

**ARRIVES**

# Nigeria Reintegration Ecosystem Mapping

Focus on entrepreneurship support for returnees  
2025



© Shutterstock.com

A project by



Co-funded by



Federal Office  
for Migration  
and Refugees



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# ABOUT THE PAPER

This ecosystem report is developed within the framework of the Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support (ARRIVES) project

The report highlights gaps and overlaps in support services and analyses the network of connections in the ecosystem of civil society organizations offering returnee support in the Nigerian cities of Abuja, Benin and Lagos.

It aims to contribute to the development of ecosystem-enabling activities, such as partnerships and programmes, to facilitate the reintegration of returnees.

ARRIVES is a project co-implemented by Social Impact, International Returns and Reintegration Assistance (IRARA) and International Trade Centre (ITC). It is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Commission and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ARRIVES project extends its gratitude to all those who contributed to the development and production of this publication.

The report was written by Emeka Okafor and Sandra Federolf under the guidance of Nuria Rull Bes (all ITC).

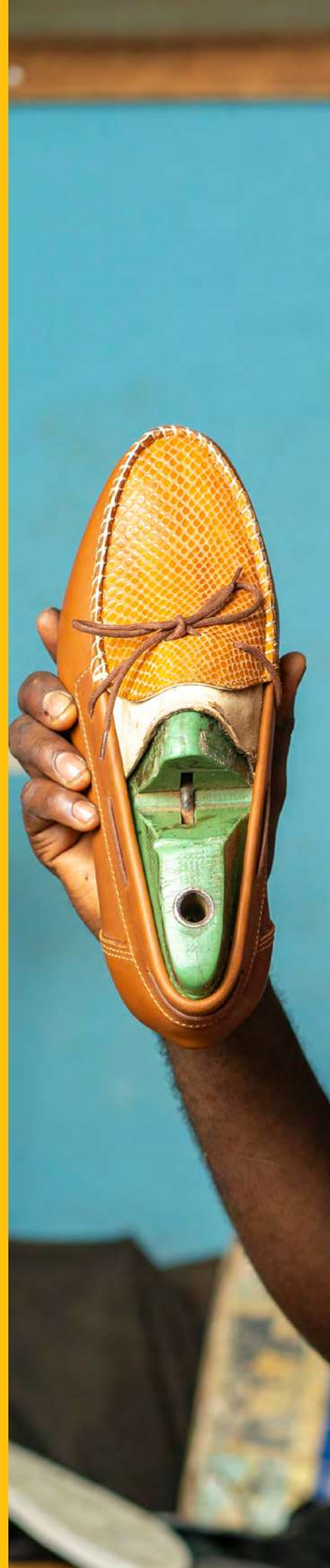
The team expresses its gratitude to its team members, particularly Ben Beuchel, Roland Nwoha and Chioma Eze for their support during the mapping exercise.

ARRIVES would like to thank Jennifer Freedman, who edited the paper, Michael Kpamber, who provided graphic design, and Edison Yap who provided editorial review of the report.



# CONTENTS

|                                           |        |
|-------------------------------------------|--------|
| About the paper.....                      | 2      |
| Acknowledgments.....                      | 3      |
| Table of Contents.....                    | 4      |
| Abbreviation.....                         | 6      |
| Boxes, Tables, and figures.....           | 6      |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....                    | 8      |
| INTRODUCTION.....                         | 10     |
| KEY FINDINGS.....                         | 15     |
| SERVICE GAPS AND OVERLAPS.....            | 23     |
| NETWORK ANALYSIS.....                     | 28     |
| USER EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS.....             | 33     |
| RECOMMENDATIONS.....                      | 36     |
| SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS..              | 42     |
| <br>ANNEXES.....                          | <br>43 |
| ANNEX I: INSTITUTIONS<br>INTERVIEWED..... | <br>43 |
| ANNEX II: ITC METHODOLOGY.....            | 43     |





© Shutterstock.com

# ABBREVIATIONS

|                |                                                                                                     |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>ARRIVES</b> | Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support |
| <b>CSO</b>     | Civil society organization                                                                          |
| <b>ESO</b>     | Entrepreneurship support organization                                                               |
| <b>ITC</b>     | International Trade Centre                                                                          |
| <b>TVET</b>    | Technical and Vocational Education and Training                                                     |

# BOXES, TABLES, FIGURES

## Boxes

|                                          |    |
|------------------------------------------|----|
| Box 1: Pathfinder's business school..... | 20 |
|------------------------------------------|----|

## Figures

|                                                                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1: Services provided by Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs)..... | 19 |
| Figure 2: Total number of services provided by each stage .....                   | 23 |
| Figure 3: Number of CSOs providing each service.....                              | 24 |
| Figure 4: Number of services provided by each CSO.....                            | 25 |
| Figure 5: Service offer of each CSO.....                                          | 26 |
| Figure 6: Networks – all connections – size by connecting power.....              | 30 |
| Figure 7: Networks by location and network analysis.....                          | 32 |

## Tables

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| Table 1: CSO rankings..... | 29 |
| Table 2: Hub profiles..... | 41 |





© Shutterstock.com

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Returning migrants need a range of support services, from psychosocial assistance to economic reintegration, including skills development, job placement and pathways to self-employment. Meeting these needs requires a coordinated network of support organizations capable of offering specialized services that help returnees rebuild stable, independent lives.

This report focuses on the entrepreneurship support available to returnees. It analyses the organizations involved, identifies gaps and overlaps, and offers recommendations for improvement.

Using service mapping, network analysis and insights gathered from interviews and surveys, the report examines service availability and quality and the level of

collaboration across organizations. Its findings and recommendations aim to guide future actions to improve the experience of returnees when receiving support and to enhance the network of service providers.

### Key findings

This report examines the support landscape for returning migrants in Nigeria, focusing on Abuja, Lagos and Benin City. It reveals that while various organizations offer essential services – from psychosocial assistance to entrepreneurship support – there are significant overlaps in service delivery. Key findings highlight the need to strengthen trauma-informed and gender-sensitive care, which is not often prioritized. Effective strategies include integrating mental health support into

economic reintegration programmes and combining technical and vocational skills training with entrepreneurship support.

The report also identifies gaps in outreach and communication, as well as opportunities to strengthen digital skills and promote digital platforms to enhance service delivery and broaden opportunities for returnees.

The network analysis shows that collaboration among organizations presents opportunities to improve service delivery and enhance entrepreneurship training. These growth areas include partnerships with entrepreneurship support organizations (ESOs) and leveraging the unique expertise of each civil society organization (CSO) to build a cohesive support network for returnees.

## Recommendations

The recommendations focus on two main areas: institutional strengthening and network building.

For institutional strengthening, improving service delivery and design is a key area of work. This includes incorporating tailored trauma and psychosocial support that addresses the unique needs of returnees, along with a focus on gender-sensitive approaches. Integrating successful strategies such as packaging business support with vocational training, fostering cooperatives among returnees and providing long-term coaching can significantly improve existing services.

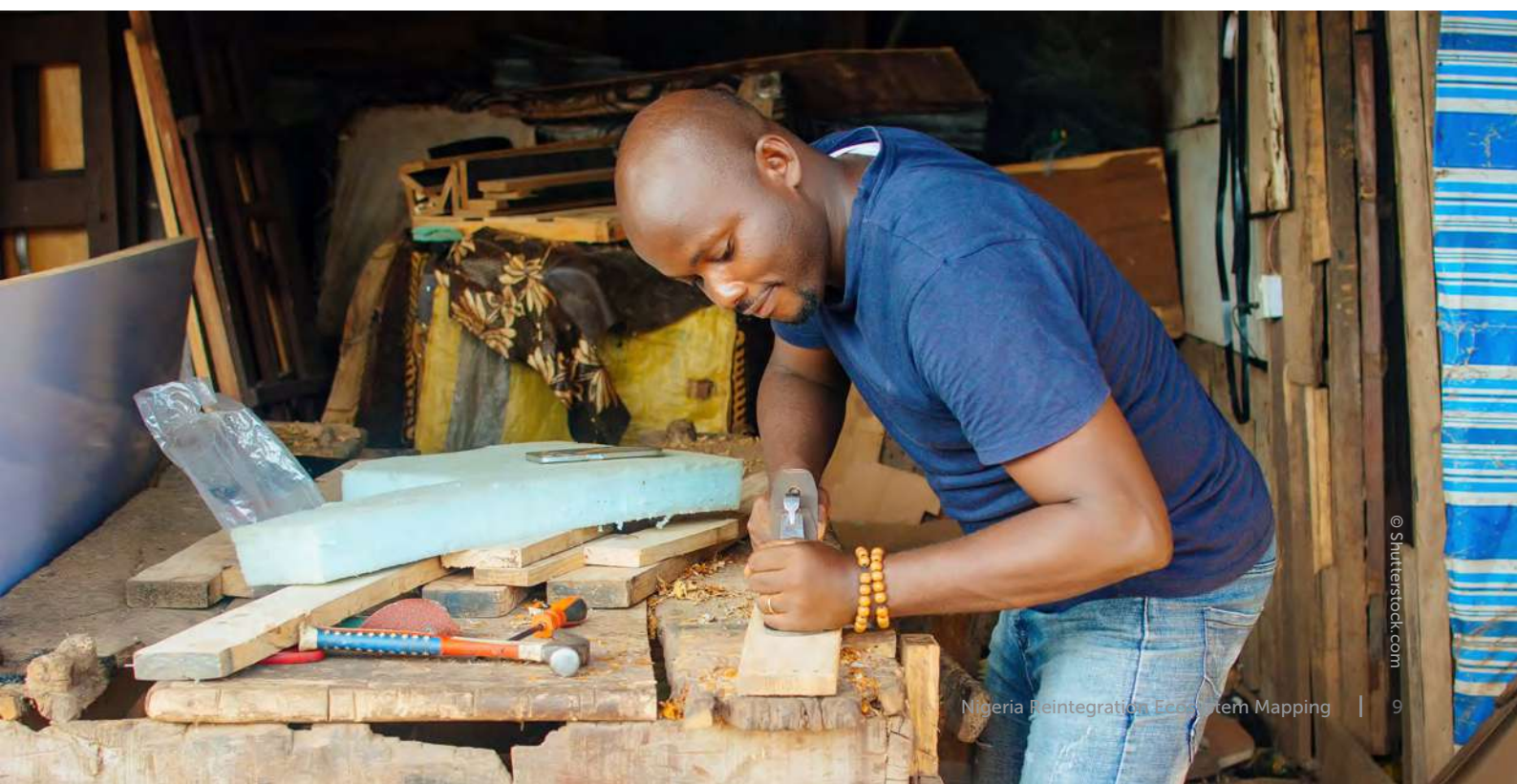
Additionally, expanding access to alternative income pathways, including apprenticeships and digital freelancing opportunities, can complement and boost entrepreneurship support.

To connect more effectively with returnees, the report recommends improving outreach, using both traditional and digital methods, including targeted social media campaigns. Leveraging the success stories of returning migrants can also serve as a motivational tool and raise awareness about the complexities of migration.

Finally, strengthening partnerships between CSOs and ESOs is recommended to expand the support network, maximize resources, foster innovation and enhance service delivery. By focusing on core strengths, building unique expertise in organizations and creating strategic collaborations, CSOs can increase their impact and ensure that returnees receive comprehensive and effective support when reintegrating.

## Conclusion

This ecosystem mapping report underscores the need for a collaborative and specialized support network that meets the diverse and complex needs of Nigerian returnees. By building institutional capacity, implementing tailored support, expanding outreach and fostering partnerships, the ecosystem can enhance support for returnees to reintegrate successfully and achieve economic stability.





# INTRODUCTION

The ARRIVES (Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support) project is a collaborative effort to support the economic reintegration of Nigerians returning from Germany. ARRIVES seeks to address gaps in the current return and reintegration system by ensuring that returnees receive continuous, well-structured support.

The European Commission's Asylum Migration and Integration Fund and the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees fund the project. A consortium of partners including Social Impact (SI), International Return and Reintegration Assistance (IRARA) and the International Trade Centre (ITC) implement the project.

This report focuses on Project Measure 7, a key component of the ARRIVES project. Project Measure 7 aligns with the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund's Specific Objective 3: to promote safe, dignified return and reintegration and support the first steps towards a sustainable future for returnees.

ARRIVES aims to establish a coordinated support system, ensuring that returnees can reintegrate economically by establishing businesses or finding employment, thus contributing to their personal success and national development.

