Chapter 10

Capitalising on return migration by making it more attractive and sustainable

The human capital, financial means and social norms acquired by return migrants constitute an important source of development for many countries. This chapter synthesises some of the key return migration trends identified in the IPPMD partner countries. It examines development potential of return migrants which strongly depends on the economic, social and institutional environment back home. An increasing number of countries are introducing policies targeted at return migration to attract emigrants home and foster their reintegration. Beyond the targeted policies, this chapter further explores how sectoral policies play a role not only in attracting citizens back home, but also in aiding their long-lasting reintegration into society and realising the potential they have to contribute to their country's development.

Return migration has become an important topic in the agenda of a growing number of emigrant origin countries. The 2008 global economic crisis triggered an unexpected increase in the number of migrants returning home. As immigrants constitute one of the most vulnerable groups, they were among the first to lose their jobs. Some went back to their home countries by their own means, others in the framework of voluntary and assisted return programmes, while still others were deported. Recent conflicts in destination countries have also accelerated return flows. The crisis in Libya, for instance, generated important return flows towards sub-Saharan African countries. Likewise, the 2011 civil war in Côte d'Ivoire translated into massive returns, especially to Burkina Faso.

Many developing countries are also interested in attracting back their compatriots, in particular the highly educated, to benefit from the skills and experience acquired abroad. The human capital, financial means and social norms acquired by return migrants constitute an important source of development for origin countries. During the IPPMD kick-off workshops and bilateral consultations (Chapter 2), various stakeholders highlighted the importance of return migration for their countries. This encompasses providing more incentives to return and supporting reintegration beyond strengthening links with diaspora. They emphasised that return was at the top of the migration and development agenda and showed willing in attracting their nationals back home.

The development potential of return migrants strongly depends on the economic, social and institutional environment which they find on their return, however. The longer they have spent abroad, the more challenging it is for returnees to adapt to their home countries. Their expectations for more and better public services, in particular, might have increased. Sectoral policies thus play a key role not only in attracting citizens back home, but also in easing their reintegration into society and thus ensuring the sustainability of their return.

This chapter synthesises some of the key return migration trends identified in the IPPMD partner countries. In line with the findings highlighted in Part II of the report, the second section shows how the financial, human and social capital that return migrants bring back with them contribute to the development of their home countries. The third section then explains how different public policies can influence the decision to and the sustainability of return. The chapter concludes with policy recommendations.

Table 10.1. Return migration, sectoral policies and development: Key findings

How does return migration affect countries of origin?

Return migrant households are more likely to run businesses than non-migrant households.

Return migrant households.

Return migration increase investment in agricultural activities, but also in other types of activities in agricultural households, creating opportunities for diversification.

Return migration increase investment in agricultural households, creating opportunities for diversification.

Return migration helps enrich the skills sets in the home country. Even though only a limited share of the highly skilled return, they help raise the stock of human capital in origin countries.

How do sectoral policies affect return migration?

Return migrants' lack of access to government employment agencies may mean that self-employment is the only option.

Public policies aiming to relieve households' financial constraints, such as agricultural subsidies, can represent incentives for return migrants.

Social protection increases the likelihood of migrants returning home permanently.

Note: These findings do not apply to all countries. More country-specific findings can be found in the IPPMD country reports.

IPPMD data shed new light on an understudied subject

Very little information exists on return migration, as to date no systematic and representative large-scale data collection has been organised on the subject. The IPPMD data, however, suggest that return patterns differ significantly across the partner countries. In the IPPMD study, return migrants are considered to be individuals who have lived in another country for at least three consecutive months and are now back living in their country of birth. Some have returned by choice while others have been forced to do so. Table 10.2 represents the number of return migrants and the return rate in the IPPMD survey¹ both at the individual and household levels. Armenia has the largest absolute number of return migrants in the sample (707), while Costa Rica has the highest share of return migrants in the sum of returnees and emigrants (55%), largely because it has fewer emigrants than the other countries. The Dominican Republic has the lowest share of return migrants, at 9%. At the household level, the Dominican Republic has the lowest share of migrant households with return migrants (13%), while Burkina Faso has the highest (65%). The high share in Burkina Faso can be explained by the 2010-11 political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which spurred returns to neighbour countries.

