner institutions, step-by-step work is being done on the reintegration of the case. The following services are provided in the framework of the Individual Protection Plan for each and every returned child:

* Follow-up of procedures for securing a family caregiver;
* Follow-up of procedures for certifying labor disability by the Medical Commission;
* Providing food in the apartment;
* Ensuring continuous monitoring of provision of psychological service in the home for mother and children;
* Provision of physiotherapy for the mother;
* Provision of health consultation in the apartment;
* School enrollment;
* Registration in kindergarten and nursery homes;
* Payment of house rent;
* Payment of water and electricity bills;
* Payment of lease contract costs;
* Follow-up of the legal procedures for the registration of children in the Civil Registry

1. Holmer, G. dhe Shtuni, A. (2017). Returning Foreign Fighters and the Reintegration Imperative. United States Institute of Peace. Washington, DC [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Contribution of the Coordination Center for Countering Violent Extremism, dated 30.05.2022; Email communication, Municipality of Tirana, dated 24.05.2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)