



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

The Gambia, Region Sandugu



Mister S. voluntarily returned to The Gambia in April 2016. He planned to buy cattle with his reintegration grant in order to produce milk, yoghurt and cheese for sale. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) granted an amount of 3'156 USD to implement the project.

In the framework of the monitoring visit, IOM Banjul staff visited Mr. S.'s business in August

2017. Mr. S. told IOM Banjul that he had lived out of The Gambia for more than six years, about five of them in Spain. The main reasons for his return were the lack of economic perspectives in Switzerland and his family. Mr. S. was very satisfied with the support of IOM and the return counselling in Switzerland.

With the implementation of the project, no major problems occurred. Voluntary return assistance allowed him to improve his life back in The Gambia, although Mr. S.'s project did not generate any income yet. He said that his situation was better before he left, as the current drought made it nearly impossible to feed his animals. Although his situation was quite difficult, he saw his future in the place of return and would also recommend voluntary return assistance to other people. Mr. S. said the following: "This program will enable you to have at least a business though small of your own."



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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