The project stems from the recognition of gaps in current reintegration processes, where preparatory measures in Germany are poorly aligned with reintegration efforts in Nigeria. Many returnees need more continuity in support, especially in setting up businesses or finding stable jobs, which leads to further economic challenges.

By linking the return phases – from preparation in Germany to reintegration in Nigeria – ARRIVES ensures a smoother transition for returnees, helping them access the necessary resources and net-works for long-term success.

**Nigeria is Africa's largest economy, with a dynamic economic landscape that offers many business opportunities.**

**For returnees seeking to rebuild their lives, Nigeria presents a range of possibilities in various sectors, such as agriculture, technology and manufacturing.**





© shutterstock.com

## Why Nigeria?

Nigeria was selected as the pilot country for several strategic reasons. First, according to a 2023 publication from DW, there are over [14,000](#) asylum seekers from Nigeria obliged to leave Germany. As asylum applications from Nigerian nationals rise, while the recognition rate remains low, the number of Nigerians expected to return to their home country is expected to increase. Considering this, effective return and reintegration programmes are urgently needed for Nigerians.

Furthermore, Nigeria is Africa's largest economy, with a dynamic economic landscape that offers many business opportunities. For returnees seeking to rebuild their lives, Nigeria presents a range of possibilities in various sectors, such as agriculture, technology and manufacturing. The country's dynamic economy offers a thriving foundation for entrepreneurship and reintegration initiatives.

Nigeria already has well-established support programmes and partner networks that can be leveraged to assist returnees. Programmes such as StarthilfePlus, the European Union Reintegration Programme and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's commitment to voluntary return offer vital structures upon which the ARRIVES project can build.

The presence of key reintegration service providers that have extensive experience in Nigeria also provides a solid foundation for expanding support for returnees. These include International Return and Reintegration Assistance, the International Organization for Migration, the German Corporation for International Cooperation and ITC.

There are additional opportunities to synergize existing structures – such as the German-Nigerian Centres for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in cities including Abuja, Benin City and Lagos. These centres serve as valuable returnee resources, offering employment support, vocational training and business development services. By collaborating with these networks, ARRIVES seeks to enhance the available support and create a more robust framework for reintegration.

Finally, the coordination and support provided by Nigerian agencies responsible for reintegration and their extensive network



of CSOs dedicated to support returnees bolster the success of reintegration efforts. These organizations play a crucial role in delivering localized and community-focused assistance, ensuring that returnees have access to essential services that address their unique needs.

By leveraging these networks, the ARRIVES project is better positioned to integrate returnees into Nigerian society sustainably and holistically. Working with CSOs strengthens the impact of reintegration activities and enhances the potential for cross-sector partnerships that can lead to more innovative and comprehensive support frameworks.

The coordination efforts of these local organizations are essential for creating an ecosystem that fully supports returnees' social and economic reintegration across various regions of the country.

**According to a 2023 publication from DW, there are over 14,000 asylum seekers from Nigeria obliged to leave Germany.**

## Project Measure 7

Project Measure 7 focuses explicitly on building partnerships with local economic development organizations in Nigeria to strengthen services for returnees. Its goal is to sensitise and equip at least two partner organizations in Abuja, Lagos and Edo to provide ongoing support to returnees.

Potential partners will include chambers of commerce, industry associations, CSOs, business accelerators, start-up incubators, and export promotion agencies. Through these partnerships, returnees will access a broader range of services tailored to their specific needs

## Ecosystem mapping

To ensure the success of Project Measure 7, the ARRIVES project has conducted this detailed 'ecosystem mapping' to identify and analyse service providers in Nigeria that focus specifically on returnee support and entrepreneurship building.

This mapping process seeks to enhance understanding of the support landscape and pinpoint critical gaps that need to be addressed. It also aims to evaluate potential partners and identify their needs to improve assistance for returnees.

The ecosystem mapping provides a comprehensive overview of the services available to returnees in Abuja, Lagos and Benin City. The report will help the ARRIVES team select institutions to help create a network of partners that can offer returnees

**Stakeholders can leverage the information in this report to drive initiatives, identify service providers, pursue partnerships and as a baseline for subsequent ecosystem mapping.**

a wide range of services, helping them reintegrate successfully and build sustainable livelihoods.

Stakeholders can leverage the information in this report to drive initiatives, identify service providers, pursue partnerships and as a baseline for subsequent ecosystem mapping.

To provide a comprehensive overview of the ecosystem with the available data, ITC's methodology used information across three pillars of analysis:

- Service mapping and gap analysis based on desk research and interviews with relevant local institutions.
- Network analysis to present how institutions interact. Data used to build the network are based on the responses received from the survey to CSOs.
- User experience analysis of returnees, captured from the lens of returnee coaches.

## Stakeholder engagement

ITC's teams in Geneva and Nigeria have actively engaged with key stakeholders and service providers in Abuja, Edo and Lagos as part of the ecosystem mapping process. Using online surveys and key informant interviews, the team gathered critical information on the services available to returnees, the capacity of

service providers and the challenges returnees face in accessing support. This engagement has been vital to identify gaps in the support system and understand where additional resources or training are needed. By involving stakeholders from various sectors and regions, the mapping ensures that the ARRIVES project has a holistic view of the reintegration landscape in Nigeria. This information will support the final selection of partner organizations and ensure that the services provided are relevant and effective.

## Limitations of the analysis

The analysis in this report reflects the results of a survey and the responses from interviews. Despite efforts to conduct a comprehensive analysis, some institutions that are present in the ecosystem may not be represented in this report. Limitations of this report include time constraints, difficulties in reaching the organizations concerned and obtaining their willingness to be interviewed.

The interview questions were based on ITC's ecosystem diagnostic methodology, which was developed specifically to identify ESOs in a target country or region and to understand the network and ecosystem building their strengths. Interview and survey questions to inform the report were therefore less focused on the assessment of the situation of individual businesses or other stakeholders that do not provide business support.

This report offers a snapshot of the situation in the third quarter of 2024 and may not reflect interactions from earlier or later periods. The study used a target-group approach, focusing solely on organizations that support returnees at various stages and through specific measures. It does not include institutions that engage with returnees in a more general capacity.

The information collected only reflects the side of the service providers and coaches. Further analysis may be needed to directly reach the returnees who receive reintegration assistance.

---

# KEY FINDINGS

---

This section presents the key insights drawn from the data and information gathered through key informant interviews, online surveys and feedback from institutions and returnee coaches. It summarizes the most significant findings from the research, highlighting recurring themes and observations.

## **Effectiveness of entrepreneurship support improves when combined with psychosocial and trauma support**

Findings underscore that combining entrepreneurship support with psychosocial and trauma-focused services greatly improves reintegration outcomes for returnees. Many returnees experience severe psychological trauma when they migrate, which makes it hard for them to benefit from business and entrepreneurship support once they return. Tackling trauma is both crucial and foundational, as returnees require emotional stability to reintegrate into society and engage with business opportunities effectively.

Several challenges complicate reintegration, particularly for returnees with vulnerabilities such as low education or disability or a history of gender-based violence. Women returnees are often victims of violence, trafficking or exploitation, which compounds their reintegration challenges.

In these cases, business or entrepreneurship support alone is insufficient. Services must be packaged with psychological counselling and

trauma healing to facilitate emotional recovery and readiness for business activities. This comprehensive approach enables returnees to regain their sense of dignity and commitment to long-term success.

The findings highlight the need for more structured mental health and emotional support within the reintegration framework. Without addressing the psychological needs of returnees, business support alone will not yield sustainable results. By integrating trauma-informed care with entrepreneurship support, returnees are better prepared to face personal and business challenges, leading to more effective and sustainable reintegration outcomes.

## **Community reintegration and stigma reduction are crucial for impact**

One of the biggest challenges returnees face when they return home is negative perceptions in their communities. In many societies, migration abroad is often viewed as a guaranteed path to financial success, and those who return without wealth or tangible results are met with disappointment or ridicule.

These societal pressures can isolate returnees, leading to feelings of failure and hopelessness. In extreme cases, the combination of community stigma and personal disappointment can lead to psychological distress, including anxiety, depression or even suicidal thoughts. This stigma, rooted in unrealistic expectations, makes reintegration more difficult for returnees.



Addressing these challenges requires community-based interventions to reshape perceptions and foster understanding. Organizations such as the Centre for Youths Integrated Development, the Patriotic Citizen Initiative and the Web of Hearts Foundation engage to reduce stigma through community awareness campaigns.

These campaigns aim to change how returnees are perceived, helping communities understand the realities of migration and the reasons for return. By promoting empathy and social inclusion, these initiatives encourage communities to support rather than reject returnees. This change in perception is vital to easing the emotional burden on returnees and creating a more welcoming environment for their reintegration.

Another crucial element of reintegration is the role of peer networks and returnee associations. These groups provide much-needed support by connecting returnees with others who have faced similar challenges. Through these networks, returnees can share experiences and encouragement and offer practical advice to each other. Peer networks also allow for the exchange of

‘success stories’, helping to boost morale and showing returnees that reintegration is possible despite the challenges.

Only a few such networks are present or active across a handful of reintegration projects, however, limiting their impact.

Addressing stigma and fostering community reintegration are essential for the emotional well-being of returnees and the effectiveness of broader reintegration programmes. Returnees who feel accepted by their communities are more likely to engage with support services, such as entrepreneurship training or vocational opportunities.

### **Long-term engagement combined with coaching and mentoring improves out-comes for entrepreneurship support**

A fundamental issue in the reintegration process for returnees is the need for long-term sustainability in the programmes designed to support them. Many initiatives, including those aimed at fostering entrepreneurship, often offer short-term solutions that do not

adequately ensure the continued success of returnees once the initial phase of support ends.

This short-sighted approach risks leaving returnees vulnerable to setbacks, as they may need more resources or guidance to maintain and grow their businesses after the formal support programmes conclude.

The importance of long-term engagement and capacity building cannot be overstated in ensuring the sustainability of reintegration efforts. With continuous mentorship, coaching and access to evolving business training, returnees may be able to navigate the complexities of the business environment.

Reintegration service providers such as Genius Hub and Pathfinders Justice Initiative say long-term support is critical to achieving positive outcomes for returnees, as it allows them to build the necessary skills, resilience and confidence to sustain their entrepreneurial ventures. This ongoing engagement gives returnees the tools and guidance they need beyond the initial support period.

Short-term solutions lasting three to six months have proven inadequate for returnees. Many reintegration programmes have found that at least one year is necessary to address the needs of returnees fully and give them the comprehensive support required for long-term success. This extended period allows for more in-depth mentorship, the building of stronger business foundations and the chance to adjust strategies as returnees navigate the complexities of the business landscape in their home countries.

Despite recognizing the need for long-term engagement, there are gaps in how this support is provided. Some organizations offer training based on general needs assessments, often conducted for groups or cohorts rather than tailored to individual circumstances. While this cohort-based approach can be beneficial, more personalized support is usually needed for returnees to overcome their unique challenges.

The absence of individualized, ongoing support can be attributed to capacity constraints in the organizations that limit the effectiveness of these programmes. This highlights the need for a more sustained, flexible approach to mentorship and coaching in reintegration efforts.

## Limited specialization and collaboration on service delivery among CSOs

Institutions assisting returnees handle most aspects of support. A single organization usually provides shelter, psychological support, skills training and internship placements. While organizations have connections with others and collaborate through networks and committees, partnerships to deliver support are not systematic or integrated into service delivery.

Interviews and data suggest that organizations do interact, but mainly on advocacy, donor-funded project requirements and specific forums. There is the perception among CSOs of competition among peers to obtain funding and visibility. This competition encourages institutions to deliver all services independently and does not incentivize specialization on support areas or target beneficiaries.

The absence of specialization leads to inefficiencies, such as duplicated services or gaps in support. For instance, most ecosystem actors provide skills building, but not all are certified training centres to ensure quality. Many organizations offer counselling and psychosocial services, while service gaps remain on job placement support or legal assistance. The current 'one-stop-shop' approach often fails to provide the depth and quality of services needed.

This report focuses on entrepreneurship support and notes that more specialized institutions or programmes in this area could lead to better outcomes. Many CSOs offer entrepreneurship training through the International Labour Organization's Start and Improve Your Business model.<sup>1</sup> However, this model has

**Stakeholders can leverage the information in this report to drive initiatives, identify service providers, pursue partnerships and as a baseline for subsequent ecosystem mapping.**

not been adapted to incorporate other elements for returnee support and does not provide the depth that specialized incubators and entrepreneurship hubs can offer. Entrepreneurs needing further assistance will find the same or similar programme offering in all CSOs.