Table 10.2. Partner countries vary in their share of return migrants Number of return migrants and households with return migrants and their shares

Country -	Return migrants		Households with return migrants	
	Total	Share ¹ (%)	Total	Share ² (%)
Armenia	707	46	499	53
Burkina Faso	521	48	411	65
Cambodia	409	22	282	28
Costa Rica	140	55	119	62
Côte d'Ivoire	188	23	169	34
Dominican Republic	65	9	59	13
Georgia	308	24	258	27
Haiti	88	20	86	26
Morocco	333	23	318	29
Philippines	361	26	335	33
Total sample	3 120	29	2 536	33

Notes: 1. The share of return migrants is the percentage of return migrants in the sum of all return migrants and emigrants included in the sample. 2. The share of households with return migrants is the percentage of return migrant households in the sum of all households with at least one emigrant, return migrant or both.

Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

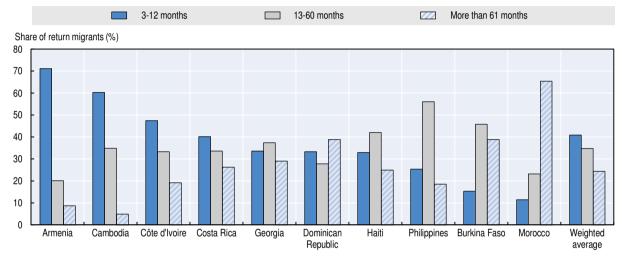
More than 40% of all return migrants in the IPPMD survey had spent less than a year in their destination countries before returning home (Figure 10.1). Armenia (71%) and Cambodia (60%) have the highest share of people returning after between only 3 and 12 months. This is mostly attributable to the large share of seasonal migrants from these countries. For instance, many Armenians (to Russia) and Cambodians (to Thailand) migrate repeatedly between home and host country to work in agriculture. Morocco, in contrast, has the highest share of people returning after more than five years away. The length of stay in host countries can play a role in the decision to return and reintegration upon return. Longer stays outside of home countries can make it harder for returnees to reintegrate back into economic, social and political life in their origin countries.

Figure 10.2 shows the share of return migrants whose previous host countries are low and middle-income countries in comparison to the share of emigrants' destination countries in this income group. The share of low and middle-income countries is higher for return

migrants than emigrants' destination countries in most countries. While 36% of all emigrants in the IPPMD surveys are currently residing in low and middle-income countries, a larger share of return migrants (weighted average of 43%) come back from these countries. The difference is particularly noticeable for Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti, where the share of return migrants is 35% and 31% higher than the share of emigrants in low and middle-income countries, respectively. The explanation for Côte d'Ivoire is that many Ivorians of Burkinabé descent came back in the post-conflict period. For Haiti, the sudden return flows from the Dominican Republic in 2014 may have shaped the results.

Figure 10.1. On average, most return migrants came back after less than a year abroad

Length of stay in the destination country prior to return

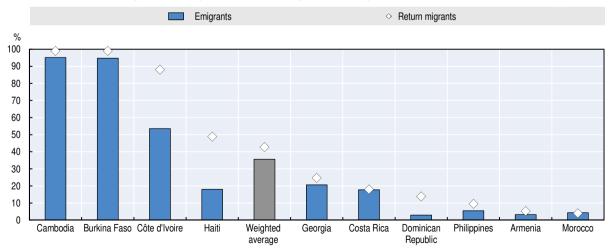


Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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Figure 10.2. A larger share of return migrants have come home from low and middle-income countries

Share of return migrants coming back from and emigrants residing in low and middle-income countries (%)



Note: The figure is based on the return migrants' previous country of residence. Income levels are based on the World Bank's 5 level

