

TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGE

IV



2018 - 2020

A European counselling perspective on region-specific
return and reintegration

FINAL BROCHURE



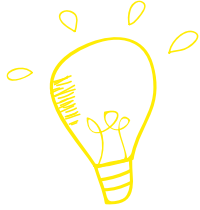
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INTRODUCTION

The EU funded Transnational Exchange Project IV is co-financed by the Bavarian State Office for Asylum and Repatriation (LfAR) and aims to provide a platform for a European exchange of AVRR counsellors. The project took place from July 2018 to June 2020 and focused on “A European counselling perspective on region-specific return and reintegration”.

Within the framework of the project three region-specific workshops took place: Counsellors from different EU countries met with experts from the field and reintegration partners and discussed best-practice and challenges in the return and reintegration process. The aim was to equip counsellors with first-hand information and to improve the counselling quality through region-specific training on relevant topics. The workshops covered “Return to the Caucasus Region”, “Return to the Middle East” and “Return to West Africa”.

Additionally, two field trips were conducted: one field visit of European counsellors to the Netherlands to explore the country’s AVRR system and one field visit of European counsellors to Ghana as a country of return to explore the local reintegration procedure and assistance.

Unfortunately the final conference of the project, which should have provided information about the “Return to the Horn of Africa and Pakistan” as well as enabling a dialogue between counsellors and political actors in the field of AVRR, had to be cancelled due to the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic.

Instead, the project offered a series of virtual seminars to give an overview on the situation in Somalia and Pakistan.

This final brochure of the Transnational Exchange IV project includes the summaries of the virtual seminars to make the useful information of the speakers accessible to a broader European audience. But the brochure also aims to offer some food for thoughts for counsellors in the AVRR field by

summarizing key conclusions and practical advice from the previous workshops with the focus on region-specific return. We strongly believe that such excerpts can help to reflect one’s own way of working, challenge the daily routine counsellors are working in, rise additional questions and make us more aware of issues and concerns we sometimes lose sight of. Some pieces of advice might feel like common sense for experienced counsellors, but also might remind ourselves of some basic facts and bits and pieces which can be small components of a successful counselling and a sustainable return.

This brochure is not comprehensive, but rather a collection of “spot lights” from the workshops, discussions and partly from the field trips. We like to invite you to have a look at the different reports provided on the website of the project to get more detailed information:

<https://www.caritas-augsburg.de/hilfeberatung/migrationsundfluechtlingsberatung/transnational-exchange-iv/transnational-exchange-iv>

Also you will find the latest information about the AVRR system in different EU countries. The information was collected in close cooperation with organizations offering AVRR counselling in the respective country. We are grateful for this support and cooperation and we apologize that not all EU countries are presented in this brochure. Nevertheless, this could be a chance and invitation towards more EU countries to join this European Dialogue amongst counsellors.

» 2.

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON AVRR AND CURRENT TRENDS

The Transnational Exchange Project also aims to include an overall picture of AVRR in the European Union. Therefore the final conference of the project was supposed to provide a platform for exchange between political actors from different EU countries and the EU Commission and counsellors working on the ground. We want to encourage counsellors to contribute their expertise in the discussions, look at the wider picture, and stay updated about current trends and tendencies on the political level.

DATA CONCERNING ASYLUM AND RETURN ON A EUROPEAN LEVEL¹

- 676,000 asylum applications, including 613,000 first time applications, were lodged in the EU in 2019, up by 11 % from 2018.
- Germany, France, Spain, Greece and Italy were the main destination countries.
- The main countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela, Colombia and Iraq.
- In 2019, Member States in the EU took 541,000 first instance asylum decisions. 38 % of these decisions were positive: 109,000 persons received refugee status, 52,000 were granted subsidiary protection status and 45,000 received humanitarian status. Without humanitarian status (which is granted in part of the Member States, under national legislation), the average recognition rate was 30 %.
- In 2019, a further 292,000 final decisions were made following an appeal, including 32,000 decisions granting refugee status, 30,000 granting subsidiary protection status and 28,000 granting humanitarian status.²
- In 2019 513.470 third country nationals were issued a return decision, up from 478.155 in 2018. 161.755 third country nationals returned to a third country, which brings the return rate for 2019 to 31,5 %.³

1) Eurostat statistics https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

2) Eurostat

3) also Eurostat

4) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:348:0098:0107:EN:PDF>

EUROPEAN RETURN POLICY

At the end of 2010 the common rules on return, the Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (the so-called „Return Directive“)⁴ agreed by EU States in 2008, entered into force. The Return Directive is one pillar of efforts of the EU to harmonise and support national efforts to better manage returns and to facilitate reintegration. Effectively returning irregular migrants is one of the key objectives of the European Union’s migration policy - in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and based on the principle of giving preference to voluntary return it is seen as essential to a comprehensive and sustainable migration policy. The Return Directive has been transposed into national law by all States bound by it (all EU States except UK and Ireland; plus the 4 Schengen associated countries: Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein).

On 12 September 2018, the European Commission published a proposal for a recasting of the 2008 Return Directive⁵. This proposal was part of a package of measures proposed by the EU Commission to step up the effective return of illegally staying third-country nationals. Currently, legislative negotiations are ongoing after the Justice and Home Affairs Council reached a partial general approach in June 2019.

The recast of the Return Directive aims to tackle difficulties and obstacles that Member States face in return procedures, including:

- The lack of clear common rules on the definition of risk of absconding and the consequent inconsistent use of detention resulting in absconding and secondary movements;
- The lack of cooperation of individuals subject to return procedures;
- Strengthening national assisted voluntary return programmes.

The revised Return Directive also aims to allow Member States to better deal with the lack of cooperation on the part of the third-country nationals that leads to obstruct the return procedure, by setting new third country nationals’ obligations and increasing support for voluntary return.

The proposed amendments still ensure the respect of the principle of non-refoulement as it is also stated in Recital (10) of the Return Directive: “Where there are no reasons to believe that this would undermine the purpose of a return procedure, voluntary return should be preferred over forced return and a period for voluntary departure should be granted.” Voluntary return is and remains the preferred way of returning irregular migrants in the European policy, following the arguments that voluntary return allows for a more dignified return of migrants, is more acceptable to third countries and is more cost-effective.

The share of voluntary departure from the EU is gradually increasing. At the same time, there is scope to increase the use of voluntary departure and improve the effectiveness of voluntary return, both through return & reintegration programs and through improved counselling.

The EU-Commission has financially and politically supported national return and reintegration programmes since 2005. The number of these programmes has been increasing over time. An EMN study in 2016 found 96 programmes implemented by 27 Member States to assist migrants to return and to support their reintegration⁶; these programmes greatly differ and might target only a certain category of irregular migrants (e.g. rejected asylum seekers only, irregular migrants coming from specific third countries, migrants who are not detained, migrants subject to a return decision issued only by one of the national competent authorities for return).

Currently, there is no common EU policy on AVRR. The future aim is to increase cooperation and coordination between EU Member States, EU Commission and Frontex. Under the European Migration Network (Return Expert Group) topics such as counselling and return & reintegration programs will be further discussed. Also within the framework of ERRIN (European return and reintegration network) enhancements for outreach and pre-departure counselling are compiled.

5) https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-returning-illegally-staying-third-country-nationals-directive-634_en.pdf

6) https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_synthesis_report_rejected_asylum_seekers_2016.pdf

» 3.

OVERVIEW OF THE AVRR SYSTEMS IN THE EU

The following part will show the latest information about the AVRR system in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and Belgium. The information was collected in close cooperation with the organizations offering AVRR counselling in the respective country. The different availability of time, finances, reintegration projects and the predefined government structure lead to a great variety of AVR counselling systems.



Assisted Voluntary Return

GERMANY



COUNSELLING PROVIDER

- Municipality counsellors
- NGOs: Caritas, Red Cross, Diakonia, AWO, etc.
- IOM

COUNSELLING SYSTEM

New: mandatory information session by BAMF staff in the course of asylum procedure.

Due to federalism the AVR counselling offer and reintegration assistance differ strongly between the 16 federal states – from no AVR counselling to counselling with an available budget for individual reintegration assistance.

One-stop-shop assistance:

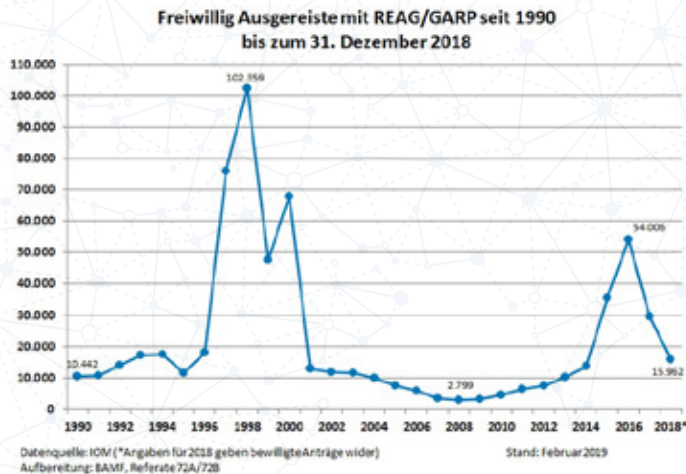
- First counselling
- Analysis of perspectives in host and home country
- Arrangements with public authorities
- Application for flight ticket and travel money at IOM (REAG/GARP)
- Start-up assistance e.g. development of business plan
- Enrollment in reintegration projects when possible
- Final counselling and handing out of flight ticket and travel money

REINTEGRATION PROJECTS

- ERIN (BAMF): 15 countries of return
- URA (BAMF) & Kosovo project (AWO): Kosovo
- Startfinder (GIZ): Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan
- Returnee counselling center Belgrade (Caritas Serbia): Serbia
- CAROB (OFII/BAMF): Armenia
- Restart your future at home (ETTC): Iraq

VOLUNTARY RETURN NUMBERS

Number of voluntary returnees with REAG/GARP from 1990 to 2018 (1)



Voluntary returns with REAG/GARP 2019: 13.105 (2)

TOP 10 COUNTRIES OF RETURN

	2018 (1)		2019 (2)	
1.	Iraq	1834	Iraq	1791
2.	Albania	1562	Georgia	1064
3.	Russia	1371	Northern Macedonia	1007
4.	Macedonia	1246	Russia	956
5.	Serbia	1153	Albania	843
6.	Georgia	1065	Armenia	832
7.	Moldova	733	Serbia	822
8.	Ukraine	713	Ukraine	686
9.	Armenia	704	Moldova	681
10.	Azerbaijan	685	Iran	551

Source: (1) @BAMF/Numbers: IOM
(2) Preliminary figures as of February 2020, IOM Nuremberg – Germany

DONORS

1. Funds of Federal Government
2. Funds of individual federal states (Länder Funds)
3. Funds of municipalities
4. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
5. AMIF
6. (BAMF) → ERRIN
7. Own funds of NGOs

HANDLING OF VULNERABLE CASES

- Solwodi (Solidarity for women in distress) offers special return counselling, reintegration projects and funds single women
- Melonet (Medical Logistics Network) is specialized in medical flight escorts for ill returnees

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Homeward bound Program (BMZ, GIZ): reintegration scouts, online information, preparatory measures for reintegration, migration advice centers in CoR, etc.
- Returning from Germany homepage & returnee hotline (BAMF)
- IntegPlan project (Micado Migration): training for counselors, advisory team, online platform for information exchange
- European Reintegration Support Organisations (ERSO) network

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Nationwide available financial assistance:

Return funding program REAG/GARP by IOM on behalf of the federal government and the federal states. Includes:

- Travel aids: 200€ for adults and unaccompanied minors and 100€ for persons under 18; reduced travel aids for nationals who travel visa-free to Germany: 50€ for adults and unaccompanied minors and 25€ for persons under 18
- 1. Start-up aid for nationals of the REAG/GARP country list: 1000€ for adults and unaccompanied minors and 500€ for persons under 18; the maximum funding amount is 3.500€ per family

- Special funding for early departure in the amount of 500€ per person/ family (within the first 2 months after asylum decision)
- Cost absorption for travel to point of departure/airport upon request
- 2. Start-up aid 6-8 months post-departure for nationals of the REAG/GARP country list: 1000€ for adults and unaccompanied minors and 2000€ for families
- Housing reintegration support for returnees to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Tadjikistan and Turkey: 3000€ in kind for families and 1000€ per person and unaccompanied minors

Assisted Voluntary Return

AUSTRIA



COUNSELLING PROVIDER

- Caritas Austria in 7 federal states
- Human Rights Association of Austria (Verein Menschenrechte Österreich/VMÖ) in 8 federal states

COUNSELLING SYSTEM

AVR counselling is centralized in Austria. There are no differences with regards to rules and regulations between the 9 federal states.

