



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

Abuja, Nigeria



In the beginning of the year 2019, Mr. I heard about return assistance from other asylum seekers. He then decided to return voluntarily from Switzerland to Nigeria in March to live with his family. He received the necessary information during the return counselling session and then set up a reintegration plan together with a return counselor. His plan was to open a car repair shop in Abuja, as he previously had experience in this field. The SEM granted him financial assistance to implement his project.

By the end of March 2019 Mr. I returned to Abuja. He contacted IOM Nigeria a few weeks later and they finalized his reintegration plan together. In June, he received the first part of his reintegration which allowed him to pay the rent of the shop and buy engine parts. Unfortunately, the contact between IOM and Mr. I broke off for several months due to the pandemic. At the beginning of 2021, the last part of the return assistance was finally disbursed.

Despite the situation, it was possible for IOM to visit Mr. I in his working place in September 2020. He expressed satisfaction with the information he received from the return counselor and the support he received from IOM after his return. At the time of the visit, his shop was open and he was earning a living. He worked there alone and has not had any problems. Despite the difficult financial situation he talked about, he still imagines himself staying in Nigeria and he would like to expand his business later on.

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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