Further research is needed to assess the availability and quality of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes and certified training providers. There is a centralized data-base of TVET programmes<sup>2</sup> and institutions such as the National Board for Technical Information, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria<sup>3</sup> and the Industrial Training Fund<sup>4</sup> offer training certifications to CSOs.

However, it is not clear how organizations in the ecosystem are connecting with certified training centres to offer skills building. Service providers that offer uncertified vocational training risk lowering the quality of service provided.

Specialization has mostly been noted in institutions that offer support exclusively to minors, girls and women. Geographic location has also been noted as an advantage for some organizations that are able to deliver through different CSO antennas/hubs in the country.

## Few linkages between CSOs and ESOs

The current support ecosystem for returning migrants in Nigeria does not have strong connections with specialized ESOs. This is a missed opportunity to offer

advanced and specialized assistance for returnees in building their businesses.

As part of the data gathering, this study connected with Afrilabs, Africa's largest network of entrepreneurship hubs. Afrilabs facilitated linkages to collect inputs from entrepreneurship and innovation hubs in Nigeria with experience or the potential to offer support to returning migrants. It was reported by interview organizations that entrepreneurship hubs are loosely connected with returnee support organizations and, collaboration rarely occurs.

CSOs say one reason for this is that few returnees are prepared for the demands of entrepreneurship programmes. Hubs focus on cohort-based support for individuals ready to start businesses, while returnees often require additional coaching and preparation. As there is no bridge programme to help returnees transition into entrepreneurship initiatives, entrepreneurship support tends to be light-touch additional support that is offered along with other CSO services.

As a result, there is a clear division between organizations providing arrival support, such as food and shelter, psychological support and skills building (CSOs), and those supporting entrepreneurship and innovation (ESOs). This fragmentation means returnees may find it difficult to access holistic support that addresses both immediate needs and longer-term entrepreneurship goals. It also reduces the quality of services provided by the ecosystem.

Online consultation with four hubs showcased their specializations in offering business and entrepreneurship skills building, vocational training, business creation, microfinance and grants, and financial literacy. This could complement what reintegration CSOs now offer.

The figure below shows the services offered by ESOs that participated in this study. While the dataset is small, it showcases how they specialize in entrepreneurship support services and the potential to supplement what the network of CSOs already offers.

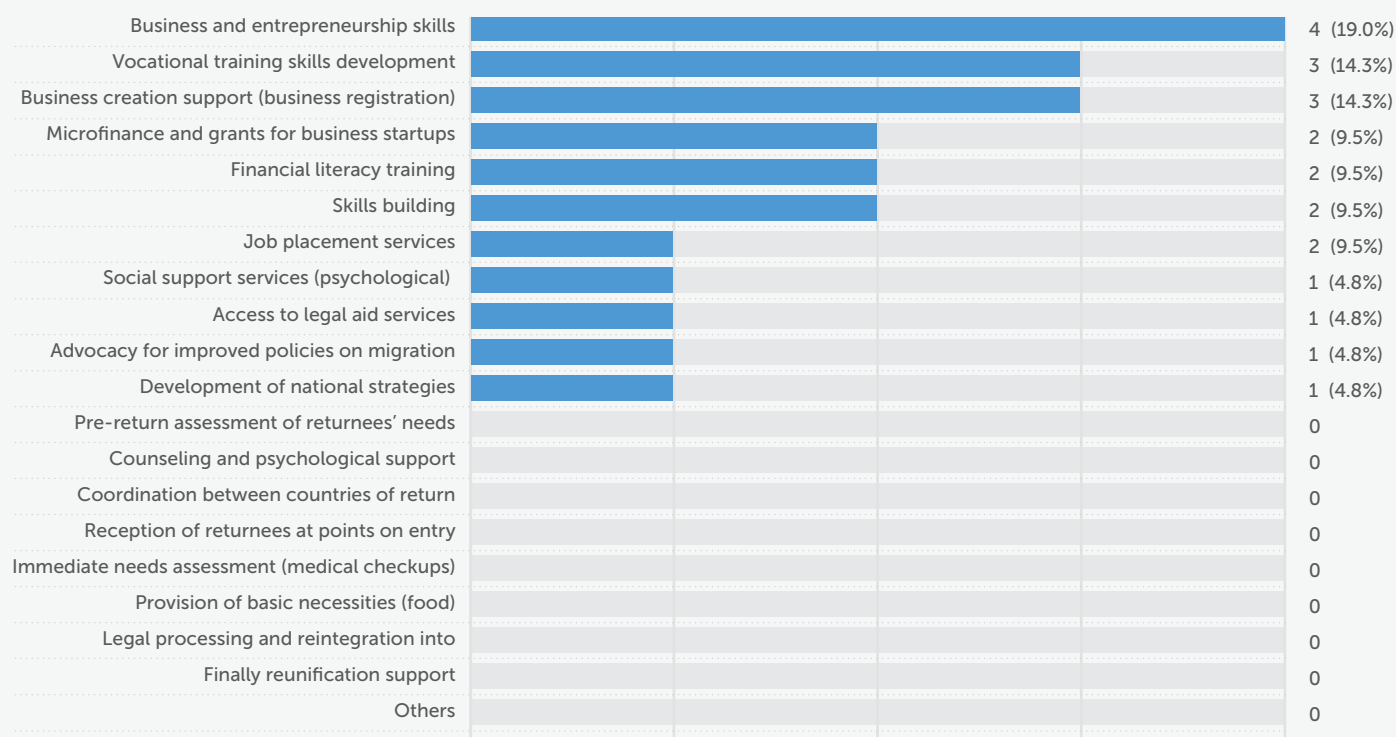
<sup>1</sup>International Labour Organization (2024). Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB). Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/start-and-improve-your-business-siyb>

<sup>2</sup>See National Board for Technical Education at <https://web.nbte.gov.ng/>

<sup>3</sup>See Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria at <https://smedan.gov.ng/>

<sup>4</sup>See Industrial Training Fund at <https://www.itf.gov.ng/>

Figure 1: Services provided by Entrepreneurship Support Organizations (ESOs)



Source: ITC survey tool.

## Limited resources and poor communication hinder access to services

Despite the variety of services offered, several organizations surveyed say not enough reintegration services are available for all returnees. Many local organizations have limited infrastructural and operational capacity to accommodate the large number of returnees in need and are struggling to keep up with the growing demand for reintegration measures.

These limitations also stem from inadequate financial resources. Most organizations in the ecosystem rely heavily on donor funding. The lack of consistent financial support prevents them from offering adequate services on a sustainable basis. This results in a gap in comprehensive and individualized support, leaving many returnees without the necessary resources to reintegrate successfully into society.

As a result of these challenges, CSOs tend to use unconventional channels to network in the ecosystem. The absence of a centralized database or source listing

all support services means that outreach activities happen mostly through word-of-mouth or in churches and other religious or social communities. This means returnees often need more time or even 'luck' to find the support they need and come into contact with the relevant organization.

This is particularly challenging for people with special needs – such as people with disabilities or women with children – who already face societal barriers. Few organizations use advanced and pro-active information sharing about their services, including social media channels such as Facebook. While this type of communication can help overcome geographical distances and reach a wider audience, it requires that returnees have access to technical devices and the internet.

## Skills development and job opportunities complement entrepreneurship support

Skills and capacities are important to build sustainable livelihoods. In line with the concept of empowerment through education, most surveyed

organizations said entrepreneurship must be accompanied by or linked to the acquisition of skills. While there are many ways to develop and enhance skills, some were mentioned more frequently and are more crucial for reintegrating returnees into their communities.

Programmes such as Edojobs work to empower people through the acquisition of a wide range of skills. Edojobs uses strategies that focus on life skills and mental healthcare to ensure that returnees are mentally and emotionally prepared for their reintegration. By gaining real-life skills such as emotional intelligence, problem-solving and communication skills, returnees are made fit for reintegration and better prepared to find their ways in everyday and professional life.

Internships and vocational trainings/apprenticeships are extremely effective for returnees to reintegrate in the labor market. These short-term jobs are seen as an easy and accessible route to reintegration. They not only help the target group gain work experience in different sectors, but they also cover practical skills that enhance employability.

In addition, such jobs are seen to boost self-confidence and can help with network building.

As returnees often lack education and qualifications, they are more vulnerable and dependent than others on training to support their reintegration. Entrepreneurial programmes are not as beneficial without these trainings, which teach the returnees the technical basics.

This is why most organizations consider business development training to be essential to give returnees the knowledge they need to run their companies successfully. Entrepreneurship support programmes often include training to improve management skills, digital marketing and the use of social media.

Depending on the funding possibilities, some organizations can also provide start-up assistance and resources to help returnees create and expand their ventures. In some cases, organizations including the International Organization for Migration and Caritas supply additional funding and resources such as start-up packages.

## Box 1: Pathfinder's business school

Pathfinders business academy is a critical component of its support for survivors of human trafficking, designed to empower them through education and skills development. Its business school offers comprehensive training on how to run a business effectively. This training covers topics such as financial management, marketing, profit-making strategies and business planning. This foundational knowledge is crucial to help participants avoid common pitfalls in business.

Pathfinders emphasizes the importance of using a mix of hands-on training and guidance from experienced instructors. Part of its approach is to combine theoretical learning with practical experience. After completing the courses, participants visit successful businesses to see real-world applications of what they have learned. This exposure is designed to help them understand the challenges and realities of running a company.

Business academy graduates may receive start-up capital to help them launch their businesses. This financial support, combined with the training they receive, increases their chances of success. The business school is seen as vital for survivors, giving them not just the skills to run a business, but also the confidence and support. Needed to reintegrate into society successfully.



All the training programmes aim to prevent businesses from failing by providing ongoing support and confidence building. Long-term mentoring and support are key, especially in the context of returnees, to assure that they have ongoing access to business advice and updated training. This mentorship can also be useful to overcome challenges and ensure that companies are sustainable.

Certain sectors, including tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, welding, mechanics, catering and baking, seem to have been especially proven suitable for skill-building purposes. The Web of Hearts Foundation shared two success stories from the hairdressing and catering/baking sectors:

- **Bakery entrepreneur:** A group of female returnees who completed catering and baking training under the foundation's programme were given a small start-up grant. They opened a local bakery and now

supply baked goods to schools and local stores. The foundation not only trained them, but it also helped them secure a business location and access equipment and linked them to the local market.

- **Hairdressing cooperative:** A group of women who trained in hairdressing formed a cooperative, pooled their resources and opened a salon. The foundation gave them a start-up kit that included hairdressing equipment such as dryers, scissors and other essentials. The group now runs the salon successfully, offering jobs to other women in the community.

These forms of entrepreneurship support offer returnees a structured path to economic independence by creating sustainable business opportunities. Long-term economic empowerment pro-programmes are essential to go beyond one-off support and help returnees acquire the skills and capacities to build a sustainable livelihood.

## Digital illiteracy hinders advanced training and innovation in service delivery

Low digital literacy among returnees makes it difficult for them to access advanced training and participate in emerging career paths in Nigeria's digital economy. Many returnees have limited educational backgrounds, with some barely completing secondary school before migrating. This gap in foundational education limits their ability to access support through digital channels and acquire and understand digital skills such as coding, graphic design and website/app programming.

Consequently, opportunities in tech-related fields remain out of reach for most returnees, narrowing their employment options and reinforcing their reliance on traditional, often low-income, work sectors.

Addressing digital literacy gaps is essential for returnees' sustainable reintegration and economic advancement. As Nigeria's economy increasingly relies on digital services and innovation, equipping returnees with digital literacy and technical skills can open new career pathways and enhance their capacity to succeed.

Building these skills could expand job prospects and would enable returnees to access and benefit from digital service platforms designed to support reintegration, entrepreneurship and ongoing training. Investing in digital literacy as part of reintegration efforts can help bridge the skills gap, fostering a more

inclusive workforce and contributing to Nigeria's broader development goals.

## Active CSO networks show potential for growth in the ecosystem

Networks of civil society organizations play an important role for the support ecosystem for returning migrants in Nigeria. By promoting coordination between organizations, they enhance collaboration and collective action. CSO networks aim to strengthen their member organizations' capacities and provide training, resources and platforms for knowledge exchange. This helps small or grassroots organizations improve their operational efficiency and programme implementation and their ability to secure funding.