One – Stop – Shop Assistance

- Counselling on perspectives in Austria and country of origin (CoR)
- Assistance with organization of travel documents
- Organization of return flight in cooperation with IOM
- Application for financial support to asylum authorities (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl)
- Registration of returnee in matching reintegration program
- Occasional escort to the airport by counsellors
- Hand out of flight ticket by IOM staff at the airport

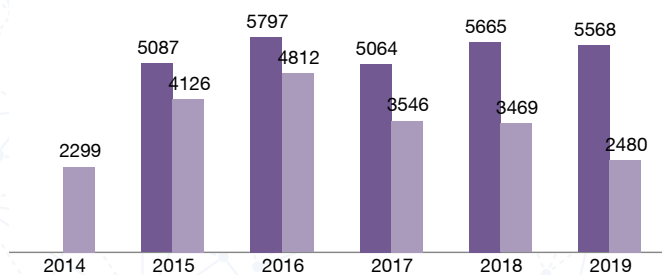
REINTEGRATION PROJECTS

- Irma Plus (Caritas Austria):
 - » Vulnerable returnees only: Ghana, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, India
 - » Vulnerable and non-vulnerable returnees: Nigeria, Morocco
- Restart II (IOM): Iran and Afghanistan
- ERIN (Ministry of the Interior): Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Morocco
- MigDev Armenia (Caritas Voralberg)

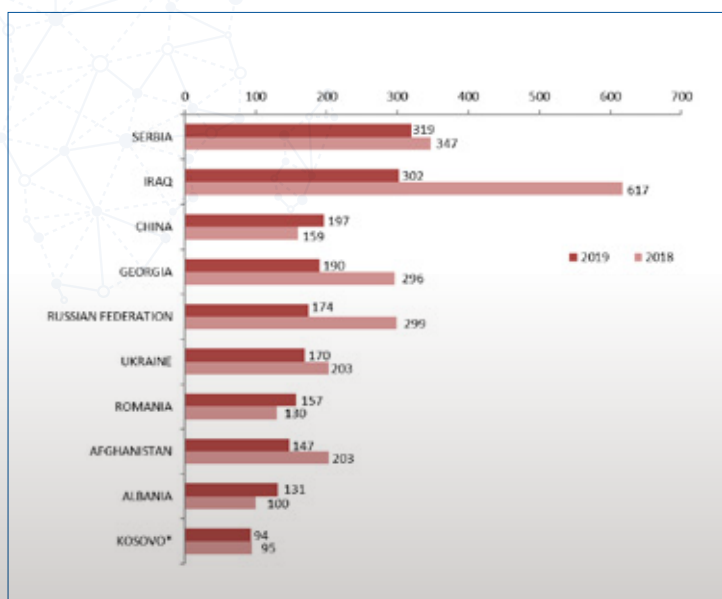
RETURN FIGURES

RETURN FIGURES

- total number of voluntary return (BFA)
- voluntary return assisted through IOM



MAIN COUNTRIES OF RETURN (IOM)



Source: - IOM Austria Statistical Overview 2019
- BFA Jahresbilanz 2014-2019

COUNTRY SPECIFIC DETAILS

DONORS

- Funded by AMIF and Ministry of the Interior
- Projects based on specifications of Ministry

SPECIAL FEATURE

- From January 2021 the BBU (the federal agency in Austria) will be taking over the field of administrative care and legal advice of asylum seekers, including return counselling. There will be only one actor then for AVRR counselling
- Regarding reintegration programs there is a small change in the IOM Restart Projects – the Iran project has been cancelled

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Since 2017 returnees can receive between 50 € (visa-free countries including Western Balkan countries), 250 € and 500 € depending on the decision of the BFA (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum). Reintegration assistance ERRIN: 200 € cash and 2.800 € in kind.

The reintegration assistance of IRMA plus, RESTART III can amount to 3000 € or 3500 € depending on the project and the country of return.

Assisted Voluntary Return

SWITZER- LAND



STRUCTURE

COUNSELLING PROVIDER

- Cantonal Authority Counsellors
- NGO counsellors: Caritas, Red Cross, KKF-OCA
- IOM (in Federal Asylum Centers)
- AVR for asylum seekers is centralized in Switzerland & steered by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

COUNSELLING SYSTEM

One-Stop-Shop Assistance

- Initial Counselling
- Assistance with organization of travel documents
- Creation of a business plan
- Return counsellors prepare the actual departure and reintegration assistance in cooperation with IOM (RIF, SIM, RAS)
- Application for flight ticket and for financial and project assistance (business, housing, education) to SEM
- Counsellor is the hub between returnee and IOM, SEM and the local authorities
- Hand out of financial assistance, travel documents and flight ticket at the airport

REINTEGRATION

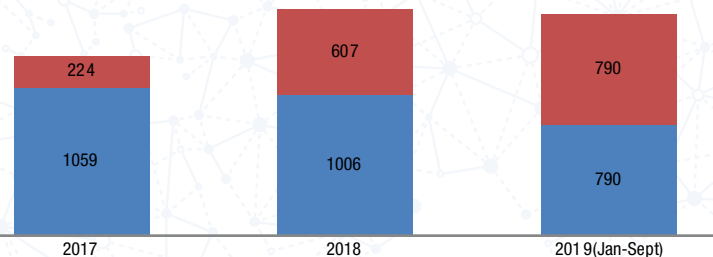
- Local IOM staff help implementing the returnees project (adequate use of project assistance) and execute monitoring (if requested by SEM)

RETURN FIGURES

RETURN FIGURES

Voluntary return numbers 2017 - 2019

- Number of returnees without financial support
- Number of returnees with financial support



TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF RETURN

(only returns with financial assistance, only CoRs with visa requirement)

	2018		2019 (Jan-Sept)	
1.	Algeria	59	Algeria	93
2.	Iraq	42	Kosovo	56
3.	Sri Lanka	31	Iraq	51
4.	Gambia	29	Turkey	37
5.	Ethiopia	28	Sri Lanka	31

Source: IOM Bern, SEM

COUNTRY SPECIFIC DETAILS

DONORS

- State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)
- Service Social International (SSI)
- Cantonal authorities or Municipalities

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Counselling session upon the rejection of asylum application in several cantons obligatory
- Asylum seekers who register for voluntary return assistance need to withdraw their application
- Return assistance from Federal Asylum Centers is degressive according to the status of the asylum procedure and the length of stay and takes into account country-specific reasons
- Those who decide quickly to return voluntarily receive higher benefits
- Persons from geographically distant countries that are not exempt from visas receive an in-kind assistance if they subscribe for voluntary return before the Asylum Decision

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Return assistance from Federal Asylum Centers is degressive and country-specific. Returnees may receive up to 1000 CHF cash allowance and 3000 CHF if they subscribe for AVRR before the Asylum Decision. Vulnerable persons and people with a longer stay in

Switzerland will receive up to 1000 CHF cash grant and 3000 - 5000 CHF reintegration support. Additional medical assistance is granted, if needed.

(exchange rate: 1€ ≈ 1,1 CHF)

Assisted Voluntary Return

THE NETHER- LANDS



STRUCTURE

COUNSELLING PROVIDER

- NGOs: Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland), Foundation WereldWijd, Solid Road, ROS, Bridge to Better, Goedwerk Foundation
- IOM
- Case managers of the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V) of the Ministry of Justice and Security

COUNSELLING SYSTEM

- The pre-departure counselling includes information about AVRR and psychological assistance in the decision making process
- In some programmes clients can enrol in vocational training programs which are offered by organizations such as Solid Road and WereldWijd; these organizations continue the AVRR counselling after clients finalise their training
- Registered clients work on a business plan or reintegration plan
- The advisors of the Dutch Council for Refugees establish the contact between the returnee and the reintegration partner in the country of return through the European Reintegration Support Organizations (ERSO)-network, IOM or other institutional partnerships
- For the practical departure preparation the returnee needs to visit an IOM office where he/she applies for the flight ticket and an additional financial allowance

REINTEGRATION

The return projects that the Dutch government supports financially offer migrants three levels of support: 1. Basic departure support; 2. Support aimed at reintegration; 3. Additional support

- ERRIN: this reintegration program is only available for forced returnees; the ERRIN project offers reintegration support in 17 different countries of return
- ERSO: The Dutch Council for Refugees offers clients who return independently a re-integration programme through the ERSO network. Close cooperation before and after return of a client is fundamental here
- Other: several NGOs foster good relations with reintegration organizations or make use of existing networks like ERSO

RETURN FIGURES

COUNTRY SPECIFIC DETAILS

RETURN NUMBERS



TOP 5 COUNTRIES OF RETURN – IOM (1)

	2018		2019	
1.	Albania	368	Albania	467
2.	Moldova	229	Moldova	380
3.	Azerbaijan	136	Azerbaijan	264
4.	Iraq	134	Georgia	130
5.	Tajikistan	106	Ukraine	124

Source:

(1) IOM Netherlands Annual Statistics Voluntary Return since 1992

DONORS

- Dutch government: the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V)
- EU funds: The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)
- Own funding of NGOs

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Dutch Council for Refugees: strong emphasis on training of volunteers who assist the returnees in a similar way to professional counsellors (VluchtelingenWerk offers this training all over the Netherlands) with the goal to provide as much AVRR counselling as possible
- (Illegal) migrants / (former) asylum seekers are encouraged to leave independently; strong financial incentives to return independently & voluntarily are given throughout their entire stay (even after a first rejection of the asylum request); at the same time, strict implementation of laws: transfer of rejected asylum seekers after a limited period of time from reception centre to Freedom-restricting Centre to detention centre
- An important part of the departure process is the departure interviews between foreign national and DT&V, IOM and possibly other NGOs
- In 2018, the national government together with local governments started a national pilot in five cities to offer guidance and shelter to a selected group of undocumented migrants. Aim is to find durable solutions for the people concerned. These so-called LVVs currently exist in 5 cities

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- The reintegration budget consists of maximum 1800€ for adults, 2800€ for minor children returning with their family and 2800€ for unaccompanied minor children
- Depending on the programme and funding agency, a client can choose to receive a maximum 300€ of the total budget in cash or to spend part of the reintegration budget in the Netherlands before departure
- The in-kind amount can be used for an income generating activity

(such as a small business), education and on accommodation in country of return

- IOM: airline ticket and a basic financial allowance of 200€ for an adult and 40€ for an accompanying child to cover your immediate expenses after arrival
- For vulnerable returnees an additional budget can be requested at the DT&V

Assisted Voluntary Return

BELGIUM



COUNSELLING PROVIDER

- FEDASIL (State) Counsellors
- NGOs: Caritas International Belgium (CIB), Red Cross, CAW (social centers)
- IOM (reintegration counselling only)

COUNSELLING SYSTEM

2 – stage – model

Stage 1: Information and Return Counselling offered by numerous providers all over the country

- First contact and counselling, information about AVR, examination of eligibility for reintegration support
- Organization of flight ticket and travel money through IOM

Stage 2: Reintegration Counselling offered by 4 CIB counsellors and 5 IOM counsellors in all of Belgium

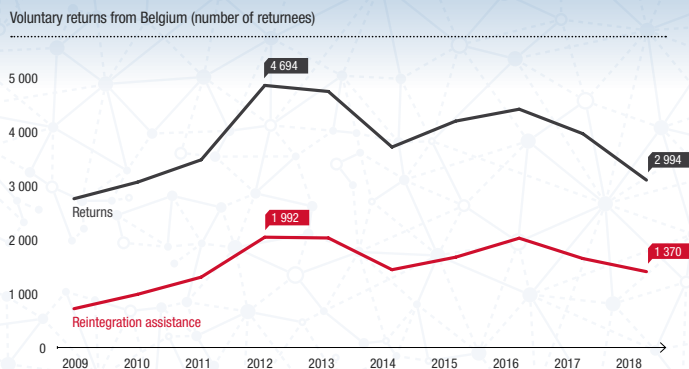
- Development of reintegration plan
- Establishing contact between returnee and reintegration partner through telephone or skype
- Follow-up assistance and support after return
- Regular monitoring

REINTEGRATION PROJECTS

- National Program (AMIF & FEDASIL): reintegration assistance to all countries of return possible
- ERIN: Russia, Morocco, Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Ukraine, Morocco, Russia, Iraq

RETURN FIGURES

RETURN FIGURES



Comment - The figures also include the voluntary returns organised by the Immigration Office (48 persons in 2018). However, the figures do not include voluntary returns carried out within the framework of the Dublin Convention (organised by the Immigration Office to the European countries where migrants have already applied for international protection).

TOP 8 COUNTRIES OF RETURN

	2018		2019	
1.	Ukraine	547	Brazil	338
2.	Georgia	432	Romania	313
3.	Romania	383	Ukraine	201
4.	Brazil	331	Iraq	76
5.	Iraq	172	Georgia	58
6.	Albania	101	Armenia	51
7.	Armenia	74	Mongolia	50
8.	Macedonia	62	Albania	48

Sources: FEDASIL – REVIEW 2018 p.18 / FEDASIL – Nov. 2019

COUNTRY SPECIFIC DETAILS

DONORS

- AMIF
- FEDASIL
- NGOs

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Fedasil plans to continue raising awareness among illegal immigrants
- Fedasil organizes information sessions for front-line personnel
- The aim is to inform as many people as possible about the possibilities for return
- Fedasil has also expanded its network of partners among the local authorities
- The cities of Liège, Anderlecht and Mechelen now have a returns awareness project

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Financial assistance for returnees divided into 2 Groups.