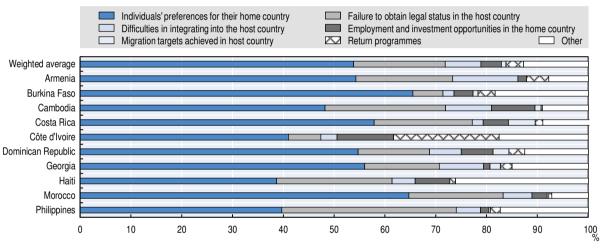
Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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Understanding why migrants decide to return home is essential for grasping the impact of return migration. While there is some variation across partner countries, some general patterns on return migration appear in the IPPMD sample (Figure 10.3). The decision to return is strongly associated with personal preferences, for instance to reunite with family in their country of origin. The second largest share of returnees came back because they failed to obtain legal status for work or residency in destination countries. Difficulties integrating economically and socially in destination countries were the third most important factor on average. A small share of migrants decided to return when they realised that employment and investment opportunities were better at home. Participation in return programmes based in host countries are among the least reasons cited to come back.

Figure 10.3. Most return migrants surveyed came home because they prefer their country of origin

Reasons returnees came back to their home countries



Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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The contribution of return migrants to development remains limited

Return migrants may bring home three types of capital accumulated in the destination countries:

- Financial capital, which can be invested in business start-ups and to boost selfemployment.
- **Human capital**, which can mitigate the possible negative effects of emigration of the highly skilled.
- Social capital, which can have a wide-ranging spill-over effect through the transfer of norms.

The degree to which these contribute to development is discussed for each below.

Return migrants invest financial capital in business start-ups and self-employment

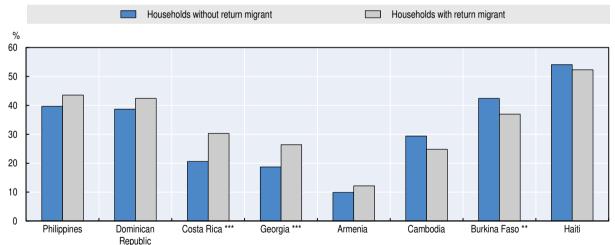
Growing evidence in the literature suggests that return migrants are more prone than non-migrants to engage in entrepreneurial activities or to be self-employed (De Vreyer et al., 2010; Piracha and Vadean, 2009). Savings accumulated abroad can be used as a resource for business establishment. Return migrants intending to become self-employed or set up

businesses on their return are also more likely to acquire higher savings abroad; such plans are integral parts of people's migration strategies. On the other hand, such activities may also be the last resort, especially for those who were forced to return or whose skills do not match the labour market needs of the country (Mezger and Flahaux, 2013).

Chapter 3 showed that return migrants in the IPPMD partner countries are more likely than non-migrants to become self-employed. The impact on the economy through job creation, however, depends largely on whether they also employ other people. It is unfortunate that the data do not reveal whether the self-employed members are business owners or not. Yet, given that self-employment and business creation are highly correlated, IPPMD analysis can show whether self-employed household members belong to households running businesses.

In most partner countries, all households that are running businesses are most likely to have self-employed members (ranging from 84% of the households running businesses in the Philippines to 99% in Burkina Faso). Self-employed people can be divided into two groups: those working in agriculture and the others. In fact, business-running households barely have members that are self-employed in agriculture except in Cambodia and Burkina Faso. Around 80-90% of the business running households have non-agricultural self-employed members. Return migrant households are shown to be more likely to have members that are self-employed in non-agriculture except in the three low-income countries: Burkina Faso, Cambodia and Haiti (Figure 10.4).

Figure 10.4. Households with return migrants in middle-income countries are more likely to have self-employed members in non-agriculture compared to households without returnees



Share of households with self-employed members in non-agriculture (%) $\,$

Note: The sample excludes households with immigrants only. Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco are excluded due to data availability. Statistical significance calculated using a chi-squared test is indicated as follows: ***: 99%; **: 95%; *: 90%.