CSOs compete for resources and cooperation targets areas other than the provision of services and the exchange of expertise. Networks can nevertheless help to pool expertise, conduct joint research and align goals with the right incentives for collaboration. CSO networks are crucial in shaping policy agendas. As they often engage effectively in dialogues with stakeholders, they play an essential role in participating in and influencing public policymaking.

The recent emergence of several initiatives in both the public and private sectors underscores the relevance of and demand for such networks. However, it also reveals the need to strengthen networks to avoid duplication and dilute the advocacy strength and collaboration opportunities of such networks.

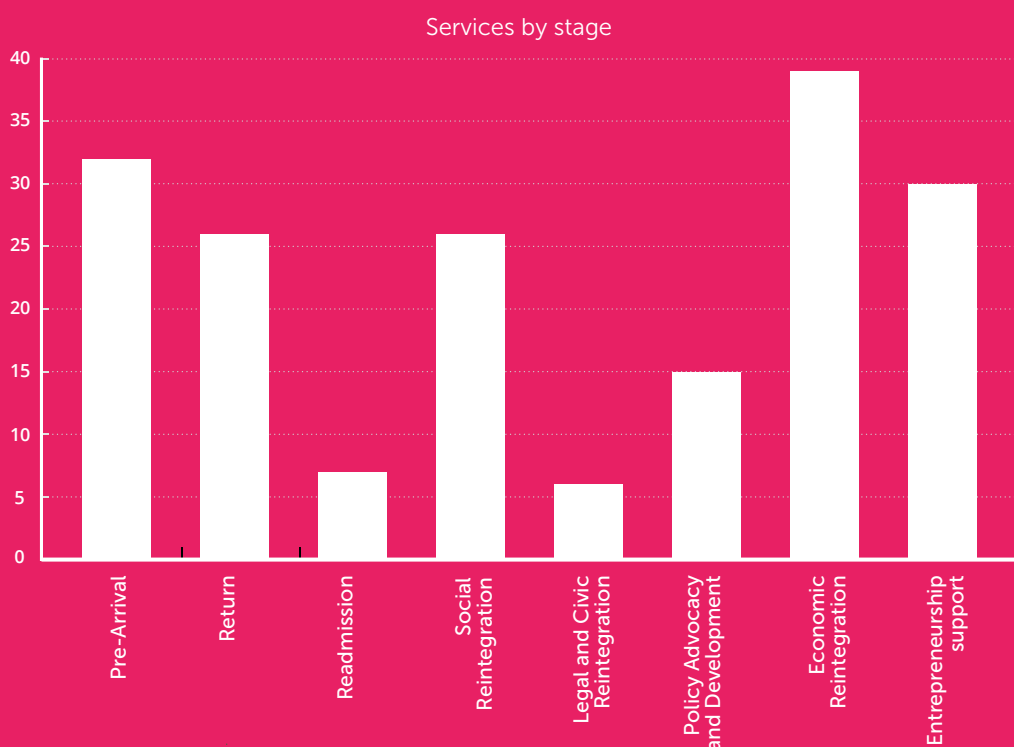
# SERVICE GAPS AND OVERLAPS

## Overview of services provided

During the ecosystem mapping, 47 Nigerian key stakeholders and service providers that focus on returnee support and entrepreneurship building were contacted for the survey and four ESOs were contacted for the study. The final data include 25 survey responses and 12 interviews.

The analysis of the survey results shows that many organizations support returnees in several stages and through a combination of reintegration measures. Comparing these data with the interview results indicates a lack of service specialization among entrepreneurship-supporting organizations. Many offer a wide range of services in the pre-arrival, return and reintegration stages.

Figure 2: Total number of services provided by each stage



Source: Survey data.

Business and entrepreneurship skills building, vocational training and skills development, and counselling and psychological support are the most frequently cited areas of support. Legal aid, involvement in national policymaking and microfinance services are offered less

frequently and can be found at the other end of the spectrum. Few organisations prioritise services at a particular stage, with economic reintegration measures being the most common.

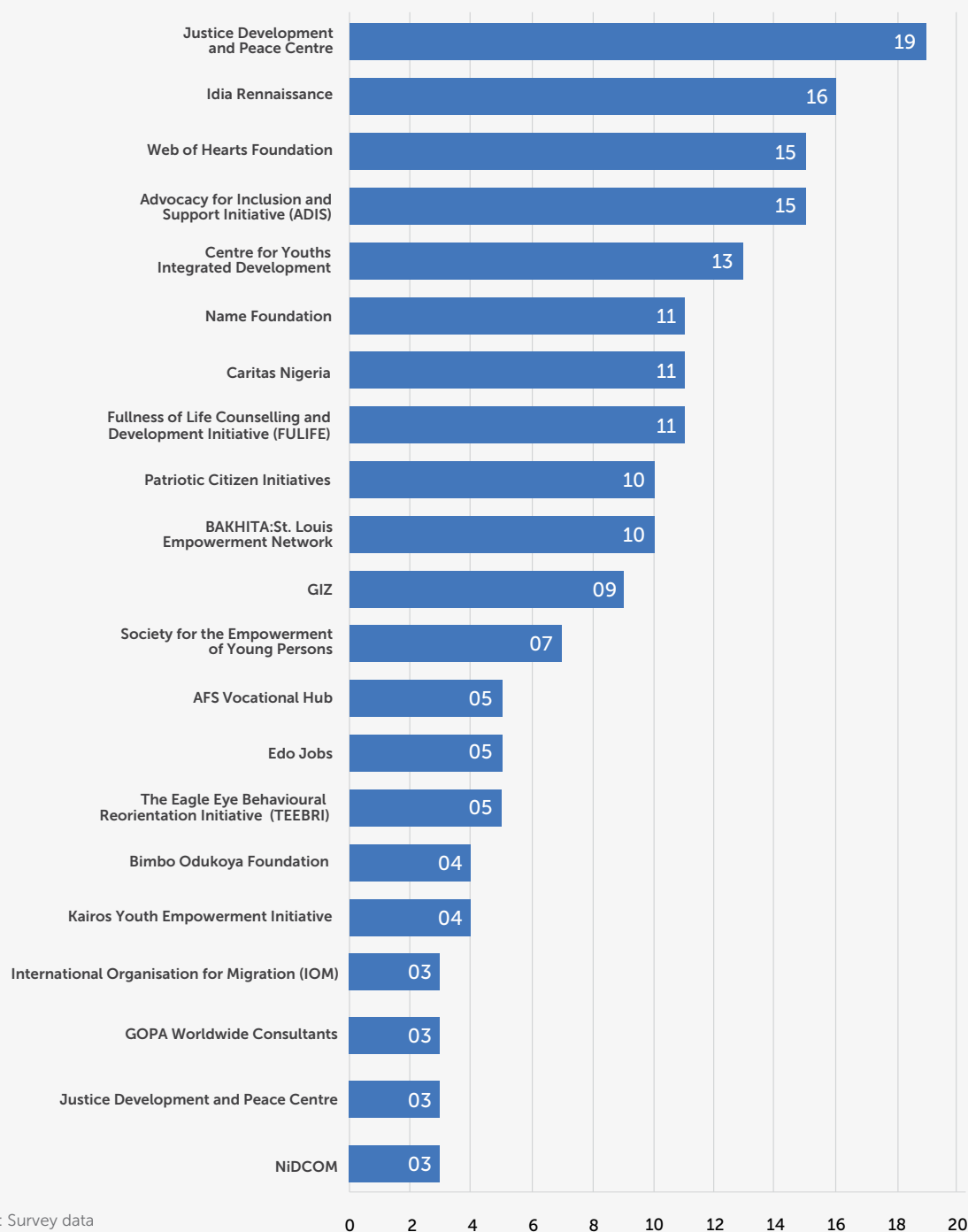
Figure 3: Number of CSOs providing each service



Source: Survey data

Figure 4: Number of services provided by each CSO

## Services by CSO



Source: Survey data

As many organizations offer similar services, there are overlaps and gaps in services for returnees. This results in an abundance of services, but makes it difficult for returnees to find and access ad-vice tailored to their specific needs.

The absence of specialization leads to inefficiencies, especially services that fall into the entrepre-neurship support phase. While many

CSOs offer corresponding support programmes, they often lack sufficient expertise and experience in these areas. The type and scope of support differ from one organization to the other, leading to differences in quality, delivery and content.

The figure below shows the institutions and the reintegration services they offer to returnees.

Figure 5: Service offer of each CSO

| Stage                                                            | Pre-Arival                                                    |                                                                             |                                                             | Return                                                             |                                                              |                                                                    | Readmission                                     | Social Reintegration                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Services                                                         | Pre-return assessment of returnees' needs and vulnerabilities | Counseling and psychological support to prepare returnees for reintegration | Coordination between countries of return and host countries | Reception of returnees at points of entry (airports, land borders) | Immediate needs assessment (medical check-up, accommodation) | Provision of basic necessities (food, clothing, temporary shelter) | Legal processing and reintegration into society | Social support services (psychosocial counselling, peer support groups) |
| Fullness of Life Counselling and Development Initiative (FULIFE) |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| NiDCOM                                                           |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Kairos Youth Empowerment Initiative                              |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Idia Renaissance                                                 |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Caritas Nigeria                                                  |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| GIZ                                                              |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| The Eagle Eye Behavioural Reorientation Initiative (TEEBRI)      |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Pathfinders Justice Initiative                                   |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Advocacy for Inclusion and Support Initiative (ADIS)             |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Justice Development and Peace Centre                             |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Edo Jobs                                                         |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| GOPA Worldwide Consultants                                       |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| BAKHITA: St. Louis Empowerment Network                           |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| International Organisation for Migration (IOM)                   |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Centre for Youths Integrated Development                         |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Bimbo Odukoya Foundation                                         |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons                     |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Name Foundation                                                  |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Web of Hearts Foundation                                         |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| AFS Vocational Hub                                               |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |
| Patriotic Citizen Initiatives                                    |                                                               |                                                                             |                                                             |                                                                    |                                                              |                                                                    |                                                 |                                                                         |

Source: survey data

[illegible]

---

# NETWORK ANALYSIS

---

This pillar of analysis shows how institutions are connected at various levels of engagement. Using a specialized network analysis tool called [Kumu](#), ITC has quantified the strength of these connections and differentiated the networking capacities of each actor. The main data for this analysis come from the institutions that responded to the survey. As not all institutions participated, connections with non-responding institutions were identified through indirect reporting.

For example, if Institution A reported a connection with Institution B, the analysis validated this connection even if Institution B did not respond to the survey. This is therefore an additional set of data used to extract findings and recommendations for the report, together with individual interviews responses and feedback from coaches. It shall not be used on its own to extract final conclusions.

The analysis of the network reveals a density of 0.32, with 1 being the maximum level of network density (all actors connected to each other). This density indicates that there is significant room for business support organizations to strengthen their connections and improve network cohesion.

## Ecosystem-building actors

Two network measures were used to identify the key players in the ecosystem:

- **Network of each CSO:** By calculating the number of connections, weighted by relevance, the analysis

reveals which CSOs have the strongest networks (in terms of both the quantity and quality of connections). This calculation considers the connections reported in the survey and the nature of those connections (information sharing, service collaboration and funding distribution). Thus, it identifies the CSOs that connect 'more' and 'better'. This information allows the identification of key players and models of collaboration that can be replicated.

- **Bridging capabilities of CSOs:** This measure identifies the CSOs that are enlarging the ecosystem. Those that are connecting less-known actors or new actors with the rest of the network. Examples are CSOs that have connections with entrepreneurship support organizations and innovation hubs.

Acknowledging the two ways in which actors can contribute to ecosystem building, the analysis shows that while some have many connections within the ecosystem, others hold bigger bridging capabilities.

For example, the Industrial Training Fund is one of the few actors connected to ESOs (Innov8, the Nest and Ventures Park), which elevates its bridging role in the ecosystem. Bimbo Odukoya Foundation is specialized in supporting minors and girls and has established several connections via ad hoc programmes with organizations to deliver services.

It should be noted that ESOs are also strongly connected with actors supporting the business community, such as the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Although the chamber is not a key actor for the returnee support ecosystem, it shows how connections with the entrepreneurship support and business support ecosystem could be built in the future.

The rankings of institutions by their connecting power and their bridging capabilities are shown below. Institutions reporting or obtaining the same value have been categorized together. This ranking has not looked at the depth or quality of services but only at the network strength of organizations.