Group A: Asylum seekers in procedure until the end

- Allowance departure: 250 € per adult & 125 € per child
- Basic help: 700 € per adult & 350 € per child
- Complement help per file: 1.500 €

Group B: Rejected asylum seekers and migrants who follow or have followed other procedures in the aim of a regular stay; all persons known by the Foreign office

- Allowance departure: 250 € per adult & 125 € per child
- Basic help: 700 € per adult & 350 € per child

Migrants who have never followed any procedure and are not known by the Foreign Office only get the allowance departure. Persons without visa requirements to enter Belgium can obtain a flight ticket (no cash assistance) to return.

Vulnerable clients may receive extra funding.

SOMALIA: RETURN AND REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES

on the 26th May 2020

Speaker: Mr. Ahmed Abdi, Director of ZamZam Foundation, Somaliland

ZAMZAM FOUNDATION

Mr. Ahmed Abdi is the ERRIN Project Lead at the ZamZam Foundation based in Somaliland. ZamZam Foundation is the local partner of IRARA (International Returns and Reintegration Assistance), a non-profit organisation that is committed to helping individuals and families repatriate to their home countries.

ZamZam Foundation has main offices in Mogadishu and Hargeisa but also is regionally present across Somalia and Somaliland. The organization is involved in a lot of different sectors and has extensive experience in reintegration and repatriation of returnees. Returnees are referred systematically to ZamZam through IRARA by the ERRIN program. ZamZam started to work with returnees from Europe in 2019.

POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Somaliland is a self-declared state since 18th MAY 1991 – Somalia and Somaliland have different situations, especially regarding the security situation. For over 2 decades Somalia is struggling to have stability and the situation improved in the last 5 years. For a detailed explanation of the political situation we would like to refer to the summary of the second virtual seminar.

Main Services in Somalia/Somaliland:



Reintegration assistance:



HEALTH CARE IN SOMALILAND AND SOMALIA

Private and public health care is available, but health care becomes more privatized and people prefer private health care since the equipment, experience and treatment is regarded as better and satisfying, also due to the presence of foreign doctors in the private hospitals. The private health care is more expensive, but people also have to pay if they use the public health service. There is no health coverage from the governments.

In many regions health services are very limited: facilities might not be in the nearer surrounding and travelling to certain regions can be dangerous due to ongoing conflicts. This makes it difficult for people in the areas outside the major cities to access health care. Hargeisa and Mogadishu have well-equipped hospitals (operating 24/7), whereby the biggest hospital in Mogadishu is operated by the Turkish Government. But travelling to Mogadishu for health care can be very difficult for many people. There are no specialized clinics or facilities for people with drug or alcohol addiction. Drug use is not usual in both regions and there is no strong government outlook for more diverse treatment. The countries are already struggling with the general health care, leave alone departments for mental health. People might even travel outside the countries for a treatment of health problems which will be considered as a minor issue in most countries. "People with drug or alcohol addiction will suffer after return".

Psycho-social support is almost non-existent, there are private institutes, but they are not popular. If ZamZam gets all the pre-arrival information about the psychological status of the returnees, they can make individual arrangements. It is therefore very important to exchange this information prior to the return. The organisation has in house doctors and could also get external specialists when needed. They will meet the returnees at the airport for a first assessment. Both countries have special mental health facilities that do provide and care for the needs of mentally ill persons. Despite the trauma-inducing conditions and experiences many Somalis face, Somalia has only five WHO-recognised mental health centres and just three psychiatrists for the entire country. ZamaZam Foundation is in contact with these facilities and based on the assessment of ZamZam the returnee will either be admitted or get regular treatment.

COVID-19 AND THE CURRENT SITUATION (MAY 2020)

Both countries did not declare a lockdown-situation, but there are Government directives which are updated nearly daily. For example workplaces had to distinguish between essential and non-essential staff – non-essential staff is supposed to work from home. Schools and borders are closed, but there is no general curfew and shops are still open; also institutions are still operating, e.g. immigration authorities.

Both countries now have testing capacities for Covid-19 within the countries, before tests from Somaliland and Somalia were sent to Kenya. The increased testing capacities led to an increase of cases in Somaliland; the number of cases is decreasing in Somalia. There are medical hotlines 24/7 available in both countries.

The work of ZamZam in term of reintegration is affected by the restrictions: since the borders are closed, no new returnees have arrived. Therefore ZamZam is working with the returnees in the country, providing digital and phone counselling. Face-to-face meetings cannot be conducted at the moment, but the financial assistance is provided electronically.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Both countries have ministries of social affairs and women do not face discrimination in public services. According to Mr. Abdi the level of gender based violence might be higher in areas where more IDPs are living.

There are centres in Hargeisa providing legal aid and material and medical support for victims of gender-based violence. Protection programs, offering social protection and activities and the distribution of “dignity kits” are also part of this support structure. The dignity kit is a package comprising the basic necessities that displaced women and girls require to maintain feminine hygiene, dignity and respect in their daily lives, in spite of displacement. It comprises for example dresses, head scarves, soap, and sanitary cloths.

ZamZam so far did not have experience with unaccompanied minors returning to Somalia or Somaliland.

There are shelters for young returnees like temporary safe houses in Somaliland and also private shelters for females.

Staying in the shelter requires payment from an organization like ZamZam, which also acts like a guarantor for that person (the shelters often want a contact address and an organization responsible). As long as the payment is made, the person can stay in the shelter for an unlimited period of time.

Forced returnees mainly sent back from the Middle East, according to the experience of ZamZam, mostly disappear directly after arrival. In comparison to assisted returns forced returnees lack information and they do not get any support from the former host country. Therefore it is necessary to connect them to the humanitarian assistance available. There are many international organizations working in Somaliland and Somalia, mainly based in Hargeisa and Mogadishu, e.g. the Danish Refugee Council, Welthungerhilfe, GIZ, and many different organizations from Finland, Norway, Germany and USA. Humanitarian aid is also provided through local protection organizations.

The food security situation is alarming at the moment and the government has applied for international support. Especially in rural areas the Covid-19 restrictions make the situation worse: the majority of the people in rural areas literally “eat what they earned on the same day”. For more detailed information about the food security situation, you can visit the website www.fsnau.org.

TRAVELLING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Travelling in Somaliland is not always safe, the costs vary and might reach 10\$ maximum when travelling by road. For travelling from Hargeisa to Mogadishu the best and safest option is a flight, which will cost around 150-200\$. Driving between the regions can be very difficult and dangerous and is not recommended.

The easiest way to transfer money to returnees in Somalia and Somaliland is through organizations like ZamZam using Bank to Bank wiring. There is an internationally recognized banking



system in Somalia and Somaliland. Western Union is not used frequently for money transfer purposes. The most popular way of sending money is through Dahabshiil Money Transfer, which is also mainly used by the diaspora all over the world to transfer money within seconds.

ORGANIZING DOCUMENTS:

The process of clearing in the immigration offices takes time and depends on various factors. Therefore, it is not possible to estimate the “regular processing time”. In general, documents can be accessed easier in Somalia after the return and ZamZam can support the returnee in this process, also through family tracing (e.g. providing birth certificates). Arranging for legal documents it is next to impossible while outside of Somalia.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED WITH RETURNEES

According to ZamZam one problem that exists is the difference in the reintegration packages from the different EU

countries. It is very hard to explain to returnees why someone is entitled to receive a lower amount while another person who returned from a different EU country receives more. The high living costs, especially in Hargeisa and Mogadishu compared to a relatively low reintegration budget makes it difficult for returnees to re-establish their lives. Due to the short time of operating in the sector of reintegration for returnees from Europe, ZamZam cannot share any success story so far, but in general ZamZam expects that the reintegration packages will not be high enough to re-establish a business for the returnee.

Beside the financial limitations the psychological burden can make the reintegration process difficult: returnees might arrive with a feeling of failure since they were not able to establish themselves in Europe. Especially if there are people in the same region who “made it in Europe” it is very difficult for the returnee to stand his or her ground since the return will be seen as a downfall. It is unlikely

for the respective returnee to get further financial support from the extended family, if the family has been “investing” in the migration and it did not work out. The returnee might not be chosen for a “new investment”, which could be essential to e.g. re-establish a local business back home. But if a returnee was communicating openly about the difficulties he or she experiences in Europe, the family members might be happy to have him or her back and feel that the returnee is now “safe” again after the bad experiences.

According to ZamZam there is no general discrimination or stigmatization returnees have to cope with. The level of migration from Somalia and Somaliland is very high and youths are still very attracted by Europe. Families might spend more than they can afford for one of their family members to migrate due to the expectation to get financial stability. If a person can establish him or herself in Europe and support the family, it is an achievement, not establishing yourself can be perceived as degradation.

The family support is very strong in Somalia and Somaliland. Since most civil structures have been destroyed during the civil war, the only support system people could rely on was the family system. The family was and still is in many cases the only insurance available – although insurance companies are coming in (like health insurance), the main insurance system is the family or clan system. The clan system remains very strong in both Somalia and Somaliland, it is the support somebody will turn to when you have problems, but it can also be the source of violence. Read more about the clan system in the abstract of the second virtual seminar.

ECONOMIC REINTEGRATION

ZamZam is providing business training for returnees and helps to promote already existing businesses of the returnees. There is a small program offering grants to the beneficiaries for livelihood businesses or helping returnees to get small loans from other financial institutions. The organization also has free of charge vocational skill training centres in Hargeisa and Mogadishu, where e.g. tailoring, beauticians’ training or electrical trainings are offered. ZamZam then tries to link the trainees with the market by carrying out researches and identifying the needs of the market. The vocational trainings are seen as a good option to increase job chances. Since the project is very new there is no information a vocational training with returnees but the research also helps to connect skilled returnees with the local job market.

The reintegration packages will not sustain nor help a returnee to establish fully, because the funds given are very low compared to the needs. The amount should pay education, health, livelihood; the living expenses in the main cities are very high now, rent, education, health and income generating activity are very expensive. Successfully returned individuals in Somalia would help to promote AVRR, so that people can see that there is chance to restart a life after return.

SOMALI MIGRANTS BETWEEN SOMALIA & EUROPE: EXPECTATIONS, EXPERIENCES AND OPTIONS

on the 28th May 2020

Speaker: Dr. Markus Höhne, Social Anthropologist, University Leipzig, Germany

The second virtual seminar by Dr. Höhne started with short background information on the situation in Somalia. The Somali inhabited territory involves much more than just the territory of the Republic of Somalia. Due to the colonial partition Somalis have been spread over four nation states: Djibuti, Ethiopia, North-East Kenya and Somalia. There is no reliable population figure of Somalis but the estimated number is 12 Million; some 3.5 million live as citizens in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti and about 1 Million are spread as refugees over the globe. The vast majority of Somalis are Sunni Muslims.

There have been different “waves” of Somali migrations abroad. In the 1940s and 1950s, many Somalis were enrolled in the Italian and British colonial armies and later on worked in the colonial industry, mostly on ships. In those days some Somalis settled in Cardiff, UK or in Italy and formed the first Somali diaspora community in Europe. Later on, after independence (1960) Somalis went abroad to study (including to the USA and the USSR). Somali migration to the Arabic peninsula took place in the 1970s and 1980s due to the oil boom in Saudi Arabia and job opportunities on the oil fields. The biggest out-migration, by far, took place from 1988 onward, when the civil war escalated in Somalia (first in the north, then in the south of the country). The majority of Somali forced migrants fled to the neighboring countries (Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti). Many also fled to Europe and North



Hargeisa city © Markus Höhne 2015

America. In 2006 Al Shabaab took over some parts of the country which provoked an international military intervention (initially by Ethiopian forces, later by an African Union mission to Somalia consisting of Burundian, Ugandan, Kenyan, and other forces). The ensuing fighting, which is still present resulted in the killing of countless Somali civilians (particularly in Mogadishu and parts of southern Somalia) and a second big wave of forced migration globally.

Besides the dramatic events of (civil) war over the past three decades, several “secondary” reasons to flee Somalia exist. These become obvious if one takes a deeper look at the everyday life in Somalia. The Infrastructure of the country is very limited with only few tarmac roads. There is a strong urbanization in the region but around 50% of the population of Somalia is still living in the country side, which is wide and sparsely inhabited. Somalia is known for its clan based society. The clan system is structured through patrilineal descent. The patrilineal ties can be imagined as a kind of family tree with clan-families (the biggest groups comprising twenty or more generations) serving as trunk, clans (comprising ten to fifteen generations) as strong branches and lineages (comprising some five to ten generations) as smaller branches or twigs. At the “highest” level of segmentation, all Somalis reckon their origin to eponymous forefathers called Samaale and Sab who are said to be descendants of a legendary ancestor called Hiil.

Genealogical positioning is flexible; depending on the situation, a Somali person (man or woman) indicates his/her lineage, clan or clan-family belonging. Generally, the relations in the father’s line are the primary source of solidarity among Somalis and entail strong moral obligations.