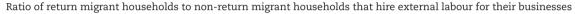
Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

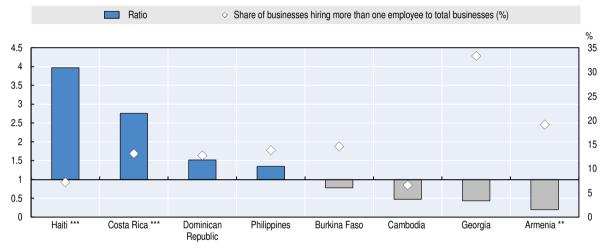
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Return migrant households are also more likely than non-migrant households to run businesses (Chapter 6). Most businesses that are found in the survey, however, tend to only employ family members or close relatives. Figure 10.5 looks at whether return migrant household-run businesses are more likely than non-migrant household-run businesses to hire in people from outside the family. It compares the shares of households with businesses

that hire in external employees for households with return migrants and households with no returnees. The results show no general pattern across partner countries. In Haiti, for instance, return migrant households are more likely to run businesses that employ other people while in Armenia, the opposite is true. Many factors come to play in determining the scale of business. In many countries, stakeholders emphasised that financial constraints are one of the most binding factors during the consultation meetings. For instance, lack of access to credit can be an obstacle for return migrants' business to scale after its set-up.

Figure 10.5. Businesses run by households with return migrants are not always more likely to hire external employees than the businesses run by households without migrants





Note: The sample excludes households which only contain immigrants. Statistical significance calculated using a chi-squared test is indicated as follows: ***: 95%, *: 95%, *: 90%. They reflect the difference in share of households hiring external labour between households with and without returnees. Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco are excluded due to lack of data.

Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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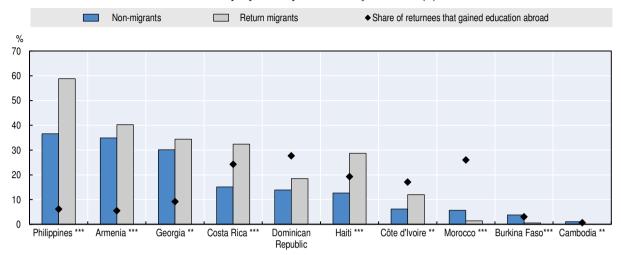
Financial savings brought by return migrants can also boost agricultural asset expenditures of agricultural households. Return migration also increase investment in other types of activities in these households, creating opportunities for diversification (Chapter 4). Real-estate ownership in return migrant households are also found to be more prevalent than those without return migration in most countries (Chapter 6).

Return migrants could potentially transfer more skills and knowledge

Returning professionals with technological, managerial, marketing or scientific competencies often create new companies, transfer knowledge and increase the human capital stock in their country of origin. They can also compensate for the human capital lost through emigration (OECD, 2008). Figure 10.6 confirms that return migrants in the IPPMD study tend to be better educated than non-migrants, with the exception of Burkina Faso, Cambodia and Morocco where overall education levels in general are significantly lower than in the other countries (Chapter 5). Return migrants' higher educational levels might be explained by the positive initial emigration selection – more educated individuals are more likely to emigrate – or by educational or training enrolments abroad, or a combination of both.

Figure 10.6. Return migrants tend to be better educated in most countries

Share of people with post-secondary education (%)



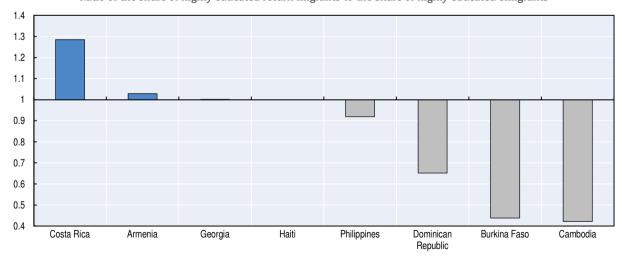
Note: Statistical significance calculated using a chi-squared test is indicated as follows: ***: 99%, **: 95%, *: 90%. Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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Human capital gains from return migration also depend on who comes back. Comparing the levels of education of current emigrants and return migrants can give an idea which group of migrants return (Figure 10.7). In Armenia and Costa Rica, highly educated people are more likely to come back compared to those with a lower level of education, while it is the opposite in Burkina Faso, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines. Countries of origin could do more to foster the return of highly skilled migrants either temporarily or permanently.