Table 1: CSO rankings

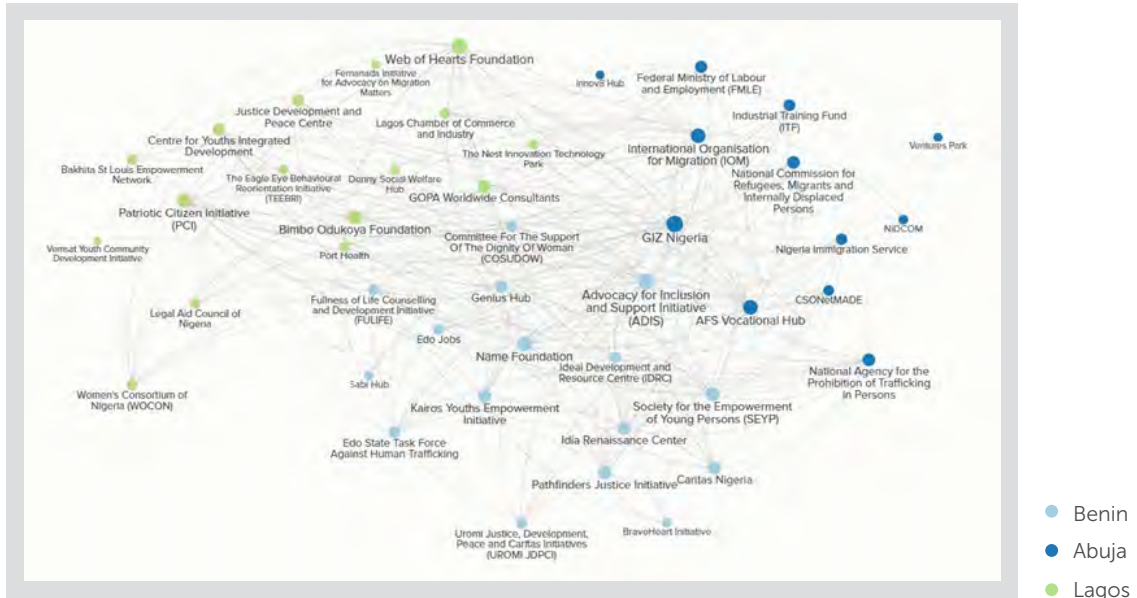
| Connections |                                                                                                                                                                           |       | Bridging Capabilities |                                                      |       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Rank        | Label                                                                                                                                                                     | Value | Rank                  | Label                                                | Value |
| #1          | Advocacy for Inclusion and Support Initiative (ADIS)                                                                                                                      | 28    | #1                    | Kairos Youths Empowerment Initiative                 | 0.081 |
| #2          | AFS Vocational Hub                                                                                                                                                        | 24    | #2                    | Advocacy for Inclusion and Support Initiative (ADIS) | 0.056 |
| #3          | Bimbo Odukoya Foundation<br>Name Foundation                                                                                                                               | 23    | #3                    | Bimbo Odukoya Foundation                             | 0.053 |
| #4          | Pathfinders Justice Initiative                                                                                                                                            | 22    | #4                    | AFS Vocational Hub                                   | 0.049 |
| #5          | Idia Renaissance Center                                                                                                                                                   | 20    | #5                    | Web of Hearts Foundation                             | 0.045 |
| #6          | Kairos Youths Empowerment Initiative                                                                                                                                      | 19    | #6                    | Patriotic Citizen Initiative (PCI)                   | 0.033 |
| #7          | Caritas Nigeria                                                                                                                                                           | 18    | #7                    | Industrial Training Fund (ITF)                       | 0.027 |
| #8          | National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced persons<br>National Agency for the Prohibition of trafficking in Persons<br>GOP Worldwide Consultants | 17    | #8                    | Name Foundation                                      | 0.024 |
| #9          | Genius Hub<br>Center for Youths Integrated Development                                                                                                                    | 16    | #9                    | Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons (SEYP)  | 0.019 |
| #10         | Federal Ministry of Labour and Empowerment (FMLE)<br>Justice Development and Peace Centre                                                                                 | 17    | #10                   | Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE)     | 0.017 |

Source: created by ITC using [Kumu](#) platform.

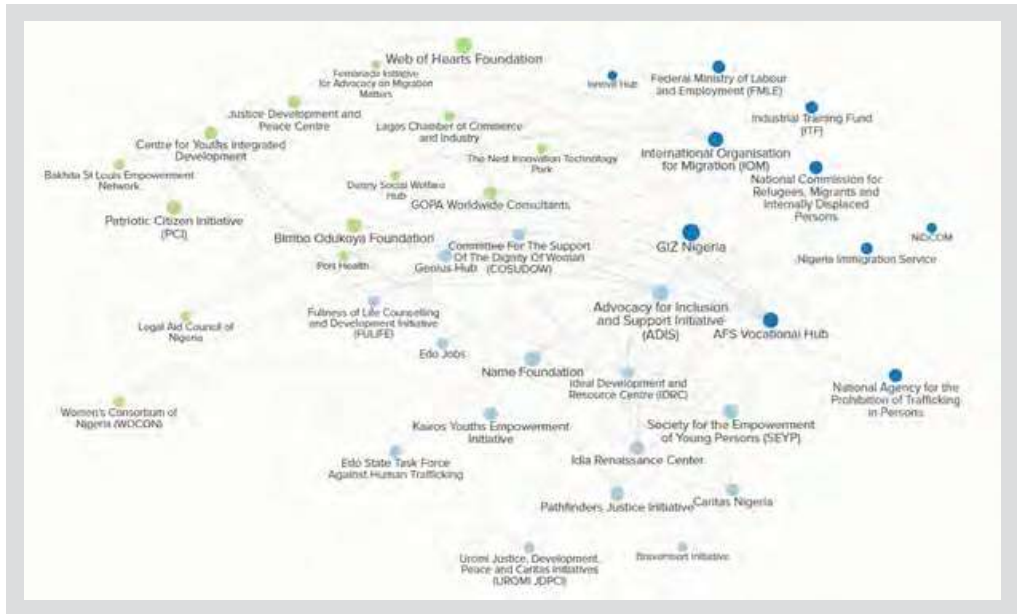
# Network of organizations

The graphs below show the results of the network analysis at different levels. All connections can be seen in the online interactive map [here](#).

Figure 6: Networks – all connections – size by connecting power

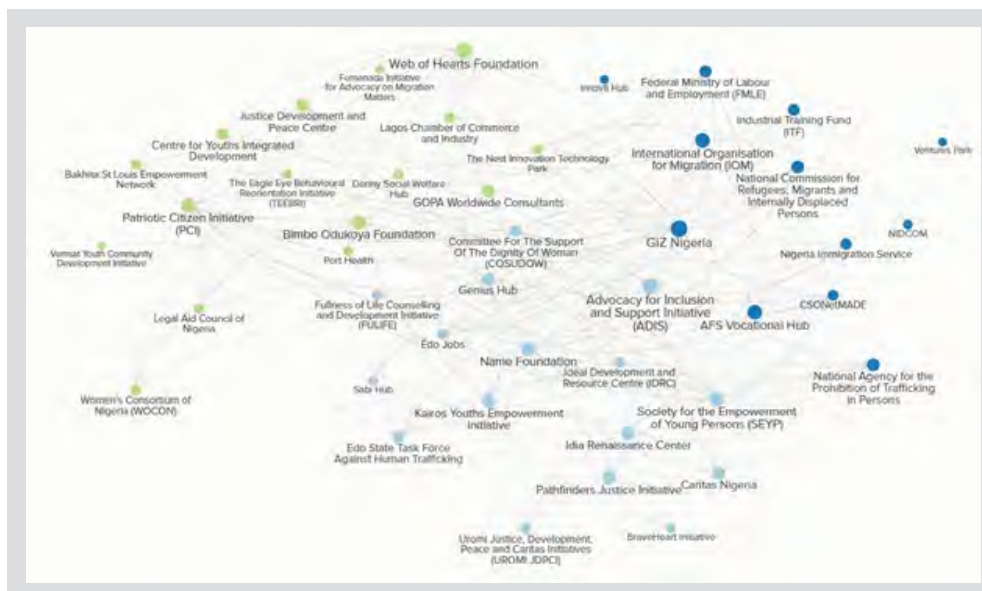


Information connections

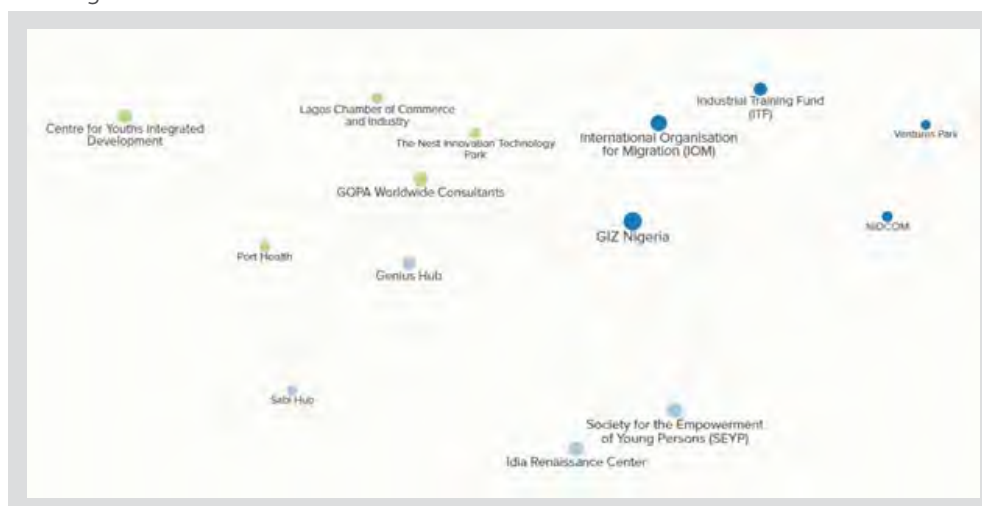


Source: created by ITC using Kumu platform.

## Service connections



## Funding connections

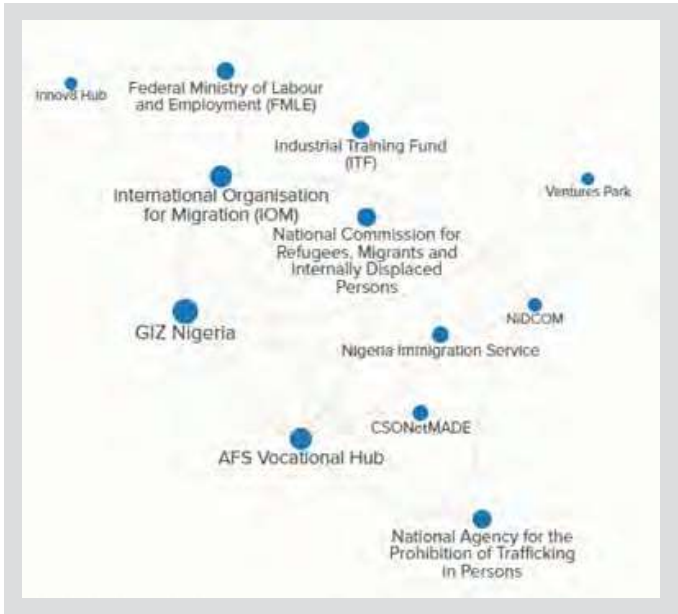


Source: created by ITC using Kumu platform.

Figure 7: Networks by location and network analysis

Institutions with a presence in various cities have been assigned to their main location, where the HQ is often located. Connections in other cities have been considered.

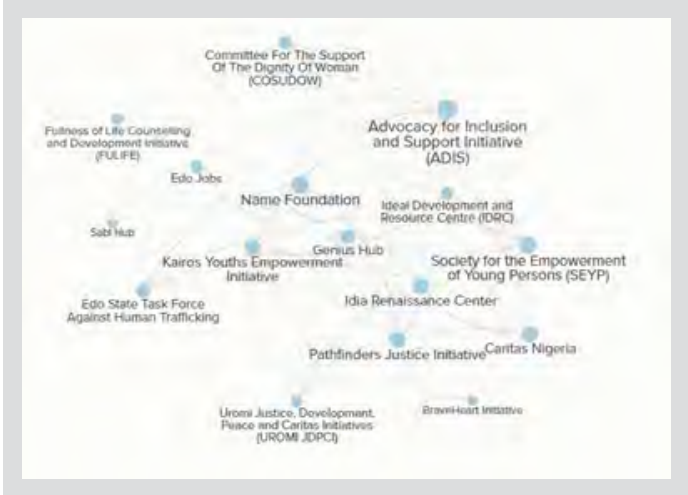
Abuja



Lagos



Benin



---

# USER EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS

---

This is the final pillar of analysis of ITC's ecosystem mapping methodology. Usually, the report would capture direct feedback from beneficiaries of entrepreneurship support services to reflect user experiences. However, due to the sensitive and vulnerable situation of returnees participating in ARRIVES and the lack of contact with returnees who received services in the past, this study has relied on proxy information from coaches who work directly with returnees.