Besides the patrilineal ties there are of course also ties on the mother’s side, since Somalis very often marry across the different groups or clans. The matrilineal ties, however, are secondary to the patrilineal relationships. Married Somalis also create relationships with their in-laws and their descent groups; this constitutes the so called affinal ties. The combination of these three kinship ties (patrilineal, matrilineal, affinal) provides a matrix for solidarity, (moral) obligations and responsibilities within Somali society. This provides also for security in areas where no effective state control exists. Given extensive forced migration, kinship-ties also structure transnational engagement. Many Somalis in the diaspora regularly send money (so called financial remittances) back to their family members in the Horn of Africa to support health care, education or basic survival.

Somalia’s clan-driven society makes it difficult and almost impossible for Somali returnees to return to an area where they do not originate from. Taking a look at the political landscape of Somalia today one can see

that during the (civil) war people fled to areas in the countryside where their respective patrilineal relatives resided. In this way, Somalia splintered into many “clanistans”. Returning to an area that does not align to the own kinship network means returning to a place with no support and security. Many Somalis then end up in IDP camps since these provide at least minimum support for survival; but often, the camps are not secure (particularly for women, children and members of minority groups).

The political realities of Somalia differ within the regions. The southern part of Somalia is mostly the region featured in the news up to today. Even though Al Shabaab has been driven away from major cities like Mogadishu, Kismayo and Baidoa since 2012, the terrorist group still has a strong presence in the southern area bordering Kenya making it the most insecure area for foreigners and Somalis over the last 30 years.

From 2007 to approximately 2012 Al Shabaab has also been active in central Somalia but for the last years this area is ruled by clan militias and government officials who follow their own clan-driven agenda.

Puntland in North-Eastern Somalia has been declared an autonomous regional state in 1998. It belongs to the Federal Republic of Somalia, but keeps a certain distance from the government in Mogadishu (this government has anyway only very limited influence in Somalia). With its capital city Garoowe, Puntland is a rather stable area, occasionally infiltrated by Al Shabaab but very secure for the locals.

Somaliland in North-Western Somalia is the most stable and secure part of former Somalia. Somaliland is a self-declared state that wishes to be independent of Somalia, but in the view of the powerholders in Mogadishu and internationally it is still considered to be part of Somalia. Somaliland is a de facto state. This means: it functions like a state with its own government, currency and democratic elections but lacks international recognition. The regions Sool and Sanaag in central northern Somalia are disputed between Somaliland and Puntland. There, the armies of Somaliland and Puntland occasionally clash which results in protracted

insecurity, displacement and lack of development in this area. Somalis living in the rural areas of the Somali hinterland are on their own. There is hardly any infrastructure. Children are forced to develop a high degree of responsibility and independence at a very early age. Most Somalis in rural areas do not receive formal education but learn early enough about the dangers of everyday life. This also shapes the behavior and decision making of young Somalis during their often very dangerous migration to and in Europe.

On the other hand, there are numerous urban centers and larger cities in Somalia (Hargeysa, Bur’o, Bosaso, Garowe, Galkayo, Beledweyne, Baydhoa, Mogadishu, Kismayo etc.). Somalis there normally enjoy better infrastructure (from running water to access to education). But all services are private and only persons with some income can afford health care and education etc. The unemployment rate in Somali cities is around 60 percent, one of the highest worldwide. Additionally, Mogadishu, but also Kismayo and Baidoa are epicenters of protracted violence and ongoing fighting (against Al Shabaab). These challenges influence the decisions of many Somalis to emigrate.

The main reason to leave for Somalis is the ongoing violence and danger related to criminality, corruption, repression (by state-agencies) and terror by Al Shabaab.

Unemployment, hopelessness, inequality and peer pressure also are fundamental reasons to leave the country. Around the year 2000, diaspora activists established local universities in Somalia to provide the younger generations with an orientation for the future. The universities quickly flourished and the 1st and 2nd generation of graduates was able to get decent and relatively well paid jobs in the local economy. Today, in 2020, with the 7th generation of graduates, it is clear to most students that they won’t get a job anymore with their local certificates. The market is saturated. Some go abroad for further studies (in Kampala or Nairobi) hoping that an international MA-degree will guarantee them a job with one of the international NGOs back in Somalia. Still, the future is by far not secure as the high unemployment rate shows.

Consequently, many young Somalis (as young as 15 years) seek to leave Somalia out of despair.

Another reason to leave Somalia is the rarely documented gender-based discrimination and violence against women and young girls. Somali women are often structural marginalized. Depending on the male support of the family, Somali women can either receive only limited or no education at all, or even enter the university and graduate. But either way women are expected to get married latest in their early twenties and give birth to as many children as possible. This makes it difficult for especially well educated Somali women to pursue a career.

In general Somali women are expected to be obedient to their husbands and male family members. This often results in severe domestic violence against women and girls, which is widely spread in Somalia. The traditional way of dealing with separation or divorce in Somalia is that normally the mother would send over the children to the husband's family as required by his clan (since clan membership is inherited in the father's line). The mother then ends up as a single person and has the option to remarry and start a new family. The concept of being a stepfather is not very common in the Somali culture.

Women who do not want to give away their children for various reasons are only able survive with help and support of the own family. As long as a woman has the backing of her lineage or clan, she can reorient herself; some open businesses or engage in religious circles for women and find stable ground in this way. Yet, single mothers without family support are extremely vulnerable to abuse. They frequently have to engage in clandestine prostitution to make living. There is no social services in place anywhere in Somalia and those in need are extremely dependent either on (benevolent) relatives or on those abusing their weaknesses. The structural difficulties in which many younger women find themselves lead to some of them seeking refuge through flight/migration.

For all these reasons Somalis migrate to Europe with high expectations to find protection, peace, security, education, employment, and a better future.



Street scene (man with khat in the foreground), Hargeysa © Markus Höhne 2012

Those, who fled in the late 1980s and the early 1990s were often entire families, with parents who had some education and work experiences. Recently, those Somalis who seek to escape from Al Shabaab and other threats are usually young men who fear forcible recruitment into the terror group. Some also fear being wrongfully accused by the government to be a member of Al Shabaab. Young women often hope to escape abuse and subjugation. The newer generation of Somali (male and female) refugees often does not have a strong educational background, has little or no work experience, and does not possess personal legal documents or certificates. Travelling to neighboring countries like Kenya or Ethiopia without any documents and then moving on from there to Europe ("on tahriib", as it is called in Somalia, which refers to illegal migration) is the usual way to migrate. The dangerous and challenging undocumented journey through different countries might take months or even years and bears a very high risk of being stuck and abused in foreign countries (particularly Southern Sudan, Sudan and Libya).

Today, Somalis are one of the largest groups of migrants worldwide after Afghans and Syrians. In various European countries they have a sizable presence. The largest number of people with Somalian background can be found in the UK and Italy. But also in Germany and in Scandinavian countries, many Somali (former) refugees reside. The major problems Somalis

are facing in Europe are lack of formal education, no certificates, problems with civil documentation, problems with legal status, and racism. They form a new group of a 'hyper visible minority' which refers to them being Muslims and dark skinned in countries like Germany, the Netherlands or Finland. Partly in reaction to racist and exclusionary experiences, partly based on the specific traits of Somali culture (including the clan system) Somalis tend to isolate themselves and build their own secluded communities. This makes it difficult for state authorities and social workers to interact with them.

The main reason for Somalis to return is the dream of a successful return to Somalia with European or North American citizenship and their own economic and educational resources. This is mostly the case with older generation Somalis, who try to achieve a transnational life between the respective countries of (secondary) settlement. One motivation to return can also be to correct the status loss some Somalis experienced when fleeing abroad in the early 1990s. They came from "good families" and ended up as "poor refugees" who were looked down upon. Becoming economically independent back home and upgrading their personal status again is desired by many Somalis.

For the younger generation it is more difficult to stabilize and upgrade their lives through migration. Most of them do not have an educational background to build themselves up quickly in Europe in order to return successfully; also the immigration regulations in Europe have changed over the past years and it is more complicated to be accepted as refugee and get a stable legal status (compared to those Somalis who came in the early 1990s and almost all were accepted as refugees). Young Somali men and women run the risk to be seen as a failed diaspora in Europe, particularly if they are not able to earn money soon and/or get some more education abroad. The financial reintegration funds offered to voluntary returnees are by far not enough to guarantee the establishment of a moderately prosperous life back in Somalia; normally, these funds are much less than what Somalis and their families have spent to make the migration to Europe possible (many parents and other relatives have to collect between 1000 and 5000 USD to save the lives of their children on the way to Europe via the Sahara

desert and the Mediterranean, which also includes threats by human traffickers). In Somalia today, a person would need at least 150 USD per month to survive (not including payments for healthcare), a family would survive on around 400 USD per month. Given that unskilled labor in Somalia is paid very badly (approximately 100-150 USD per months, if one is lucky) and given the mentioned extremely high unemployment rate in the country, besides ongoing security threats in the south and structural problems for women and minority group members, many returnees are facing the same challenges back in Somalia which provoked them to flee in the first place.



SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

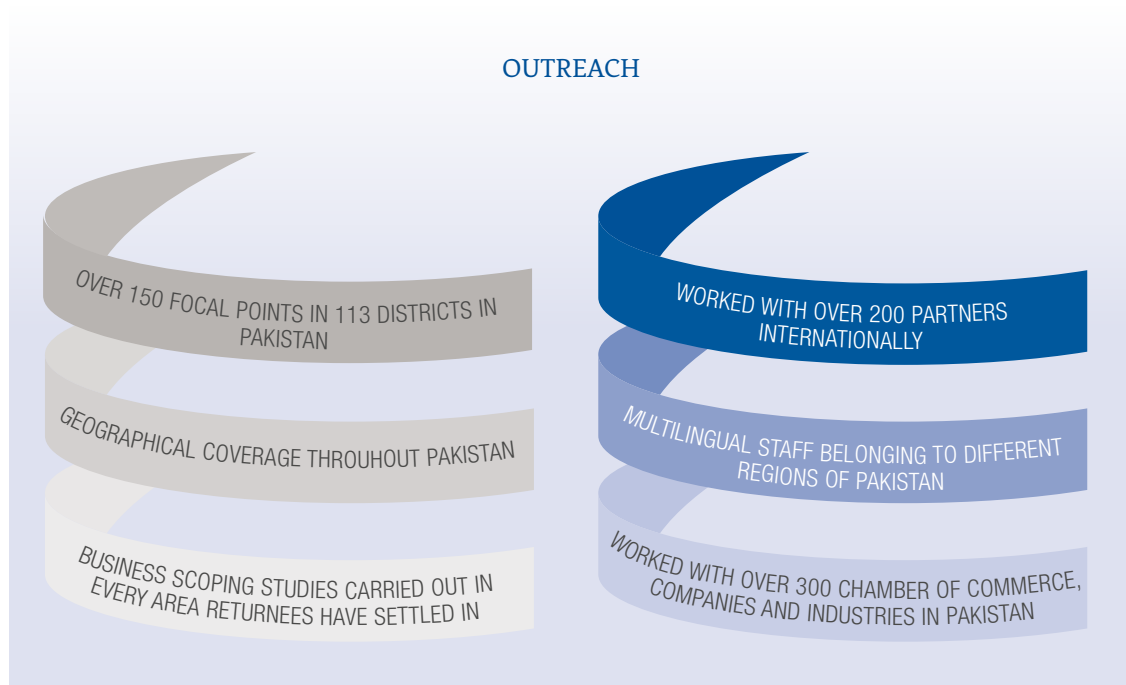
on the 2nd June 2020

Speaker: Ms. Sijal Aziz, Director Returns and Integration WELDO, Pakistan

Sijal.ext@weldo.org

WELDO AND REINTEGRATION WORK

WELDO was founded in 2003 with the goal of doing sustainable development, from 2009 onwards the focus shifted to returnees and the ERRIN program.