Figure 10.7. It is not highly educated migrants who return more often in most countries

Ratio of the share of highly educated return migrants to the share of highly educated emigrants



Note: A value of 1 indicates that return migrants and emigrants are equally likely to have finished at least upper secondary education, which is the case for Georgia and Haiti. A value above 1 indicates that return migrants are more likely to have at least finished upper secondary education; a value below 1 indicates the reverse. Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco are excluded due to data availability.

Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

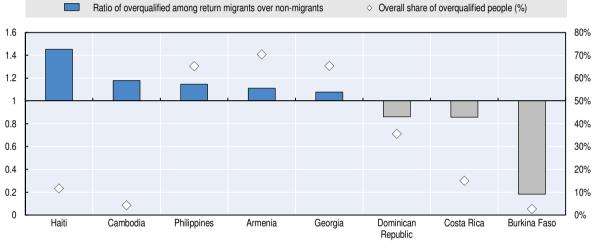
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Portable skills, i.e. those that can productively be transferred across occupations and industries in different countries, play an important role in fully harnessing returnees' skills and knowledge acquired abroad. They influence the employment status and wage premium of return migrants. As shown in Chapter 3, the occupational skills sets of return migrants differ from those of non-returnees. Return migrants are more likely than non-migrants to hold more highly skilled occupations in Costa Rica, Haiti and the Philippines (Figure 3.12). Skills mismatch or over-qualification might hinder return migrants' labour market participation (Calenda, 2014; CODEV-EPFL et al., 2013). Compared to non-migrants, in most countries a higher share of return migrants is overqualified for their jobs (Figure 10.8). This is not the case for Burkina Faso, however, where 93% of returnees (compared to 64% of non-migrants) have no former education.

Figure 10.8. Return migrants are more often overqualified for their jobs than non-migrants
Ratio of overqualified return migrants to non-migrants

Ratio of overqualified among return migrants over non-migrants

Overgualified people (%)



Note: Over-qualification is measured by mapping the skills level of occupations (Chapter 3) to the level of education. If the ratio on the left-hand axis is above 1, the share of people who are overqualified for their jobs is higher among the return migrants than non-migrants; the opposite is true for a ratio below 1. The right-hand axis shows the overall share of the native population who are overqualified in each country. Côte d'Ivoire and Morocco are excluded due to data availability.

Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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IPPMD data indicate that more than half of the returnees faced some sort of difficulties after their return (Figure 10.9). One of the commonly specified challenges for reintegration is to find a job that is equivalent to their skills. More than 10% of return migrants in Cambodia, Costa Rica and Georgia stated so. In general, integration into the local labour market is the biggest concern, with many returnees finding it difficult to find a job of any kind.

Spillover effects of the transfer of norms from return migrants to non-migrants can be wide-ranging

Return migrants help shape the public discourse, by transforming the local environment and questioning traditional approaches. However, their actual influence is based on their individual characteristics and their migration experience, as well as the size of the return migrant community in a given locality.

No such challenges Find a job in general Find a job corresponding own skills Reintegrate into society Deficient health system Hard to get land ☐ Other Weighted average Georgia Cambodia Armenia Haiti Morocco Philippines Dominican Republic Côte d'Ivoire Costa Rica Burkina Faso 10 40 50 60 70 80 100 20 30 90

Figure 10.9. Finding a job is the biggest challenge facing return migrants

Challenges faced by return migrants

Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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Although the IPPMD data do not say much about how social capital brought home by return migrants influences their countries of origin, a handful of other studies do explore this link. The transfer of norms is influenced both by the country of origin and destination, and might also have negative consequences, e.g. transferring discriminatory patterns of behaviour to hitherto more liberal returnee households or countries (Tuccio and Wahba, 2015). One example is the influence of return migration on fertility patterns (Beine et al., 2013; Bertoli and Marchetta, 2015). Return migrants' prior countries of residence with high fertility rates influence positively the fertility patterns in the country of origin; and reciprocally, a low fertility rate in the destination country decreases the rate in the country of origin (Beine et al., 2013).