By prioritizing the perspectives of coaches, the study gathers reflections based on feedback, observations and the coaches' own experiences supporting returnees.

Further studies could consider direct feedback from returnees who received support in the last three to five years, assuming they may be in a more stable position to participate.

The feedback summarized below includes responses from four coaches working with pre-arrival returnees as well as inputs from experts working directly with returnees under the ARRIVES project. Information included under this pillar aims to capture the specific experience of returnees in receiving entrepreneurship coaching and training, without extending to other services such as shelter, trauma support and other critical assistance.

## Pre-arrival

The pre-arrival coaching sessions offered by the ARRIVES project have been instrumental in pre-paring returnees for entrepreneurship by addressing practical and psychosocial needs. However, as the project is in its pilot phase with few returnees, these experiences alone are insufficient to draw comprehensive conclusions about its overall impact.

Coaches observed that many returnees lacked prior business experience or clear goals, often underestimating the complexities of starting a business. Through targeted coaching on mindset and reflection, creativity, business modelling, financial planning and market analysis, returnees gained a more grounded understanding of entrepreneurship and developed essential skills. To ensure the accuracy and relevance of these initial findings, revisiting the pre-arrival coaching sessions at the end of the pilot phase will be necessary.

Returnees generally responded positively to the coaching sessions, despite facing certain challenges. Building self-confidence and overcoming fears about business ownership were major hurdles for many. Coaches said it was essential to empower returnees to view entrepreneurship as a viable pathway to improve their lives, which helped them

distinguish between personal needs and business demands.

Monetary planning also emerged as a common challenge, with some returnees initially setting overly ambitious goals for large-scale business ventures. Despite these obstacles, returnees were highly motivated and eagers to learn. They achieved small successes in planning and confidence building as they worked through step-by-step business plans designed to start small and grow over time.

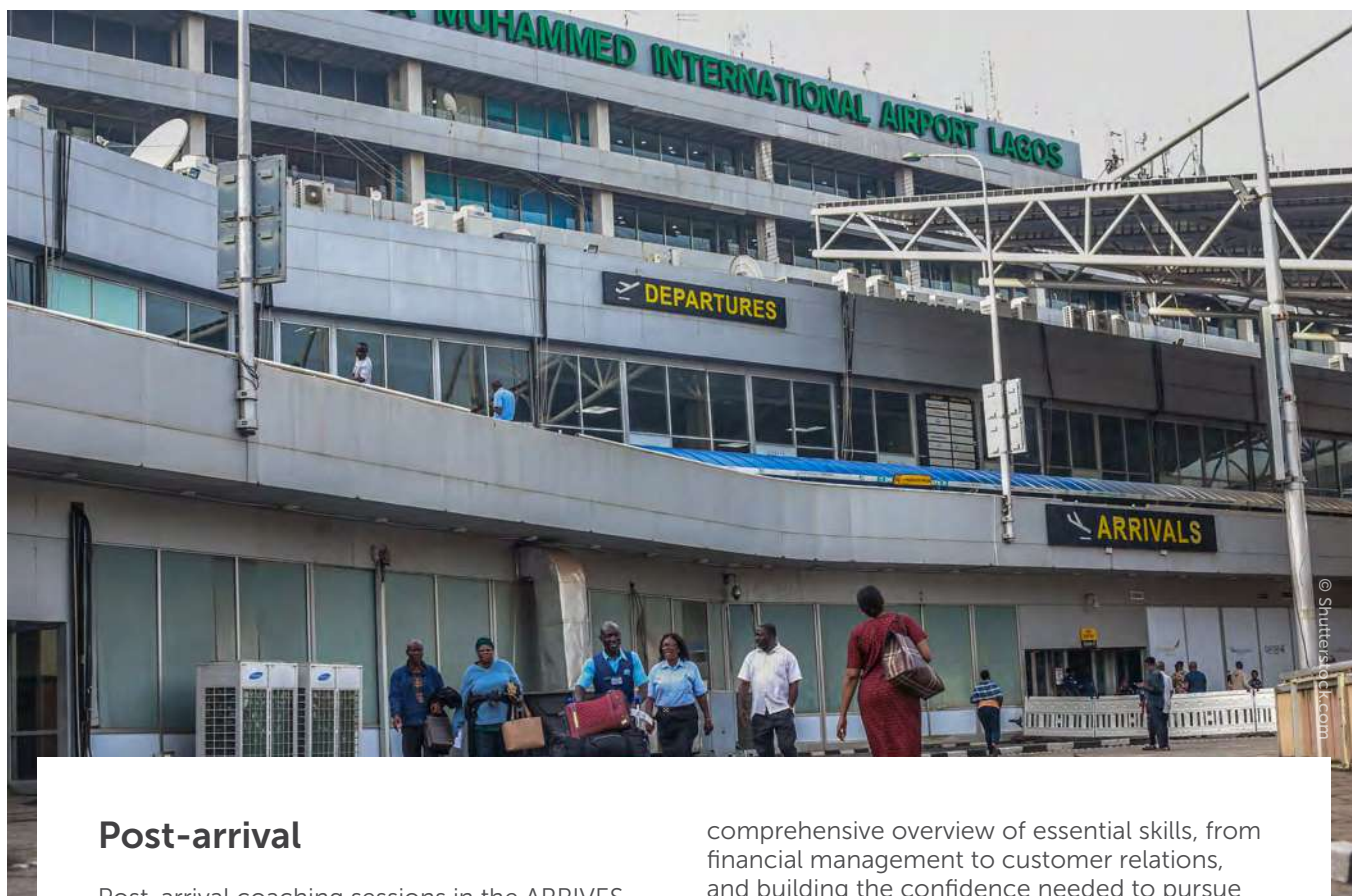
The effectiveness of the prearrival coaching varied based on an individual's background and motivation level. For returnees with relevant experience, the structured support proved invaluable, enabling them to begin business operations shortly after returning. Others, particularly those uncertain about their future, benefited from a foundational understanding of business basics and increased self-assurance.

While the sessions generally met the programme's objectives, coaches suggested that additional time for psychological support and personal assessments would enhance the overall impact of the training. This aligns with CSO interview findings.

Coaches emphasized the need for a flexible, person-centred approach in pre-arrival coaching. Addressing returnees' mental and psychosocial needs is essential, as these factors greatly influence their resilience and decision-making abilities in business. Effective coaching strategies included active listening, adapting to individual educational and cultural contexts, and maintaining a supportive rather than prescriptive approach.

Simplifying sessions to make them accessible allowed returnees to feel more at ease and engaged in their learning journey. By fostering an empathetic and encouraging environment, pre-arrival sessions can better meet the diverse needs of returnees. However, a reassessment at the end of the pilot phase will be crucial to validate these preliminary observations and refine the approach accordingly.





## Post-arrival

Post-arrival coaching sessions in the ARRIVES project have been essential in helping returnees transition into entrepreneurship. These sessions are strategically timed to support returnees once they return to their local environments, where they gain real insights into their chosen business sectors.

With this on-the-ground perspective, returnees can adjust their pre-arrival plans to better align with local market realities, making their approach to entrepreneurship more practical and effective. This recalibration phase allows them to engage with industry players, assess available opportunities and refine their business strategies to suit local conditions.

A common challenge for returnees was establishing income-generating firms to become financially stable quickly. This pressure often led some to rush the set-up process, resulting in resource misallocation and avoidable mistakes. Post-arrival coaching addressed this issue by encouraging a more measured approach, guiding returnees to understand the intricacies of their industries and develop the necessary entrepreneurial skills for long-term success. Those who applied the tools and insights from coaching typically saw positive results and improved business outcomes.

The effectiveness of post-arrival coaching was apparent among returnees with limited entrepreneurial experience. The coaching sessions were instrumental in providing a

comprehensive overview of essential skills, from financial management to customer relations, and building the confidence needed to pursue their entrepreneurial goals. Coaches reported that the sessions were highly effective in helping returnees understand the diverse skills required for successful business ownership.

To enhance the impact of post-arrival coaching, coaches should focus on each returnee's unique background, needs and goals. Building a solid rapport involves listening to returnees' personal and business experiences, assessing their level of entrepreneurial knowledge and adapting guidance to fit their specific circumstances. Tailoring the coaching content to focus on the most relevant aspects of the ARRIVES project allows for a more personalized and effective coaching experience.

Coaches are encouraged to leverage their networks in the returnee's industry to provide valuable connections and insights. By facilitating introductions and sharing local knowledge, coaches help returnees navigate their sector more confidently, supporting the practical and psychological aspects of their integration into the business community. This approach improves returnees' understanding of the business environment and strengthens their resilience and confidence as they start their entrepreneurial journey.

Further assessments could identify key success factors and the best candidates for entrepreneur-ship support, creating a user journey adapted to diverse returnee needs.

---

# RECOMMENDATIONS

---

In line with the analysis of the ecosystem, the following recommendations are aimed at ecosystem actors that support or would like to support returning migrants.

## **Institutional strengthening**

Building the capacity of entrepreneurship and business support organizations is one of the International Trade Centre's key pillars. Economic studies<sup>5</sup> consider capacity building to be a key factor to grow and dynamize economies.

The following recommendations focus on institutional areas where this report identified weaknesses or improvement possibilities. Institutional areas for best practices are based on ITC's unique methodology for business support organizations<sup>6</sup> that thousands of organizations globally have used to assess and compare institutional performance.

Develop tailored trauma and psychosocial support for diverse needs  
Developing trauma and psychosocial support systems tailored to the diverse needs of returnees is essential to improve reintegration services. Returnees often experience trauma in unique ways, making a one-size-fits-all approach to psychological support ineffective. Strengthen support systems by focusing on trauma-healing techniques, researching what methods work best and sharing best practices with other service providers. This approach allows for more personalized counselling and mental

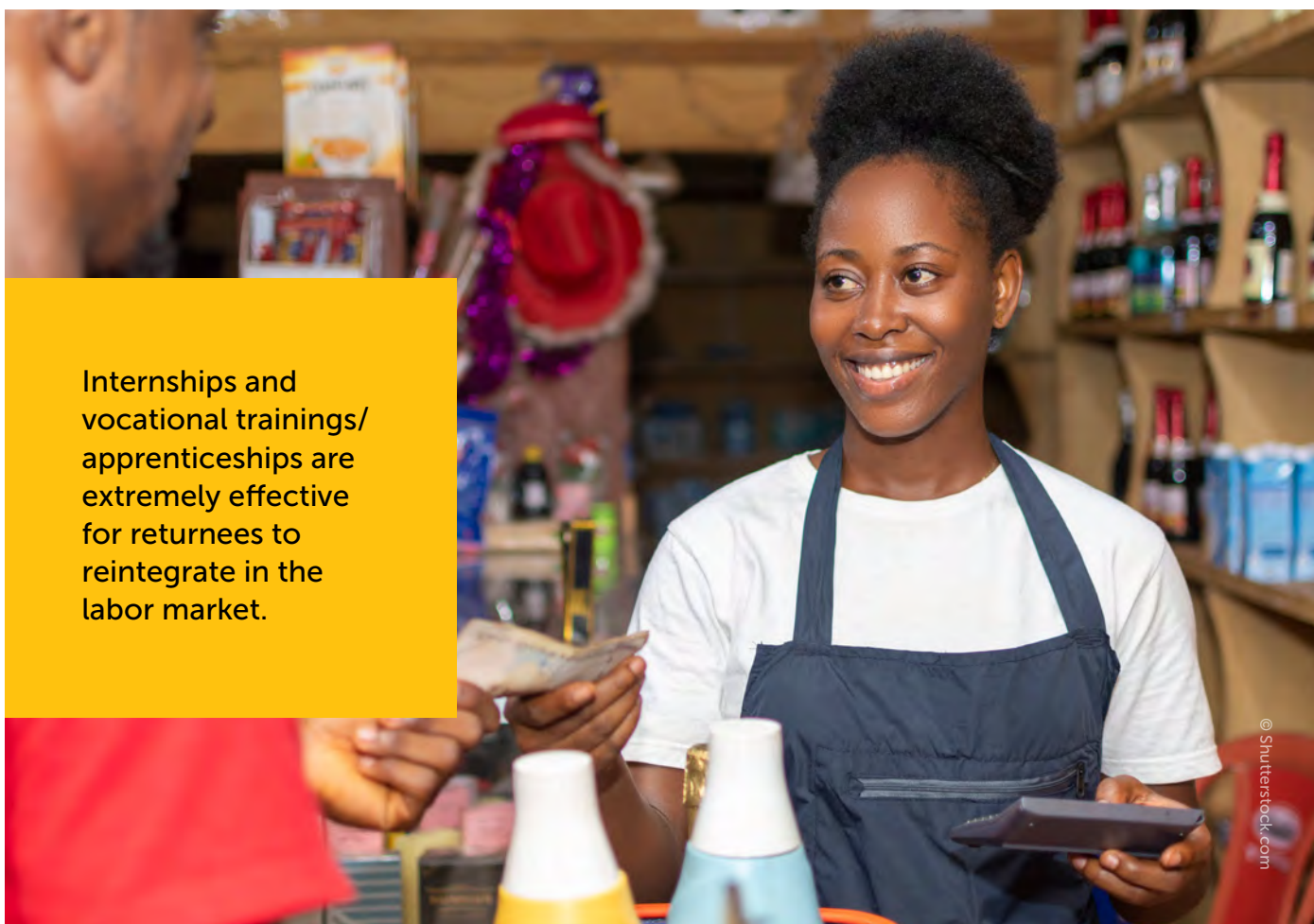
health support, ensuring returnees receive care most suited to their experiences and backgrounds.