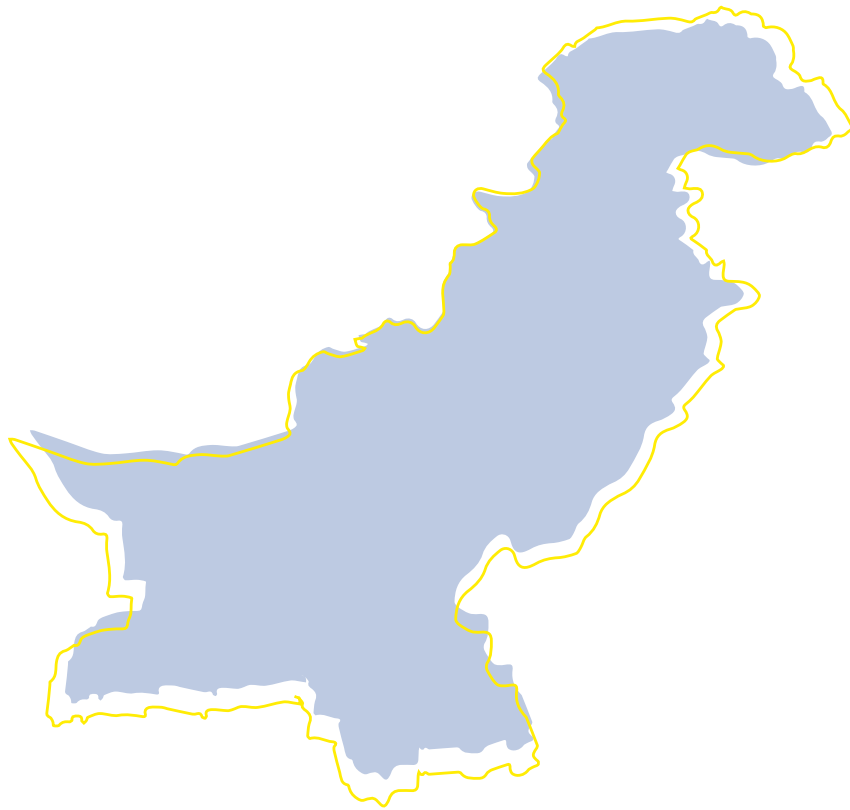


WELDO has outreach all over Pakistan and also is supported by returnees who have been assisted earlier. WELDO staff members are multilingual and belong to major provincial hubs of Pakistan where most of the returnees are coming back to. This helps in developing trust with the returnees and getting the message across.

WELDO's approach to reintegration is three pronged consisting of social, psychological and economic assessment for sustainable reintegration. The major questions which arise during this approach are what social impact is the returnee going through; does he or she need any social support as well; is he or she suffering from any psychological problems or trauma?

In most cases the reintegration process starts with a referral from the EPI (European Partner Institution). Sometimes the returnees show up at the office and their referral has not been sent. In case their referral has been sent, the form includes all the information on the returnee, whether there is a need for reception at the airport, medical needs, etc. If the returnee shows up at the WELDO office and his referral is not sent by the EPI, WELDO will contact the EPI to find out if the returnee is eligible for reintegration services.

A big percentage of returnees are interested in setting up businesses through their reintegration assistance. WELDO provides the service of business set up in this regard, consisting of carrying out a business scoping study in the area where the returnee intends to set up his business. This scoping study consists of assessing the business's financial



viability, assessing other similar businesses in the area to analyse competitiveness and identifying sources through which goods and services could be purchased if the returnee hasn't identified his preferred vendor. It can take between four weeks up to three months from the first meeting to the finalization of the business plan and finalization of payment to the vendor/landlord/service.

If the returnee does not want to set up a business, but rather invest in accommodation, WELDO examines the availability of accommodation and the housing prices of the respective areas, if the returnee hasn't done so already.

WELDO gets in touch with returnees frequently and does follow-ups for up to 3 years. A returnee is successfully reintegrated when he or she is still in Pakistan and has not re-migrated within the 3 years, the business is still running and the returnee can afford to sustain the family and pay for the education of the children. The service provided to returnees with mental problems in Pakistan is very limited: WELDO refers them to certain counsellors and therapists but the WELDO staff will not be able to provide help for major psychological problems as the condition of provision of psychological and psychiatric health in Pakistan is in shambles. WELDO offers returnees a chance to discuss their issues through holding focus group discussions consisting of 15 to 20 returnees per FGD. Psychological or mental institutions in Pakistan are not recommendable and people will not be receiving appropriate support there. Instead, WELDO would refer returnees to private counsellors in the area. Depending on the counsellor and the area this could also be quite expensive.

SITUATION AT THE AIRPORT AFTER ARRIVAL

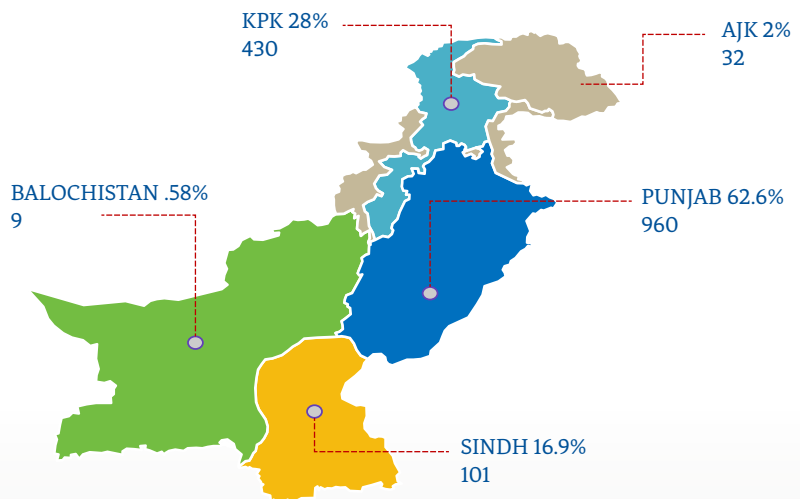
WELDO provides assistance for returnees at the airport by arranging for a mobile phone to call family members or friends. Under some of its projects, since the clearing procedure with FIA (the Federal Investigation Agency) at the airport is very time consuming, WELDO offers the option of refreshment after the long journey. In addition the returnees get support with arranging the transport to their homes (e.g. which bus to take), or if needed WELDO offers the possibility of overnight accommodation.

A lot of clients fear to get arrested at the airport by FIA. Even when the family picks up the returnee from the airport, the services of WELDO might still be required to prevent difficulties or detentions. WELDO contacts the immigration agency prior to arrival and informs them that the returnees are project beneficiaries from European countries.

The procedure at the airport is included in the services of WELDO in the framework of the ERRIN project and is covered under the service fee. But also returnees outside the ERRIN project can make use of the services but they will be charged for airport assistance. There is no cooperation between IOM and WELDO at the airport.

Detention by the FIA can happen if returnees have broken the law prior to leaving Pakistan, or gone abroad on somebody else's passport. Others may have had a legal case before they went abroad or used an emergency passport without a valid national identity card. Sometimes these persons get arrested, but might be released within a couple of days after fulfilling the legal requirements.

RETURNS BY AREA - 1532



AREAS OF RETURN

According to Ms. Sijal Aziz there are differences depending on the area a person returns to:

In the region of AJK (Azad Jammu and Kashmir) nearly every household has a family member abroad; there are very tight family ties and a tight-knitted community. A person who has gone abroad illegally will receive assistance by the family members and the kinship and most likely he/she will not return. Therefore, there are only a few returnees from this area and not as much as there should be.

In Punjab less support from the family can be expected: migration often takes place due to “demonstration effect”: people see what others have achieved when one person goes abroad. This can be illustrated by the ability to buy jewellery for the mother, which is an important sign of success, and also buying a house, upgrading a house, and buying furniture. When they see one person going abroad and succeeding they want to do the same thing. They don't see how many have failed, if one has succeeded in becoming economically stable, they think they can do the same by going abroad. Hence large incidences of illegal migration take place within certain areas. Since the returnees from Punjab don't have a very tight knitted community abroad they, once earning a living becomes difficult or impossible, decide to return within 1 to 10 years.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) area also receives a higher number of returnees and people from especially this area are well informed about the ERRIN program.

WOMEN RETURNEES



CHALLENGES FOR RETURNEES

Returnees are in general, as Ms. Aziz from pointed out, a very vulnerable group: They start their lives three times, first start is when they are in Pakistan, the second start takes place when they move abroad and the third and hardest start happens when they return Pakistan. Therefore the returnees are at a very low point in life when they appear for their reintegration meeting.

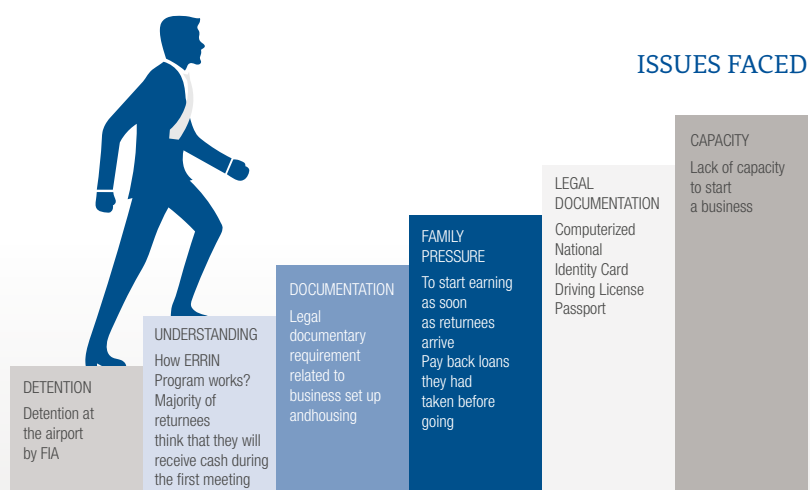
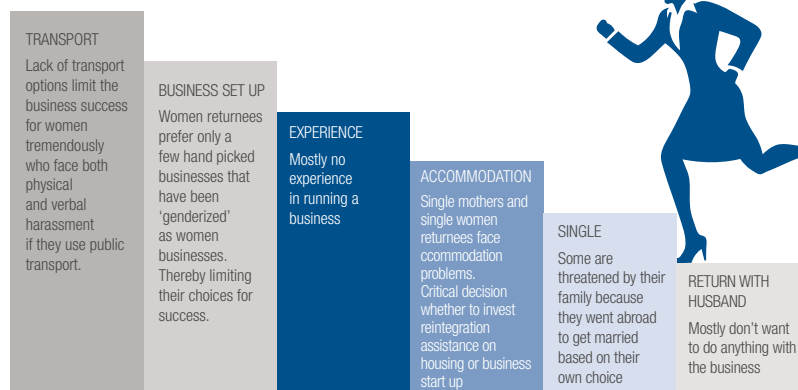
Only around 10% of the returnees WELDO assisted so far were female (housewives, daughters, single women). Approximately 70% of the returnees have none or middle or secondary education, 30% have a higher educational background (university or intermediate).

Returnees might face a lot of pressure from the family, especially if the migration was financed through loans from the family or the extended family. For the first couple of days everyone is happy to receive the returnee, but then the pressure starts: when are you going to pay back the loan?

There have been a lot of returnees without family network which creates additional challenges: first of all, they usually need overnight or 2 nights' accommodation, which is provided by WELDO. Most of these returnees go for accommodation assistance, rather than business set-up.

Also there are additional challenges for women returning: Women returning with their husbands are often not really interested in business, they might do whatever the husband says or does and sometimes even don't come for the reintegration meeting and have to be instructed by WELDO to do so.

Most women returning alone are those who went abroad to get married and after a divorce have



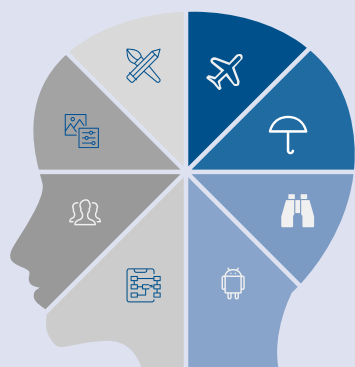
to come back to Pakistan as a single woman. In this situation, they are not accepted by the family since they offended the honour of the family by marrying a man of their choice and therefore often do not have a place to go to after returning. Finding accommodation is very hard for a single woman in Pakistan, so mostly WELDO looks for a hostel for them or put them in touch with other females returnees with whom they can share housing. It becomes very difficult for female returnees to reintegrate back into the society because they have to have accommodation and also want to start a business. The costs for accommodation vary and depend on the area / city: in a city area of Lahore a low cost housing solution starts from Rs. 15,000 while in a village housing can start from Rs. 1500.

But the place of living can be essential for the opportunities of work and business: Transport for women in Pakistan is very difficult due to physical and verbal harassment followed by the psychological impacts of the harassment. This happens every day, everywhere. Limited transport means limited possibilities to run a successful business.

Women also mostly have no work experience when they come back but still many do want to set up a business. They were mostly teachers with no economic activities prior to going abroad. Women like setting up 'gendered' businesses like salons, beauty parlours or teachers/trainers on this field, but doing this limits their scope.

RETURN DECISION

What's going on in Returnees's head



INFORMATION: Whether the information being provided is true or fake.

SITUATION BACK HOME: Family economic and social situation, economic conditions at home town.

PEER PRESSURE: Detention centers, care centers, immigration removal centers etc.

RETURN PROCESS: How long will it take?

AIRPORT: Will I be arrested, detained, tortured?

SUPPORT PARTNER BACK HOME: This is too good to be true, nothing like that will ever happen!

SHAME FACTOR: Will my family, friends and neighbors look down upon me?

RETURN COUNSELLOR BEHAVIOR: Is he trustworthy or is he like a machine?

Especially for women who return with children and without a backup of the family network it is very hard: they have to earn a living for themselves and the family, pay for education of the children and afford decent accommodation. The reintegration assistance funds will not be sufficient for all these needs.

According to the experience of WELDO most returnees do not have the capacity to start a business but still want to start one. There is a need for training before starting a business. WELDO has conducted these trainings in the past and has gained tremendous success rate based on these trainings. Additionally, the reintegration package is often not enough: Most returnees have to add from their own pocket or take loans from family members (less micro credits).