Return migrants also tend to have an influence on electoral behaviour, engagement at the local political level as well as on the political engagement of non-migrants. Migration experience might influence political attitudes and behaviour of return migrants both positively and negatively. Students studying abroad can form an influential group, transferring democratic values back home on their return from a democratic country (Spilimbergo, 2009). Furthermore, the presence of return migrants tends to increase the electoral participation of non-migrants (Waddell and Fontenla, 2015) as well as to alter electoral behaviour within communities (Chauvet and Mercier, 2014). Moreover, exposure abroad to different religious, social or political norms can enhance tolerance of diversity in returnees compared to non-migrants (Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, 2009).

Sectoral policies play a limited role in the decision and sustainability of return migration

An increasing number of countries are introducing policies and programmes directly targeted at potential return migrants. For example, Armenia is aiming to promote return migration by strengthening information channels. Through its strong ties with diaspora networks the government organises job fairs in the main emigrant destination countries to advertise vacancies in the Armenian labour market. Offering financial and non-financial benefits to returnees also increases the incentives to return. These range from tax and duty exemptions for transporting personal belongings to salary subsidies or capital provided to start up micro businesses.

As seen earlier, returnees may encounter some challenges in re-participating in economic, social and political life in their countries of origin after their return. In fact, the IPPMD data indicate that more than half of returnees have faced some sort of difficulty after their return, among which reintegration into the local labour market looms large. Finding a job that matches returnees' skills is an additional challenge. This is exemplified by Haiti. While skills mismatch poses a general problem for many people, a considerably higher share of return migrants experience that their skills set is not well matched with the local labour market (Figure 10.8). Targeted reintegration programmes, such as providing return migrants with requalification training or creating environments that better harness their competencies, can help address these issues.

Sectoral development policies can also play a role in attracting back emigrants and reintegrating them. Agricultural subsidies or policies to improve the education system can encourage people to return. Investment policies can also have indirect repercussions on the use of financial resources return migrants bring back with them. Labour market policies that enhance market efficiency and increase human capital, as well as social protection programmes, can further help return migrants re-integrate successfully.

Individual sectoral policies are not enough, however. A combination of policies is required to have a lasting influence on return. For instance, even when there are good job opportunities and efficient labour markets in the home countries, if the education system is malfunctioning parents with school-age children may be reluctant to come back. A combination of public policies can help attract back nationals abroad and make return sustainable.

Policies that relieve financial constraints at home may attract return migrants

Relieving households' financial constraints at home can encourage emigrants to return. Part I of the report has established already that policies providing financial or in-kind transfers affect households' migration decisions. Figure 10.10 plots the share of households with return migrants (Table 10.1) against the share of agricultural households benefitting from any type of agricultural subsidies. The graph shows that the share of return migration is higher in countries where a large share of agricultural households benefit from direct financial transfers, implying that such policies might help attract return migrants. One potential explanation is that financial transfers made to households may have supported the costs for return migration.

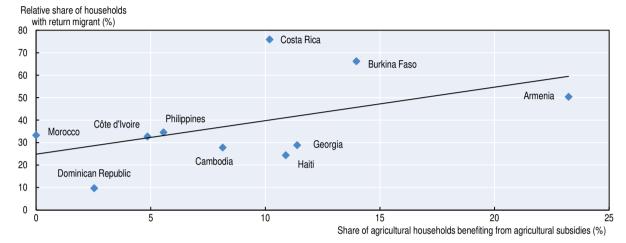
Policies that reduce risk can attract migrants home and encourage returnees to stay

