



# AVRR Newsletter

## Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

Summer 2014

### Editorial

Dear ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

An increasing number of voluntary returnees have medical problems. This often poses a challenge for all involved stakeholder – return counsellors, IOM, airlines, and of course the returnees themselves. Special medical needs must be addressed during the planning and organization of the return trip. This means that a higher level of coordination between return counsellors and IOM is required.

**As the issue of health aspects in the context of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) is continuously gaining importance, we will present a special series on health aspects in this and the upcoming issues of our AVRR newsletter.** The series will focus on different factors which need to be taken into account in the voluntary return of persons with medical problems. The current issue will focus on returnees' "Capacity to Decide".

Besides an article on AVRR and health, this newsletter issue includes several individual stories of returnees who have participated in the reintegration projects of the IOM Country Office for Austria. We would like to present you a number of cases of successful project participants to Afghanistan, who have shared their experiences with IOM during monitoring interviews. Despite various challenges, these participants have succeeded in creating a source of income for themselves and their families with the help of the reintegration assistance.

We wish you a pleasant read, and a good start to the autumn season!  
With best regards,

Department for Assisted  
Voluntary Return and  
Reintegration  
IOM Country Office for  
Austria



© IOM 2014

Abdul K.\*, participant of the AVRR Afghanistan project, with the flock of sheep he purchased with the reintegration assistance from IOM (see page 4).

\* Name has been changed

### In this edition:

Series „AVRR and Health Aspects“:  
Capacity to Decide.....p. 2-3

Success Stories of Returnees to Afghanistan.....p. 4-5

AVRR Pakistan I: Project Results.....p. 6-7

Beyond Vienna! Trips of the AVRR Department to the Austrian provinces.....p. 7

New business ideas in the Chechen Republic.....p. 8



Department for Assisted  
Voluntary Return and  
Reintegration  
International Organization for  
Migration  
Country Office for Austria  
Nibelungengasse 13/4  
1010 Vienna  
+43 (0) 1 585 3322 22  
avrr.vienna@iom.int



BM.I

REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA  
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

*This newsletter and the activities described within are co-funded by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.*



## Part 1: Capacity to Decide

In recent years, IOM has recorded an increase in voluntary returnees and beneficiaries in IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) projects. Among them, there are also a growing number of cases with medical issues.

The provision of return and reintegration assistance to beneficiaries with a medical condition requires a higher level of coordination and information exchange between return counselling organizations and IOM. All stakeholders involved need to make sure that the necessary logistical steps are in place for safe travel and also have to determine whether medical treatment is available after the migrant's return.

IOM is currently undertaking enhanced efforts to raise awareness about the preconditions for and implications of the voluntary return and reintegration of persons with medical issues. The aim is to ensure that beneficiaries have a safe journey to their country of origin and to provide reintegration assistance that takes their medical needs into account.

**The AVRR Team of the IOM Country Office for Austria will therefore publish an information series about AVRR and health aspects in this and upcoming issues of the AVRR Newsletter.**

The series will elaborate on five factors that IOM considers important in the preparation of the voluntary return of a beneficiary with health issues.

| FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT: |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Capacity to Decide            | C2D |
| Medical Eligibility to Return | E2R |
| Fitness for Travel            | F4T |
| Travel Requirements           | TRQ |
| Post Arrival Assistance       | PAA |

The factors can help to ensure that all necessary considerations, prerequisites and preparations are made prior to the departure and to enhance the cooperation between all players involved in the organization of the voluntary return and reintegration. For a livelier explanation, we will include practical scenarios based on the daily working routine of return counsellors and IOM staff.

In the opening issue of the series, we will focus on the returnees' **Capacity to Decide**.

### Background on Capacity to Decide:

**Capacity to Decide** refers to the possession of sufficient mental capacities to understand and make a reasonable decision in relation to a problem, and to understand and appreciate the potential consequences of that decision.

Determining whether or not a person has the capacity to decide is challenging when a beneficiary is impaired by a physiological or mental illness, mental deficiency, chronic use of drugs, chronic intoxication, etc. In very difficult cases, a potential returnee might lack sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate responsible decisions concerning his/her person and/or the voluntary return.

If the person is known to have a severe mental disorder, a doctor's letter should confirm that the client is able to comprehend the implications of the decision to return and therefore has the necessary capacity to make a voluntary return decision. When a return counsellor suspects that a potential returnee may suffer from a mental illness which may impede his or her capacity to decide, he/she should be referred to a medical specialist. (continued on the next page)

For legally incapacitated individuals, written confirmation about the voluntariness of the return and the acknowledgement of possible negative consequences regarding his/her health conditions are usually required from his/her legal guardian.