SERVICE DELIVERY DURING SARS-COV-2 PANDEMIC (JUNE 2020)

WELDO staff is working from home, after the office had to close mostly because of the cultural/traditional customs in Pakistan, e.g. hugging each other. Therefore, prevention of spreading the virus could not be implemented. Services are still provided to returnees and virtual communication takes place. Returnees face the following problems in this situation:

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COUNSELLORS

- » According to WELDO a huge number of returnees need to get a better understanding of the program and what they can expect: the majority expect assistance in cash and are shocked when it turns out to be in kind assistance; often mistranslations take place during the counselling
- » Without the correct legal documents the reintegration assistance might delay: a Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) is often required (e.g. for opening a bank account, driving licence, rent contracts, etc.). Returnees who did not have a birth certificate when they left must apply for a CNIC after return and their application will not be accepted without a birth certificate.
- » Counsellors should create a trust basis by introducing oneself, asking about the situation in general and not coming straight to the AVRR program
- » Acknowledging the family pressure: people might pretend to have been deported because nobody in the country of return would understand that the person returned willingly.

- » Accommodation: real estate offices are closed. Most returnees are living with their families or friends at the moment.
- » Government offices are closed: no verification of legal documents can be carried out. No notarization, which is a requirement for the ERRIN project.
- » Public transport has been shut down which makes running a business a huge challenge

PRE-AND POST RETURN SCENARIOS TO PAKISTAN

On the 4th June 2020

Speaker: Mr. Usman Mahar, University of Munich (LMU)

Usman.mahar@lmu.de

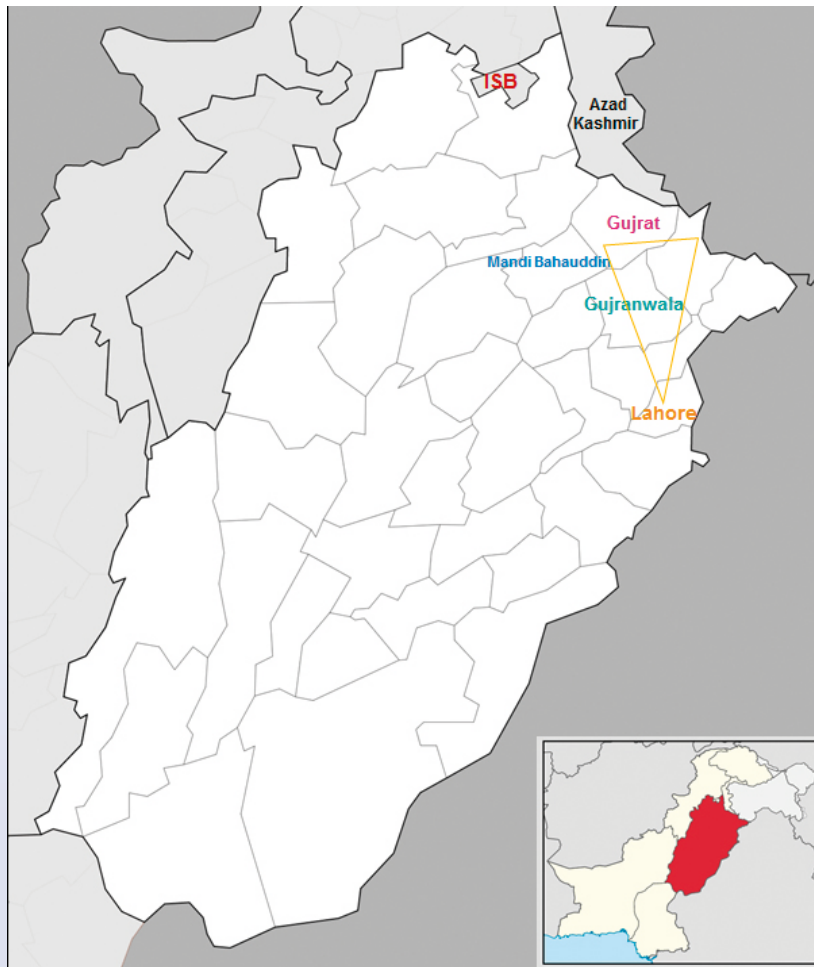
Our last virtual seminar dealt with the pre- and post-return scenarios to Pakistan. Mr. Usman Mahar, a doctoral researcher at the LMU University in Munich works on a project that specifically focusses on rejected Pakistani asylum seekers in Germany who are in the process of returning or who have already returned to Pakistan. His anthropological research deals with deportations and “voluntary” returns of Pakistanis with the help of AVRR programs, which are gaining more currency as a means of migration control in the face of increasing irregular migration.

One great issue in understanding and contextualizing the return of irregular migrants from Germany, and this may also apply to other EU countries, is the perception of Pakistani asylum seekers as economic migrants. Since the term ‘economic migrant’ does not communicate much, it is more important to enter into the question what complex motivation could be behind someone’s decision to leave their home and become an economic migrant in a EU country. At this point not only the European state sees the person as an economic migrant, also the Pakistani state and likewise the migrant him or herself. A voluntary return or rejection will not only affect the individual returnee but in most cases will have an impact on the entire family and the social network.

The hopes of the project, as Mr. Mahar states, is to challenge the common sense notions that surround deportation and voluntary returns of economic migrants from Pakistan. The starting point here is to understand the perspectives of deportees and returnees as well as communicate with AVRR counselors and people who are involved in the migration field. ¹

For his project Mr. Mahar focused on the province of Punjab and mostly met people from Gujrat, Mandi Bahaud-din and Gujranwala. These areas are a part of the industrial hub of Pakistan. The people that he carried out his research with mostly come from very rural areas but also cities like Gujrat. People leave Pakistan for various reason, their income, differences in legal rights, health care, justice, etc. are all a part of the reason. The triangle between this cities also reaching south to Lahore is also the main hub of people leaving the country.

1) Mahar, U. (2020). *Inducing return to Pakistan*. *The South Asianist Journal*, 7, 57-70.
Retrieved from <http://www.southasianist.ed.ac.uk/article/view/4393>



Mapping the Context

- **Islamabad (Capital)**
Population 2017: 2,006,572

- **Gujrat (3,192km²)**
Population 1998: 2,748,008
Population 2017: 4,756,110
Density (people/km²): 642

- **Mandi Bahauddin (2,673km²)**
Population 1998: 1,160,552
Population 2017: 1,593,292
Density (people/km²): 434

- **Gujranwala (3,644km²)**
Population 1998: 3,400,940
Population 2017: 5,014,196
Density (people/km²): 939

- **Lahore**
Population 1998: 6,318,745
Population 2017: 11,126,285
Density (people/km²): 3,566

TAKE NOTE: So called "Golden Triangle" of Industries

WHY PEOPLE COME TO EUROPE

Most migrants from Pakistan, who after rejection of their asylum application subsequently return through AVR, are typically males between 16-40 years with no to very little education. They come from low to medium income households and are skilled in the agricultural sector. However, the economic development of Pakistan has been focused on industrialization making the agricultural skills of many Pakistanis redundant. This structural problems lead to hopes coming up that a somehow more humanitarian place will figure out a way of how one can still make a living. In these cases usually the person comes from a big family, and it is mostly the youngest sibling who takes up the desire to go abroad.

In statistical terms most of the "golden triangle of industrial cities" is considered quite rich. The export business of goods from this area, e.g. surgical instruments, Fifa footballs, jeans, and Bavarian lederhosen creates a tight connection to the modern western world. The industrial cities in Pakistan make billions through export but the economic reality looks different: most of the money ends up profiting the rich Pakistani industrialists and multinational cooperations resulting in a high level of inequality towards the working class. Cheap labor is needed to produce the export goods and to compete in the international market, but still a huge part of Pakistan's population faces structural inequality and inaccessibility to basic needs like health care, proper education, legal protection etc. Leaving the country is then the last chance to get access to these needs.



3 RETURNEES

Described below are 3 returnees from Germany, who serve as an example for issues and dilemmas AVRR consultants face during and after the return. Mr. Mahar used pseudonyms during the presentation.

Alam:

After 4 years in Germany, Alam returned to Pakistan through AVR. He is quite content and does not regret his decision. Alam will never forget the German “hospitality and humanity”. According to him the treatment in Germany is way better and humane, compared to Pakistan. Even though his asylum application was rejected, the Germans still made sure that he was fit and healthy for return. During his stay in Germany Alam was able to build a house and marry off his daughter. With a combination of both, personal savings and AVR assistance he built up a small shop near his home. His return story is quite successful but Alam would like to be able to move in-between both countries.

Jamshed:

Jamshed was advised by the district administration officer to visit an AVRR center. He had little agency in the whole process and it was the only option available to him upon rejection. Jamshed was told, if he tried to further migrate to Spain he would be returned to Germany, where he would have to face prison, punishment and deportation. He had no other chance but to leave via AVR. Returning to his village was not safe for Jamshed so he opted to leave for Dubai. For Jamshed social and economic issues came together making his return not successful. Also, he did not trust the translator during the AVR counselling which led to

great miscommunication. Jamshed did not believe that the counsellor cared about his well-being: “wouldn’t they have tried to help me to stay if they really cared about the consent?”

Hassam:

Hassam returned to Pakistan through AVR after he retracted his asylum appeal. His father’s death forced him to return to his village. Hassam returned with no savings and hoped to receive the money he was promised through AVR. At his time of return WELDO was not a reintegration partner and the contract was awarded to RSP. Hassam was supported by a volunteer in Germany. Hassam told everyone in his family that he was deported because no one would understand why he voluntarily came back. He regrets returning to Pakistan and now faces social and psychological pressures; no one in his family or social network would understand why someone would willingly return.

THREE ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND FACTORS

Understanding these factors can help make AVR more voluntary, more ethical and more sustainable. Also, it helps address some legitimate concerns around this certain form of repatriation.

Choice scale:

Return counselors/facilitators and people working within AVR programs in the EU and Pakistan are supposed to only advise and assist. At times unwillingly and unintentionally they become part of a political system that wants to remove people, which is the reason why AVR is criticized. We have to keep in mind that the term “voluntary” implies complete volition



or free will, there is no hidden or external pressure. But certain conditions and policies like detention and camps, prohibition of work, higher rejection rates based on county of origin etc. result in less choice and agency of the client.

Is the choice somehow manipulated by the system in place and is a person choosing to return or is he or she running away from the inequalities and restrictions he or she ran away from in the first place?

By removing such pressures, policy makers can ensure that what counselors are providing is only good objective advice and the returnee is given a greater amount of choice and agency in the whole return process. This would also make the reintegration easier and AVR can then be made a more sustainable mode of repatriation.

Information scale:

Miscommunication through language barriers and cultural misunderstandings reduce the amount of information shared with the returnee. According to Pakistani clients and also Mr.

Mahar's personal experience the interpreters barely spoke the native languages or were not even from Pakistan. To avoid cultural misunderstandings AVR counselors should get familiar with the asylum case of the returnee. It is important to know who the returnee is, especially his or her name. For example some Pakistanis do have Christian names, which is decisive on which areas are safe to return to or not.

Assistance scale:

The reintegration payments need to be carefully made because such specific payments may reinforce the idea that refugees are unwanted members of society. This is also related to the cultural misunderstandings that may occur during counselling. Reusing the example above, giving somebody who deserves protection money to return without counterchecking his or her background would undermine the whole idea of giving refuge. Especially if something happens to the person after return.

Mostly, the return assistance is useful for returnees only in combination with personal savings. The amount given is not nearly enough to cover maintenance expenses. Reality shows



that the majority of returnees does not have personal savings and end up leaving the country again in hope for a better future.

These three scales can help make voluntary returns more voluntary if attention is paid to them.

TAKE AWAYS

1. Sustainable and Long-term Partnerships with Reintegration Partners:

In order to play a real and useful role in reintegration, reintegration partners like WELDO need to be given long time cooperation contracts from the EU. Year by year contracts do not allow these organizations to invest in the infrastructure need, long-term programs or other efforts required for certain projects to improve the local reintegration work. For example, reintegration partners can help run schools and clinics or provide legal support for family conflicts (which is the single biggest reason for people leaving) if they are given the mandate and financial support.

2. Work with Returnees:

Returnees could be recruited to start community initiatives. With the help of international organizations the returnees could not only be supported to start something on their own but also something that changes the structural problems in their society. Returnees could be involved in projects such as building schools, health clinics, providing legal help centers, vocational training centers, etc.

3. The Revolving Door:

If one person returns and another two leave, AVRR programs are a failure even before they start. That is why AVRR programs need to not only focus on individuals but their communities and the structural problems in their communities. Something needs to change in these localities for people to stop leaving and one time help to a returnee will not fix the problem. He might not leave again, but someone else will.

