



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance – in practice

Egypt, Damiette

Mr. S decided to return voluntarily to Egypt in winter 2013. He participated in the Return and Reintegration Assistance Program financed by the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). To facilitate his reintegration in Egypt, Mr. S. was granted in-kind reintegration assistance and received support for the development and implementation of a sustainable business project.

Before his departure from Switzerland, Mr. S was planning to open a small fish shop in the port city of Damietta, located at the delta of the river Nile. However, after his arrival in Egypt, he enquired about the economic and commercial opportunities in the city, and realized that the competition in this area was already very high. He shared his concerns regarding the viability of his project with the IOM counsellors in Cairo who assisted him with the development of a project more adapted to the local context. The new project foresaw the purchase of a small fishing boat which would enable Mr. S to become an independent actor in a flourishing business sector.



After the finalization of a detailed project plan, Mr. S contacted several suppliers to coordinate the acquisition of a boat equipped with nets and other fishing gear. Once he submitted the offers and a copy of his professional license to IOM the payment could be made to the supplier of the boat. Mr. S is happy to be the owner of his own boat and is looking forward to working as a fisherman in his home town.

As a humanitarian and, at the same time, reasonably-priced solution, the concept of Return Assistance has proved itself and gained acceptance in many European countries. The object of Return Assistance is to harmonize the justified interests of migrants with those of Switzerland and the countries of origin. Return Assistance makes a valuable contribution to a sustainable and successful return. It is conceived so as to rule out undesired pull factors in the direction of Switzerland.

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