Building on this foundation, recognize that certain returnees face distinct challenges requiring specialized services. People with limited education, disabilities or experiences of gender-based violence often need additional assistance to recover emotionally. Addressing the needs of these groups will create a more inclusive and comprehensive reintegration programme, ensuring that all returnees can benefit from support that acknowledges their particular struggles. Providing targeted services for these vulnerable groups improves the effectiveness of reintegration efforts.

Equally important is ensuring that trainers and service providers understand returnees' diverse backgrounds and needs. Trainers who are sensitive to returnees' psychological histories, educational levels and language preferences can provide more relevant and empathetic assistance. This enhances the reintegration experience by fostering meaningful connections between returnees and the support system. Integrating these considerations into training programmes and service delivery ensures that support services are inclusive, but also practical and impactful.

Gender-sensitive approaches are also crucial for trauma and psychosocial support. Women returnees often face extra challenges due to past trauma,

Internships and vocational trainings/ apprenticeships are extremely effective for returnees to reintegrate in the labor market.



such as violence or trafficking, and are further marginalized by traditional gender roles. By tailoring services to address their psychological needs, reintegration programmes can empower women to heal and reintegrate with dignity. Gender-sensitive support helps women overcome barriers and strengthens the programme by ensuring that no group is left behind in the reintegration process.

Together, these approaches create a reintegration system that is comprehensive, empathetic and better equipped to address the challenges that returnees face.

## Strengthen outreach capacity to improve support

Strengthening the outreach capacity of institutions could expand their reach to more returnees and enhance the overall support experience.

At the institutional level, using both traditional methods – such as flyers, community events and public announcements in markets, churches and schools – and digital channels that can reach more people, especially younger migrants who are digitally connected, could greatly improve the returnee journey.

Targeted social media campaigns have proven highly effective for outreach. For example, Genius Hub leverages Facebook as a strategic tool by customizing language and content to align with the social contexts of returnees. This approach has increased engagement with returning migrants.

Additionally, Genius Hub's migration-focused Facebook page includes a 'Call to Action' feature that directs returnees to WhatsApp communities. These groups provide direct communication channels where returnees can connect with the organization and access immediate support, resources and networking opportunities. Name Foundation uses platforms such as

<sup>5</sup>Argidius (2023). Sustain Impact: Donor practices to grow enterprise support organizations. See <https://prd-control-multisite.maneraconsult.com/media/i34eg1ow/report-1.pdf>. Also, International Trade Centre (2016). Investing in trade promotion generates revenue at <https://www.intracen.org/resources/publications/investing-in-trade-promotion-generates-revenue>

<sup>6</sup>See ITC Benchmarking platform at <https://www.itcbenchmarking.org>

WhatsApp and Telegram for outreach and engagement.

Innovative technology such as artificial intelligence could also be used to support the work of CSOs. Artificial intelligence tools can analyse data to identify trends, predict needs and automate engagement through chat bots, helping organizations tailor their support and outreach efforts more efficiently.

Creating innovative partnerships with local institutions that do not directly support returnees can also boost outreach. For example, partnerships with transport associations enable CSOs to connect with returnees in remote locations, making it easier for them to connect them to reintegration services.

## Leverage success stories to inspire and sensitize

Several organizations said they needed additional support to communicate success stories. Telling the stories of returning migrants and their journey effectively can both reinforce their reintegration in Nigeria and their communities and sensitize potential migrants about migration-related risks.

Reintegration organizations could adopt practices and technology to systematically capture and share the stories of returnees who have successfully reintegrated into their communities. These narratives can serve as motivational tools for other returnees, helping them see the possibilities for their own successful reintegration.

These stories can both inspire returnees and serve as a tool to raise awareness among youth about the risks of migration. By showcasing both the challenges and successes of returning migrants, young people gain a deeper understanding of migration's complexities and better understand the importance of preparation, education and awareness of potential dangers. Reintegration organizations can work with returnee networks to gather and share these stories, ensuring they reach and resonate with the intended audience.

Creating multimedia content to disseminate these stories is essential. Visual content – such as videos, infographics and testimonials – can be shared across platforms that are popular with returnees and potential migrants, such as WhatsApp, Facebook and TikTok. Given the low rates of literacy and technology adoption, these messages should be visual, simple and easy to share also in printed versions, audio and other channels. Such visuals could be designed and created with the support of returnees who have received digital and media training.

## Incorporate successful support strategies and services to existing initiatives

CSOs have identified the following strategies and services as successful and beneficial for supporting reintegration. This list summarizes what was said during interview and is not exhaustive.

- Bundling business support services with technical skills or TVET programmes appears to be effective for returnees. Following the concept of empowerment through education, most organizations say it is important to help returnees acquire professional skills.
- The survey and interviews results also show that business support cannot achieve sustainable results unless the emotional and psychological challenges of returnees are addressed. It is crucial to be aware of the psychological stress returnees may face and to offer suitable support and trauma management programmes. As surveyed organizations most often mentioned business and entrepreneurship skills building and counselling and psychological support to prepare returnees for reintegration, these two activities should be integrated.
- Connecting returnees with each other to form cooperatives. Web of

Hearts and Genius Hub offer this type of support so returnees can pool resources and start a business together. For instance, a group of returnees may start a farming cooperative, where they work collectively on agricultural projects, share resources and face fewer individual financial risks. Genius Hub also introduces returnees to their larger ecosystem, which gives them access to a broader network of services, industries and markets.

- Long-term commitment is crucial to achieve sustainable reintegration. This can take the form of ongoing (individual) coaching that goes beyond initial support and training, as well as mentoring programmes to keep returnees motivated, connected and accountable.
- Train and Retain method: The CSO Migration Network collaborates with TVET centres across Nigeria that offer vocational and technical skills training. While participants who successfully complete the programme receive start-up kits and support grants, the organization found through an internal assessment that they often fail to expand their skills or progress professionally. As the gap between supervised training and starting their own business is often too wide, many returnees fall back into poverty or even consider migrating again.
- The network designed the Train and Retain programme to provide continued employment opportunities to people who are initially placed in

training centres. These people can remain at the TVET centres after completing their training so they can gain practical experience, stability and confidence before transitioning into the workforce. Beneficiaries have embraced this approach and have reported better outcomes due to the longer preparation time.

- Building digital skills is crucial to help returnees access more job opportunities, acquire skills and improve communication. Several CSOs have identified this support as a critical need, especially for returnees who wish to expand their training and connect with other returnees. Being digitally savvy not only enables returnees to access more digital training, but it also means they can find business opportunities in the sector. Digital skills are both a prerequisite for engagement in certain fields and a tool to accelerate opportunities in traditional skill-building areas.
- Broaden income pathways with apprenticeships, business training and digital freelancing

Expanding access to alternative income pathways is essential to help returnees build sustainable livelihoods. Although internships and apprenticeships provide foundational skills, they do not always result in job opportunities. To maximize long-term reintegration, they can be supplemented with business knowledge and entrepreneurship training to encourage self-employment using the acquired skills and confidence in a particular domain.

Freelance work also offers a valuable source of income for returnees. Genius Hub, for example, integrates especially those returnees with technical skills into its internal innovation support network and helps them to access platforms such as Upwork. Both portals allow returnees to connect with experts and find remote and freelance jobs, especially in the tech sector.

Organizations such as Edojobs contribute to this effort by operating

two innovation hubs that offer support for tech entrepreneurs. These hubs provide coworking spaces and technical training in areas such as information and communication technology and cloud computing, enabling returnees to pursue digital entrepreneurship and freelance work.

By expanding these and other alternative income pathways, returnees can diversify their sources of income and build more resilient careers.

## Network building

### Foster CSO-ESO partnerships to expand networks and innovation

Collaborating with hubs offers CSOs numerous opportunities, from expanding access to new networks and entrepreneurial ecosystems to providing specialized mentorship and access to finance for returnees. By working with hubs, CSOs can open new channels to enhance the overall reintegration experience, offering innovative training, peer support and financial opportunities to help returnees succeed.

Working together to create new services and combine both CSO and ESO expertise could create new ways to help returnees develop their ideas and reintegrate through self-employment.

Relying on ESOs to deliver alone has some risks, however, such as a lack of returnee-specific experience, staff turnover and misalignment of goals that must be managed. CSOs should carefully select hubs that align with their mission, invest in training and capacity building, and establish clear agreements to ensure smooth and sustainable collaboration.

By maximizing these opportunities and addressing potential risks, CSOs can create effective partnerships with ESOs to better serve returnees and facilitate successful reintegration into their communities.

The table below summarizes the institutional profiles of ESOs for collaboration, highlighting their types, services, collaboration opportunities and associated risks.

Table 2: Hub profiles

| ESO Profile                                                        | Profile                                                                                                                                                                    | Services they can offer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Potential collaboration                                                                                                                                                                       | Opportunities for CSOs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Risks for CSOs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hubs already working with returnees                                | They have direct experience supporting returnees and offer established programmes tailored to their unique needs. They have collaborated with other CSOs in the ecosystem. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tailored returnee support on entrepreneurship skills and business</li> <li>Business incubation</li> <li>Specialized mentorship</li> <li>Vocational training and skills development</li> <li>Access to finance</li> <li>Innovation and technology development</li> <li>Co-working spaces and networking</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Returnee referrals to access specialized support</li> <li>Joint programme development</li> <li>Resource sharing</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharing of experiences - Collaboration to access finance and grants</li> <li>Access to entrepreneurship and tech expertise</li> <li>Access to new networks of mentors and entrepreneurs</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dependence on hub resources for sustainability</li> <li>High staff turnover could disrupt new programmes</li> <li>Limited number of ESOs with such experience</li> </ul>                                                                  |
| Hubs that do not work with returnees, but have relevant programmes | These hubs do not target returnees but provide services that can be adapted for them, focusing on entrepreneurship and innovation.                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General business and skills development</li> <li>Business incubation</li> <li>Specialized mentorship</li> <li>Vocational training and skills development</li> <li>Access to finance</li> <li>Innovation and technology development</li> <li>Co-working spaces and networking</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme customization for returnees</li> <li>Piloting initiatives focused on returnees</li> <li>Training hub staff on returnee challenges</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovative training methods</li> <li>Access to entrepreneurship and tech expertise</li> <li>Access to new networks of mentors and entrepreneurs</li> <li>Capacity and CSO network expansion through new partnerships</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of returnee-specific expertise may require additional training</li> <li>Longer time to adapt programmes</li> <li>High staff turnover could disrupt new programmes</li> <li>Dependence on hub resources for sustainability</li> </ul> |

Source: survey and interview data.

### Focus on CSO core strengths and strategic partnerships

By concentrating on their core areas of expertise, organizations can contribute more effectively to the reintegration ecosystem. For example, some CSOs may specialize in job placement opportunities, while others may excel in psychosocial services. Recognizing and leveraging their unique strengths allows organizations to provide more targeted and impactful support.