WORKSHOP I: RETURN TO THE CAUCASUS REGION

The social structure and values in Chechnya and their impact on the situation of women are pointed out in this chapter. The workshop also focused on the health system in the Caucasus Region.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND VALUES IN CHECHNYA

TRADITIONAL FAMILY STRUCTURE:

Chechen families are usually large. Normally a family has 3-5 children. There are normally three generations within one family: grandparents, parents and children. The family structure is quite hierarchical and patriarchal. The living grandmother or the mother (if she raised children alone) can be the decision maker in the family. If there are several sons in the family the youngest one is an heir and he must take care of the parents when they get older or ill.

TRADITIONAL VALUES:

There are similar values for every ethnicity in North Caucasus: Honor, Courage, Endurance, Modesty, Hospitality, and Equality

RELIGION IN CHECHNYA:

The Chechen people are adherents of Sunni Islam. Most of the people follow Shafii madhhab (school of jurisprudence). Islam was declared as a state religion in the 17th century.

Religion has emerged as an instrument of unity in a break away struggle. Still the Chechens are not typically religious as religious law is not a source of law in Chechnya. Anyway, the people of Chechnya have rallied around their Islamic identity through uprisings and wars in an effort to throw off the yoke colonialism. Society is divided into three parts according to the identity: religious, secular and adherent to original culture.

ADAT:

Adat is a traditional law appeared in pre-Islamic period and still practiced in the society. There were people who used to have life experience and a good reputation in society who could carry out the better solution for each incident in the society. Adat that do not conflict with Islamic law are applied in daily life. Unfortunately Adat is interpreted from the position of power. If the decisions used to be carried out by a group of people, now it can be one person's will that doesn't imply adat. If the blood feud targeted only the offender in the past, now a full aged son or a brother of the offender can become avenger's objective. A woman used to be in-



violable and if there was a case of insult, the offender was disgraced.

GENDER RELATIONS AND THE SITUATION OF WOMEN

Young people have very modest pre-marital relationships. They do not express their feelings and emotions towards each other in public. They cannot see each other alone. There must be witnesses of their meetings. They can see each other in the streets, in the cafes and other public places. In rural areas there is a tradition that they see each other in the house of relatives or neighbors' house. No sexual relationship is allowed out of matrimony, for both men and women. If the couple decides to get married, the future husband sends relatives (in practice, these are women from men's family) who make proposal and express the man's will to marry this girl or woman; the man must pay a bride price. The early years of 2000 were marked by the increase of "bride – kidnappings". Normally such marriages ended with divorces and this caused another issue.

A bride price for an unmarried girl is higher than for a girl who has already been married. These bride kidnappings made the young girls "once" married and no matter if they had sexual relationship or not. There was a strong outcry among victims of

this tradition, so the government carried out the law according to which an abductor is to pay a huge fine.

The religious marriage ceremony is prior to the civil ceremony. Otherwise the marriage isn't consumed.

The traditional law does not ensure that spouses have equal access to property jointly acquired during marriage and for matrimonial property to be equitably distributed between the spouses upon termination of the marriage. The norms of family law do not provide for premarital activities.

In most cases of divorce the woman returns to her family and the children stay with fathers according to traditional law. Chechen society doesn't stigmatize a woman in case of divorce, but women often cannot see their children who stayed with the father's family, especially when they get remarried.

Domestic violence in Chechnya is an important issue to discuss:

- » 11 % of women are beaten regularly
- » 28 % get slapped and kicked
- » 8 % are victims of sexual abuse

Although there was the DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DECRIMINALIZING LAW adopted in 2017, which describes the legal procedure in cases of domestic violence, the situation for women and girls is difficult: NGOs are the only assistance providers for girls and women, since there is no legal institution at the local level and state level which provides assistance. There are no shelters for domestic violence victims in Chechnya. The region is small and it is impossible to hide a woman with children somewhere in Chechnya, even in neighboring regions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN RETURN CASES

ADDRESSING A SUSPICION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THE PRE-DEPARTURE PHASE:

- » Observing possible signs, like the absence of the woman in the counselling session, physical evidence
- » Get advice from specialized organizations
- » Arrange for possibilities to speak to the woman alone, e.g. one on one counselling sessions as “standard procedure”, choosing an unsuitable time for the husband (during working hours) for the next counselling session, inviting the woman to sign a document which is needed for the return application
- » Counsellor should be prepared to follow up and be aware that a process has started which we don't know necessarily how the woman will react

AFTER RETURN:

- » Referring clients to NGOs working with vulnerable groups, safe houses (if available)
- » Possible victims of “honor killing” should be transferred to another region and the victim should hide her identity in any case. There are cases of ethnical discrimination of Chechen women, so they cannot be referred to other parts of Russia.

HEALTH SYSTEM IN THE CAUCASUS REGION

During the former Soviet Union era the health care system in the Caucasus was the so-called “Semashko Model”: Healthcare services belonged to the state, and healthcare professionals were paid by the state. Services were usually free (although there were several informal off the record payment modalities like gratitude payment, bribe etc.). The health care system was under the centralized control of the state, which financed services by general government revenues as part of national social and economic development plans. Main focus was communicable disease prevention.

Up until the 1960s, the Soviet health system achieved genuine progress in reducing infant and overall mortality, by allocating medical personnel across the national territory, by improving conditions for childbirth, and by tackling infectious diseases.

Problems with Soviet health care began to emerge in the 1970s, because the system, focused on the prevention of infectious and parasitic diseases and on increasing the number of hospital beds, failed to take account of the need to combat chronic diseases (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, etc.) and to develop a primary care service.

After the Soviet Union era, in the 1990s, the severe economic crisis that followed the breakup of the Soviet Union left all the former Soviet republics in extremely difficult financial situations. There were drastic cuts to all social spending, including health care. So question of Health Care System Reform have arisen among the all Caucasus countries.

The health care systems nowadays in the Caucasus region varies in the different countries, Armenia for example decentralized

the health care system whereby Azerbaijan has maintained a centralized health system. Private health insurance is available in many countries but often covering mainly a tiny portion of the population. Premium is very high so out of reach of mass population. Georgia for example shut down the Semashko Model in 2007 and moved to an insurance based health care model. Almost 80 % of the Georgian state's hospital and medical service was sold to private sector to renovate and establish quality health care.

KEY POINTS FOR PLANNING MEDICAL RETURN TO CAUCASUS

- » Health-related issues should never be disregarded in favor of the wish to return as they may jeopardize a successful and sustainable return
- » The sooner health-related concerns are addressed during return counselling, the better an appropriate return may be arranged
- » Lack of primary health care service may result in unnecessary hospitalization.
- » Patient may not be able to choose own physician and hospital
- » Theoretically medical service is free but in reality patient may need to purchase specialized service and own medicine.
- » Specialized service and necessary medicine may not always be available.
- » Informal payment like gratitude money, bribe, no way of reimbursement



ASPECTS TO CONSIDER IN THE RETURN PROCEDURE

COUNSELLORS UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLIENT'S HEALTH CONDITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Complications » Progress of the disease » Necessary medication » Expert opinion from treating physician » Level of possible client's participation » Possibility to work » Legal guardian » Motivation » Fit to Fly questions → counsellor already has to have an idea about the ability to fly e.g. pregnancy or terminal stage of life Flight
FLIGHT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Medical or social escort + explanation to the migrant » Airline regulations » Documents for customs (when transporting medication) » Logistics (wheel chair, oxygen)
ACCESS TO MEDICATION IN CoR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Availability » Accessibility » Quality of medication » Prescription requirement » Additional costs
CLIENT'S UNDERSTANDING OF OWN HEALTH CONDITION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Stigmatization » Understanding of the illness/ awareness of the illness » Acceptance of the situation » Willingness to take medication
MEDICAL REPORTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Translated, legalized reports » Summaries of medical letters » Fit to fly certificate » Additional reports e.g. blood type » In case of addiction: questions about aggressiveness and dose
FAVORABLE OR NECESSARY ENVIRONMENT/ STRUCTURE IN CoR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » (medical) equipment (e.g. fridge for insulin) » Access to public transport » Locality (e.g. hilly area counter-productive for heart diseases) » Social benefits/ availability of health care system » Local food distribution » Accommodation
SOCIAL NETWORK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Family & network » Stigmatization » Willingness to take care of the returning client » Capacities for caring for the client » Economic situation » Level of rejection
CLIENT'S SELF-CARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Food / nutrition » Healthy life style » Positive attitude » Understanding of political and economic and cultural situation in CoR

9.

WORKSHOP II: RETURN TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Talking about voluntary return to Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria raises controversy discussions since the security and economic situation in the three countries has a huge impact on the options of return.

SECURITY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan still struggles with indiscriminate violence. Violent attacks mainly executed by the Taliban are prominent all over the country. They are usually characterized by its unpredictability, its openness, its deliberateness and its asymmetry. The Taliban selects target places of great relevance to the society and economy such as market places, hospitals, schools, state offices, mines, opium fields, main traffic routes, etc.. This warfare strategy nationwide keeps the Afghan population in constant apprehension, insecurity and fear.

When looking at some numbers, Afghanistan is still one of the most dangerous countries in the world. In 2018 44,600 people were killed through warfare. Since 2016 there are ca. 1,65 Mio IDPs registered in the country due to conflict.

In general, Afghanistan struggles from an extremely high degree of militarization which results in quickly

escalating conflicts on a local and regional level. Civilians, mainly women and children, are usually not spared during the ongoing conflicts. Daily life is also exacerbated by road blocks and check-points on main routes taken over either by the Taliban or militias. Afghan returnees who may not have grown up in Afghanistan but in Iran face an immediate threat by not knowing how to recognize the different war parties and how to behave accordingly. Trivial things such as the mobile phone service provider or music and pictures on the mobile phone can lead the returnee into a precarious situation at the check point. It needs to be considered as well that the Taliban keeps minute records of its members and renegades. This implies that persons who fled from the Taliban 20 years ago will need to face its consequences once the Taliban gets hold of him after return. Not cooperating with the Taliban meant then and still means now that the denier, his relatives and his supporters will be persecuted.



<https://www.caritas-augsburg.de/hilfeberatung/migrationsundfluechtlingsberatung/transnational-exchange-iv/project-activities/project-activities>



THE SOCIAL SYSTEM AND RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN

- » Organizing ID papers prior to return will facilitate administrative necessities in Afghanistan
- » Reintegration to the social network is essential: health expenses have to be covered by the family, but in cases of sickness the family also needs to care for the patient even when being an in-patient in the hospital (food, transportation, etc.). But even simpler tasks such as renting or opening a bank account require a guarantor from the family or the village.
- » The returnee can increase his chances for a better reintegration by sending remittances to the family in Afghanistan regularly while still in Afghanistan or the returnee receives money on a regular basis from abroad which he then makes available to his social network. Only then the clients get introduced to live-saving new networks.

The Taliban feeds its power partially from a well-functioning surveillance system. It works with its paid informants, professional secret service and through social control. If Afghans new to town want to rent or do business with anybody, the opponent will ask for the name, names of family members, place of birth and/or a person who vouches for the trustworthiness of the counterpart. Then the relatives will receive a phone call and need to verify the identity and the trustworthiness of them. The whole village will quickly know about the returnee. This information easily transpires to Taliban members.

Certain news traveled from Europe to Afghanistan and cause difficulties for returnees. Reports about only criminals or terrorists being deported back to Afghanistan are circling within the Afghan society. Rumor has it that the German government didn't want them anymore - so they are not really welcomed in Afghanistan. This information, however, only pertains to a certain percentage of people re-

turning from Europe. Reasons such as no legal permission to stay and family are not discussed. This means that the returnee will face a lot of suspicion. Some Afghans might not even want to be in contact with returnees because of it.

ECONOMIC SITUATION AND JOB PERSPECTIVE IN IRAQ

Even though the Iraqi GDP amounted to 197 Billion USD in 2017, Iraq struggles with a high unemployment rate. 65% of the GDP is won through oil production and oil export. The oil sector, however, employs less than 5% of the working population. The private sector should provide most jobs but it is limited, weak and monopolized. The best paid and most secure jobs are in the public sector (13% in 2017), working for the government also includes retirement benefits. Usually only highly educated people receive a job in the public sector. If they get one, they will not change their position anymore – even though there might be little work to do.



But the public sector is in the process of getting down-sized which results in even more entrants to the labor market every year. The weak formal private sector cannot absorb the excess of the public sector. After graduation unemployment remains a challenge for the majority of graduates who are looking for white collar and high security jobs. Aside from getting university education Iraqi young people have limited options to get vocational training. The reputation and the quality of this type of education are very low. This situation explains why young people opt for “paid employment” in militia groups.

Starting a business in Iraq is tedious since the rules and regulations are confusing and hard to abide by (business conditions rank 165 out of 190 according to World Bank). For those returnees who attempt to find employment despite the difficult labor market situation the following steps can be taken: ask for employment within the family networks, amongst former school mates or

friends, seize political and ethnic relations, register with the MoL-Sa, check out career fairs or homepages such as www.Jobline.net; www.Gulfjobsites.com; www.Unjobs.com; www.Hawa.jobs; www.ncciraqjobs.com. If returnees opt for starting their own business, they will most likely do it in the informal sector. Many small businesses get established by young people with little education. The businesses include services in the domestic industries, street vendors, family farms in form of an informal business

The private sector in which people should find employment or start businesses easily is weak and the competition little. The people working in the private sector struggle with limited financial resources to start their businesses or to keep them going. External funding is also not really an option, since very few banks give loans. In addition to that unclear, complex regulations hinder small entrepreneurs from running their businesses smoothly.

