



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

Sulaymaniyah, Iraq



Ms. S decided to return to Iraq voluntarily with her two children, at the same time as her former husband. She has then been granted financial assistance to set up a reintegration project by the SEM. IOM was responsible for coordinating the project on site.

Ms. S wanted to return to her hometown in order to live with her family and friends again. During the counselling in Switzerland, she showed interest in opening a shop to sell healthcare products, as she previously worked as a secretary in this field and also had experience in finance. A friend of her is a dentist in Sulaymaniyah and offered her help for this project.

Ms. S and her two children returned to Iraq in March 2019. A couple of months later, she contacted IOM so that they could finalize her reintegration plan together. She then decided to change her plan and work as a dental office assistant instead, which was supported and approved by IOM. As a result, Ms. S found a job in a dental practice.

Returnees to Iraq are entitled to get a vocational training in order to improve their skills in a specific field. In September 2019, Ms. S attended a training course to learn German. As she was living in the German part of Switzerland before, she already had some knowledge of the language and wanted to improve her skills. She's hoping to one day become a German teacher or translator.

About 6 months after her return, IOM Iraq visited Ms. S to see whether the reintegration has been successful. She told IOM Iraq that she was satisfied with the support she received from IOM and the return counsellor. At that time, her situation was good, and she saw herself staying in Sulaymaniyah. The job she found is reliable and allows her to earn money, however, she told them that she would like to continue her education and maybe open her own business at some point in the future.

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.