Household vulnerability is a key push factor for migration. If these vulnerabilities have not been dealt with – such as through social protection schemes, public job creation programmes or insurance-based agricultural programmes – migrants are unlikely to want to return. For example, IPPMD data show that return migrants are less likely than non-migrants to benefit from a public pension system, which may discourage emigrants wishing to return from doing so. Not only can policies that reduce risk provide more incentives to emigrants to come back, but they can help make return sustainable. In fact, return migrants in Armenia are less likely to plan to migrate again if they have access to a public pension programme. Figure 10.11 illustrates the correlation between public social protection expenditure and the share of return migrants who plan to stay in their home countries. This correlation reveals the potential link between risk-reducing mechanisms and the sustainability of return migration, by showing a higher share of return migrants with no plans of re-migration in the countries with higher public social spending. The data also confirm that higher spending on social protection is positively correlated with a higher share of return migrants. This can

be partially related to the economic and political stability of the countries, which makes return migration more attractive. Countries with greater stability can have more resources to increase public social expenditures.

Figure 10.10. The higher the share of agricultural households benefiting from agricultural subsidies, the higher the share of households with return migrants

Relative share of households with return migrant (%) and share of households benefiting from agricultural subsidies (%)

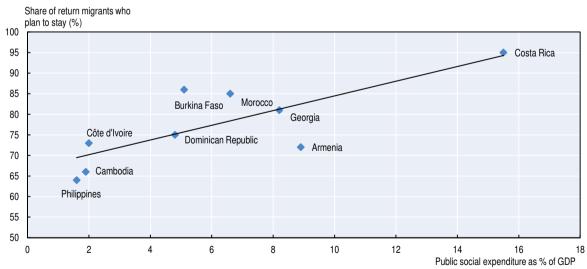


Note: The sample is limited to agricultural households. Source: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data.

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Figure 10.11. A higher share of return migrants plan to stay in the countries with higher expenditures on social protection

Share of return migrants who plan to stay (%) and public social expenditures as share of GDP (%)



Note: Public social protection expenditure is calculated as the % of GDP in the most recent year among 2010, 2011 or 2012. Haiti is not included due to lack of data.

Sources: Authors' own work based on IPPMD data and ILO STAT for public social protection expenditure, www.ilo.org/ilostat.

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Policy recommendations

Return migration holds great development potential, stemming from the financial, human and social assets embodied in returnees. This chapter has shown the potential positive influences of return migration on investment in business start-ups and self-employment, transfer of skills and knowledge as well as on social norms. Growing awareness of the developmental potential of return migration has seen it emerge as an important policy issue in the countries of origin, and many developing countries have initiated policies and programmes specifically targeting potential return migrants.

However, failure to address other policies may undermine this potential. A deficient health system, weak political institutions and an unfriendly investment environment may all discourage people from returning or for staying long. It is thus important to provide a favourable environment in the country of origin across social, economic as well as political realms.

Table 10.3. Policies to make the most of return migration

CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS				
Education	 Facilitate and improve the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad to help return migrants validate their skills. Offer training and refresher courses to potential return migrants, especially those with an education diploma, to facilitate their reintegration into the labour market in the country of origin. 			
Investment and financial services	 Strengthen return migrants' access to information on financial tools and opportunities to allow potential entrepreneurs to create and scale up their businesses and create more jobs, including in rural areas and the agricultural sector. Avoid taxes on repatriated capital used to start new businesses. Provide information about local investment opportunities to return migrants through tailored investment networks and websites. 			
Social protection and health	 Ensure that return migrants find it easy to register for social protection and health facilities when they return, to reduce the need to emigrate again. Invest in bilateral agreements with main destination countries to ensure portability of pension funds and other social benefits. 			
	TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS			
Migration and development	 Create an official information portal, such as a website, to provide comprehensive information to potential return migrants. Organise diaspora fairs in the main countries of destination to offer employment and investment opportunities to would-be return migrants. Provide financial incentives, such as duty exemptions for the transport of personal belongings, and subsidies for the salaries of highly skilled return migrants. 			

Note

 The project did not explicitly take return migration into account in its sampling strategy. Hence, return migrant households were oversampled in the overall household population, but randomly selected from the pool of migrant households (See Chapter 2 for further details on the sampling procedures).

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