REGISTRATION AFTER RETURN: CENTRAL IRAQ GOVERNMENT AND KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

- » Not only Kurds will return or move to the KRG but also returnees who are originally from the disputed areas along the border Central Iraq Government and KRG as well as IDPs such as Christians from Baghdad and refugees from other countries such as Syria.
- » In order to settle in the KRG region, returnees or migrants need to provide a guarantor, a person who has residence in the KRG already and able to vouch for the applicant (not financially, rather for the integrity of the applicant), to obtain a residency permit for the duration of 1 year (standard) and to register with the Asayish (independent security forces). The Asayish rank higher than the local police in terms of authority and power.
- » The Asayish runs a diligent background check on every registering person. This process can take up to 5 weeks.
- » Once the returnees know where they would like to live, they need to register with the Mukhtar, the local representative of the neighborhood, as well. More information about the registration process can be found on the homepage services.gov.krd.
- » Returning to Central Iraq is less complicated. The returnee merely needs to register at the residency office. Sometimes the police do a brief background check. The following graphic shows the ratio of living expenditures.

PRACTICAL ADVICES FOR A RETURN TO SYRIA

The information shared about Syria in the workshop was an attempt to give a first basis for discussion for the attending return and reintegration counsellors. By no means the information given is comprehensive and can be solely relied on during counselling. The situation in the country still changes frequently which might already render the information outdated. Voluntary return to Syria is still highly debatable and depending of the group of people the returnee belongs the situation can drastically differ (e.g. elderly person vs. young man who was politically active). The IOM does not support voluntary return to Syria so far. Many governments and NGOs still don't support voluntary return to Syria either. Nevertheless, the demand for return counselling of Syrians with a residence permit increases and several AVRR counselling centers have started working with Syrians. When talking to clients about voluntary return to certain regions, the clients need to double check with their relatives on site who will be the better judges about the security situation than the AVRR counsellor in Europe. The security situation is ever-changing in Syria and it is not foreseeable in which direction the conflicts will evolve.

TRAVELLING TO SYRIA

McSa e travel solutions UG travel agency, located in Berlin, can provide up-to-date information on travel documents and travel routes. This travel agency is also an agent for Cham Wings, the Syrian airline, as well as for Wings of Lebanon, the Lebanese airline. Cham Wings offers domestic flights as well as international flights from the Damascus airport to Teheran, Moscow, Yerevan, Muscat, Kuwait, Khartoum, Baghdad, Erbil, Qamishli currently.

In order to be able to travel to Syria, clients need to have the right travel document. Currently



two options are possible: Syrian passport or Syrian Laissez-Passer. Recognized Palestinian refugees can hold a special Syrian passport for refugees.

A new passport can be obtained from the Syrian consulate in the respective European countries. The applicant needs to send several documents in advance and personally attend an appointment at the consulate. He or she needs to show a Syrian ID or an old passport. The passport with a normal processing time of 4 to 6 weeks costs 265€. In case of an emergency the Syrian citizen can apply for a 2-day Express Passport which costs 705€. The passport allows Syrians to travel from different cities in Europe and even fly detours via Qatar. In comparison to the passport the Laissez-Passer with a validity of 3 months costs only 25€ (plus 25€ registration fee) and takes about 3 weeks processing time (in Belgium, however, the Laissez-Passer takes 2 -3 days to be issued but is only valid for 14 days). Syrian Laissez-Passers are currently accepted by few airlines which limits the cities to start the return journey.

If Syrians entered the European Union with a real Syrian passport and an official visa to one of the Schengen States, these Syrians have the option to travel from Europe to Lebanon by plane and take a taxi or bus to the Syrian border (1,5 hours). Experience has shown, however, that many Syrians were denied entry to Lebanon or were even denied by the airline at the airport of departure. Sometimes a Lebanese visa was requested and in the worst case the returning clients could be denied entry to Syria. If external (state) funding enables the return, the government usually wants to see prove that the client returned to the home country – hence a plane ticket to Syria. In this case and for all other Syrians traveling with a passport without an EU visa it is currently recommended to travel from Europe via Teheran, Iran, to Damascus, Syria or for Syrians traveling from the Netherlands to travel via Moscow, Russia, to Damascus, Syria. Traveling via Teheran is possible because Syrians don't need an Iranian tourist visa for transit if they have a connecting flight with Cham Wings Airlines.

» 10.

WORKSHOP III: RETURN TO WEST AFRICA

The importance of the family network, challenges concerning health care and the perception of mental health in West Africa as well as the meaning of Juju are interesting topics to look at.

FAMILY NETWORKS AND RECONNECTING TO THE FAMILIES

Whether it is forced or voluntary, return can trigger a wide-ranging of contradiction for the individual on how to deal with the unmet expectations. The decision for individuals to return can be grave with unpredictable consequences especially if the migration in the first place was a family decision as it is in most cases. The question AVRR counselors are confronted with is how return can become a preferred option despite having failed expectations and how familial obligations and negotiations shape the decision and capability to return without turning it into a social disaster.

The experiences of Idea Renaissance, a reintegration partner in Nigeria is that firstly, returnees whose families contributed in their migration are at risk of family rejection, but returnees who spent their personal savings to travel are happy to return. Secondly, the level of education is positively related to their level of vulnerability and coping mechanism; the higher the level of education of a returnee, the higher the level of re-adjustment.

The communication between the family back home and the returnee plays a major role in the return process. In most returns to African countries the families do not encourage their family members abroad to come back. This is often the result of an unstable situation in the countries of return and the financial status of the family. Mostly the life in Europe is favored by the families, no matter under what condition. It is necessary to include the family in the reintegration work back home and help them understand what the returnee went through on their way to Europe, in Europe, and in making the final decision to return. The expectations set on the family members abroad are often too high; it is then difficult to sympathize with traumatized returnees, especially considering that trauma and mental illnesses are not recognized as serious deceases in most African countries. The risk of being stereotyped as a failure is very high and facing this kind of discrimination in society mostly leads to depression and frustration that could initiate a second emigration from home.



<https://www.caritas-augsburg.de/hilfeberatung/migrationsundfluechtlingsberatung/transnational-exchange-iv/project-activities/project-activities>



RECONNECTING TO THE FAMILY

USEFUL STEPS IN THE PRE-DEPARTURE PHASE:

- » In order to achieve best results and to create a good and friendly relation and understanding of both roles, contact between returnee and reintegration partner should be established prior to return.
- » Mentioning the interrelation of return migration and the family. Amongst others the most important point in relation to the return context is the notion that neither re-migrants, nor the country of return, nor those left behind stay the same. The challenge for return migrants then is to deal with their changes, get in to the learning processes, and create a new sense of personhood, culture, identity, and home. Therefore, a return is even more difficult than the emigration.
- » Involvement of children in the return counselling: It is important to include the whole family in the process and also the voices of children should be taken seriously. It is the task for AVRR counsellors to identify whether the return is a common decision.

USEFUL STEPS AFTER RETURN:

- » Psycho-social support services for the returnee by making the returnee feel accepted and listening to his or her experiences abroad
- » Families may attend the psycho-social counselling to create a better understanding of the situation of the returnee and to inform about the psycho-traumatic experiences the returnee withstood during the stay abroad

SOME HEALTH CARE CHALLENGES

Some West African countries like Ghana implemented a national health insurance system, but returnees should be aware of the limits of this health insurance: discussing health problems with the reintegration partner before the return is highly recommended.

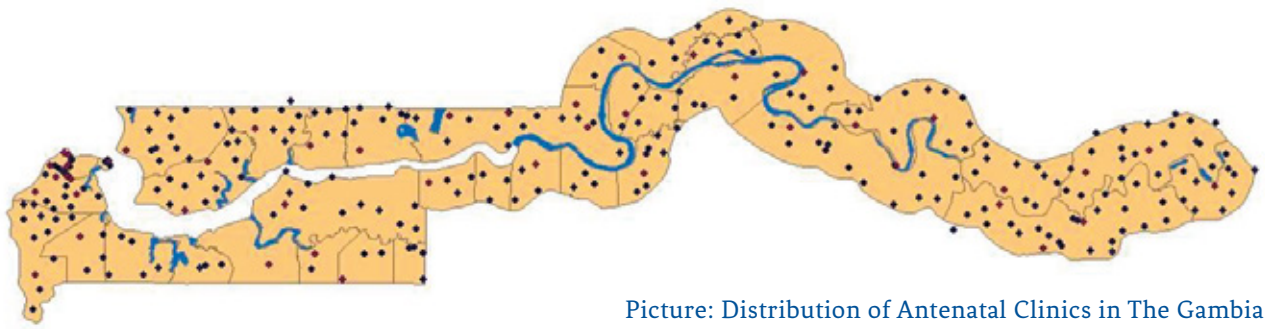
There seems to be also general problems in the implementation of the health insurance: Sometimes patients might not have the information on what kind of disease he or she is suffering from. Without the diagnosis the patient cannot find out whether the insurance will cover the costs for treatment and might end up receiving a very expensive treatment without refunds of costs.

Besides covering the costs for medical treatment, access of specific health services can be problematic. The simple presence of clinics or health centers does not necessarily mean that specific health problems can be treated in a certain region.

HEALTH CARE

USEFUL STEP IN THE PRE-DEPARTURE PHASE:

- » Health problems and the limits of potentially available national health insurance should be discussed prior to the return, including “minor” health problems which might become worse with time
- » Support in covering the costs for treatment as well as the care in hospital (like food needed as an inpatient) is often provided by the extended family. Restoring family links therefore is also important for health issues



Picture: Distribution of Antenatal Clinics in The Gambia



Distribution of Health Facilities providing Caesarean Section in The Gambia

This can be illustrated with an example from The Gambia: The accessibility of emergency obstetric care for women the rural areas of the Gambia represents a major challenge. Whereas the distribution of antenatal clinics is quite pronounced throughout the country, the access to health facilities providing delivery services is more limited. The availability of health facilities providing caesarean section is alarmingly scarce. Only 8 clinics offer emergency caesarian section, 5 of them are located around the capital Banjul. In The Gambia 75 % of maternal deaths occur around delivery time, mainly due to losing blood or the baby not being delivered as expected. For women in rural areas it is next to impossible to reach the clinics on time.



MENTAL HEALTH

According to the WHO neuropsychiatric disorders, amongst traumatology and chronic deceases, are in the list of neglected areas of health in low income countries and occupy third position in the list of diseases that put the most burdens on the individual, the family and the society. In West Africa and many other Sub-Saharan African countries the total of psychiatrists working in mental health per 100.000 population amounts to 4 or less. A reason could be the social security in developing countries and the exclusion of mental illness from insurance coverage.





Participants of the field trip to Ghana, June 2019

Traditional medicine is an important type of treatment for many illnesses in African countries. But whereas in most European countries many patients resort to complementary medicine as a last hope, when biomedicine has failed or do not yield results, in Africa traditional treatments are usually first line therapy. Traditional treatments are consistent with the families' beliefs and therefore helpful in coping with the patient's mental illness. This kind of treatments seems to be particularly useful in treating mild and moderate depression, anxiety, neurotic, stress-related and substance abuse disorders. In severe neuropsychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, severe depression and epilepsy - which are not susceptible to traditional interventions – the patient and the family should seek for psychiatric medication. Traditional healers also have a role in addictions and in the aftercare and rehabilitation of severe mental disorders.

THE ROLE OF JUJU

Juju in the field of migration is frequently associated with human trafficking. Traffickers make use of the cultural belief of potential victims and utilize juju to blackmail their victims. The deep faith in the power of juju enables the traffickers to keep total control over individuals. A majority of West Africans, for example Nigerians grew up in environments where the belief in juju is a given.

AVRR counselors need to keep in mind that some clients are bent to keeping the oath taken with a juju priest prior leaving Nigeria. The dependency on spiritual obligations and the attachment to certain practices can be indicated by the clients' lack of interest in the culture of the host country or the client referring to faith as an explanation for all life experiences, while having sincere fear of return to the home country. As a counsellor it is important to not treat the client with rationalism and rather listen carefully, observe and validate the clients concerns. It is helpful to ask questions to make the client also reflect on the presumptions and perceptions: What exactly happened? When did it happen? How do you connect it with the incident? Asking question rather than challenging the perception of the client directly can help to disconnect from the juju belief. An open minded approach will help understand the clients' situation without being judgmental and eventually being able to identify alternative means that complements initial strategy of the client to break out of the juju bond.

It is interesting that by now also some churches have been exposed to cooperating with human traffickers. The most desperate situation of migrants and victims of human trafficking serve as a platform for traffickers and pastors to involve into joint business. Nigerian free churches in European countries for example offer born again ceremonies for money exchange, which are seen as a way of breaking free from the bond with the juju oath. In this way these churches make a great deal of money they use to bargain with traffickers.





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