To create entrepreneurship support programmes, partnerships with certified training providers are needed to identify and leverage the expertise of other institutions in the ecosystem. Developing and maintaining a database of qualified professionals in entrepreneurship support could improve the consistency and effectiveness of services for returnees interested in starting their own businesses. For skills building, the broader use of certified TVET services or certified providers of skills

training could improve overall quality of services.

Strengthening the capacity of CSOs is essential to improve service delivery and ensure access to best practices in areas such as management, service design and results measurement. Capacity-building initiatives could include organizational assessments to identify strengths and areas for improvement and tailoring programmes to address specific CSO gaps to help organizations enhance both their management practices and operational effectiveness.

Lastly, it is important for CSOs to clearly identify and communicate their 'unique value' in the reintegration ecosystem. By doing so, they can better position themselves as key contributors to the support network for returning migrants. This would not only increase their visibility but also enhance the impact of reintegration efforts, ensuring that services are more targeted, efficient and effective.

---

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

---

The recommendations outlined in this report are designed as an interconnected set of actions, requiring collaboration across all ecosystem actors and stakeholders to ensure effective implementation.

All stakeholders in the ecosystem act on recommendations in the short to medium term. These recommendations aim both to strengthen existing CSO programmes and to support the development and implementation of new initiatives.

The recommendations are divided into two interconnected categories based on their expected outcomes: institutional strengthening and network building. Strengthening networks fosters the growth of individual actors in the ecosystem, while robust institutions are better equipped to invest in, expand and collaborate effectively within these networks. Both categories work in synergy to enhance the overall ecosystem.

| Institutional strengthening                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Network building                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Developing tailored trauma and psychosocial support for diverse needs</li><li>■ Strengthen outreach capacity to enhance support</li><li>■ Leverage success stories to inspire and sensitize</li><li>■ Incorporate successful support strategies and services in current initiatives</li><li>■ Integrating business support with technical skills training</li><li>■ Fostering cooperative business models</li><li>■ Committing to longterm support</li><li>■ Adopting the 'train and retain' approach</li><li>■ Promoting digital skills for greater employment and self-employment opportunities</li><li>■ Broaden income pathways with apprenticeships, business training and digital freelancing</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Foster CSO-ESO partnerships to expand networks and innovation</li><li>■ Focus on CSO core strengths and strategic partnerships</li></ul> |

---

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX I: INSTITUTIONS INTERVIEWED

| Institution name                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bakhita St Louis Empowerment Network                           |
| Bimbo Odukoya Foundation                                       |
| Centre for Youths Integrated Development                       |
| Edo jobs                                                       |
| Genius Hub                                                     |
| GLZ (German Corporation for International Cooperation) Nigeria |
| Name Foundation                                                |
| Pathfinders Justice Initiative                                 |
| Patriotic Citizen Initiative                                   |
| Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons                   |
| Web of Hearts Foundation                                       |
| CSO NetMADE                                                    |

## ANNEX II: ITC METHODOLOGY

### Defining business support ecosystems

In the context of this report, a business support ecosystem is a collaborative arrangement through which institutions that support companies and entrepreneurs combine their resources, capabilities and products to offer a coherent, business-oriented solution.

When they work, ecosystems enable institutions to create value that they could not have created alone. Well-managed ecosystems improve the management of critical interdependencies to increase benefits or reduce costs.

## ITC's Network Analysis Methodology

ITC's Network Analysis methodology aims to capture interactions, trends and patterns in collaborations among institutions. The results presented in this section are based on three pillars of analysis:



### **Desk research:**

Preliminary research to understand the landscape of institutions in the country and their offerings. Research on specific studies and reports in the field of business support and development in the country. Research to validate findings.



### **Business support organizations:**

Personal interviews to understand the role of the institution in the ecosystem, its contributions, perspectives and specific collaborations in the network.



### **Businesses and entrepreneurs:**

Focus group discussion(s) to validate the institution's offering and to understand the business support journey in the ecosystem.

To represent and visually capture the interactions and linkages among the interviewed institutions, this section of the report presents qualitative and quantitative insights supported by a network analysis software. The following section answers two key questions:

1. What are the main connections in the network? The analysis explores how the landscape of institutions interacts with each other, which are the most connected institutions, with whom are they connecting and why are they connecting. This analysis seeks to understand what stimulates collaboration or what might be preventing it and, therefore, what can be done to continue strengthening the ecosystem.

2. What are the different types of connections? To respond to this question, ITC's network analysis focuses on three factors of collaboration: information, funding collaborations and service delivery.

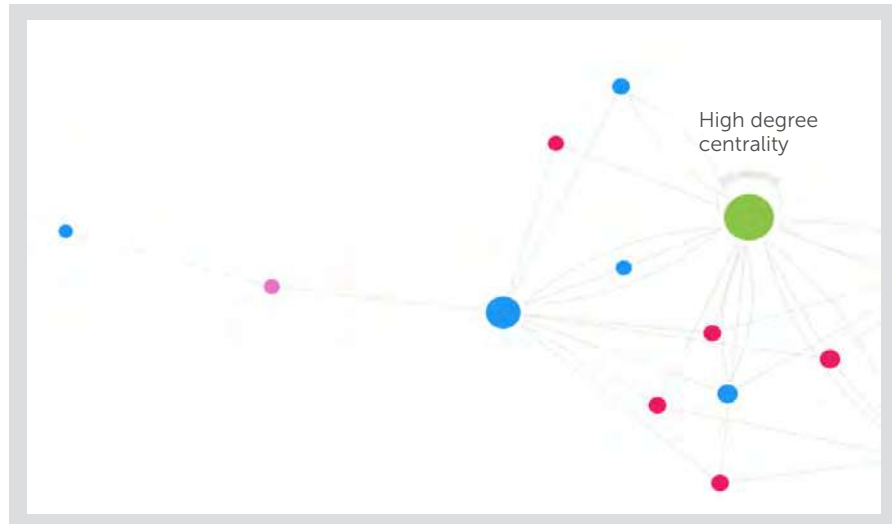
In the case of information exchanges, the analysis explores aspects such as sharing databases of entrepreneurs, event information and market intelligence. Regarding financial exchanges, the analysis focuses on the exchange of funds between institutions. This would be the case of institutions providing financial support for events to other institutions or logistics support. Finally, service delivery collaboration involves support for training, such as training material and training staff and collaboration for the organization of events and competitions.

## Key network analysis definitions

### Degree centrality

The degree centrality measure finds actors (institutions) with the most links to other institutions in the network.

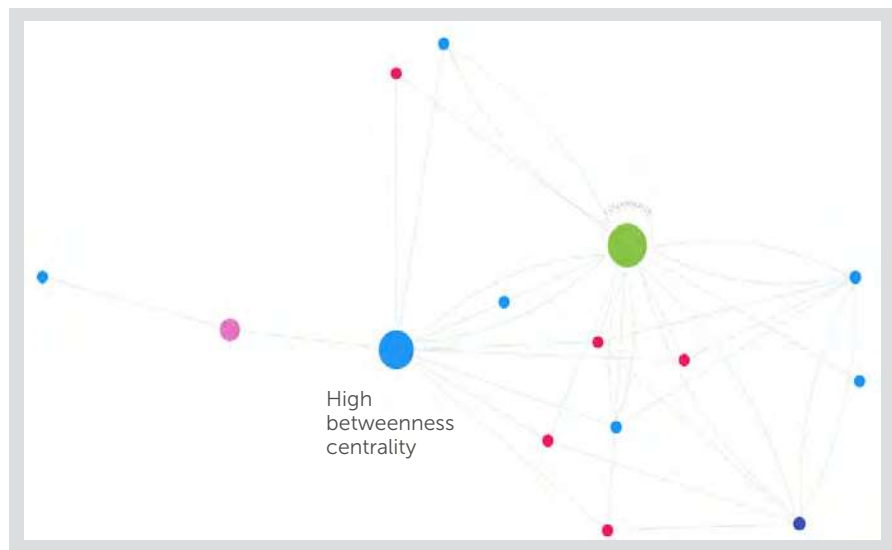
Those with a high degree centrality have the best connections to those around them – they may be influential or just strategically well-placed.

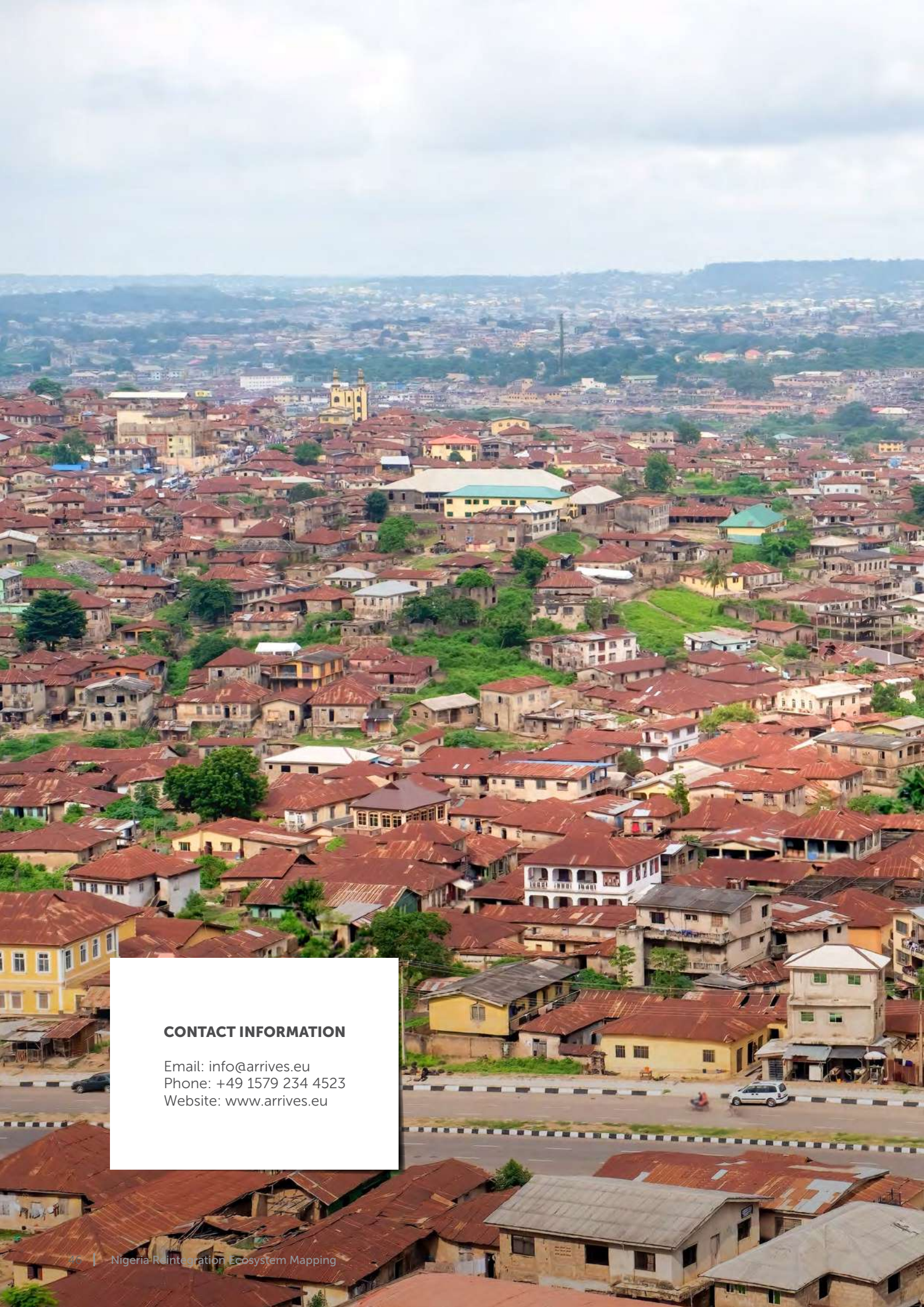


### Betweenness centrality

Institutions with a high betweenness centrality score are the ones that most frequently act as 'bridges' between other nodes. They form the shortest pathways of communication within the network.

Usually this would indicate important gatekeepers of information between groups.





### CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: [info@arrives.eu](mailto:info@arrives.eu)  
Phone: +49 1579 234 4523  
Website: [www.arrives.eu](http://www.arrives.eu)





**ARRIVES**