### **Practical Example\*:**

A return counsellor is approached by a male Pakistani national who wishes to return to Pakistan as soon as possible. He is also interested in participating in IOM's "AVRR Pakistan" project.

During the counselling session the potential returnee seems to be agitated and confused. The returnee reveals that he was diagnosed with a bipolar disorder and that he is currently on medication. The potential returnee also suffers from home sickness and thinks that after the return his depression will gradually lessen as he will be unified with his family.

Due to his obvious confusion and his medical record, the return counsellor doubts that the potential returnee is capable of deciding whether a voluntary return to Pakistan would be advisable at the moment.

### **IOM recommendations:**

- The return counsellor should advise the potential returnee to see and consult a specialist who assesses his state of health before making a definitive decision.
- The doctor should confirm in writing that the person is able to comprehend the implications of the decision to return and therefore has the necessary capacity to make a voluntary return decision. He should also indicate other relevant information, if applicable (diagnosis, recommended therapy and medication, fit for travel, necessity of escort, etc.).
- The return counsellor should obtain written consent from the beneficiary confirming that personal data about his/her medical condition can be transferred to IOM.
- The return counsellor should share all relevant and available information regarding the beneficiary's state of health with IOM designated staff.
- If the returnee rejects the disclosure of personal medical information, the return counsellor should inform IOM about the refusal. In such a case, IOM may reserve the right to refuse assistance.

If the returnee needs to continue taking medication during and/or after his/her return, IOM should be informed. Issues related to these aspects will be covered in the next newsletter.

\*The examples cited in this series are fictional, but are based on our working experience and are thus as close to reality as possible.

## Success Stories from Returnees to Afghanistan

**Karim H.\*, Kabul: "I am happy to be reunited with my family and friends"**



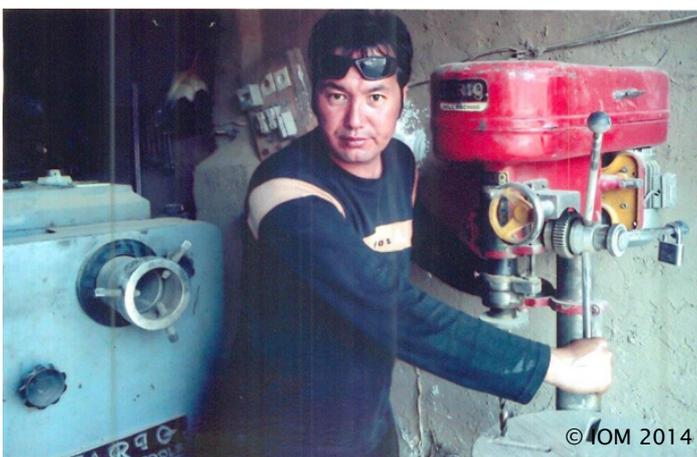
Karim H. returned to Afghanistan in August 2013. Although he is originally from Ghazni, he decided to rent a house in Kabul and now lives there with his

eight family members. He was very anxious to quickly gain a source of income and eventually settled on a business

partnership in a metal workshop with a friend he had known for years.

Mr. H., who had previously worked as a taxi driver and as a police officer, had no experience in this field and is now learning the trade from his business partner, who "is an honest person and always teaches me all of the metal work skills".

When he was visited by representatives of IOM in February 2014, Karim H. stated that he earns EUR 229 a month (33% of the profits of the business), which is enough to cover the monthly expenses of his family. He said that he is happy to be reunited with his family and friends and living again in his home society.



Karim H. in his metal shop that he runs together with his business partner.

**Abdul K.\*, Nangarhar: "I am happy with my business"**

Abdul K. had been living in Austria for five years when he decided to return to Afghanistan in order to take care of his elderly mother and his brother. In the summer of 2013, he returned to his home



Abdul K. in a shady spot with his flock of sheep.

village in a rural area of Nangarhar at the eastern border of the country.



After considering his options, Mr. K. decided that purchasing a flock of sheep with the reintegration grant provided by IOM would be the best way to earn income for his family. He had plenty of space to keep the sheep and sufficient meadows and greenery in the area where they could graze. His family already had experience in keeping livestock and knew how to prepare dairy products at home.

Abdul K.'s sheep are now bringing him a regular income. He has built up strong relationships with his customers and is able to use the dairy products to feed his family as well. Overall, he estimates that he earns EUR 175 a month, which is sufficient to cover his family's costs. He also earns an annual income from his family's agricultural land.

When IOM colleagues from Jalalabad spoke with Abdul K. in May 2014, he said that he was very happy with his business and had no problems in his daily life.

\* Names have been changes

**Reza A.\* from Helmand: “My experience gained abroad exposed me to new ideas which now help me to attract customers”**

Reza A. travelled to Austria with his fifteen-year-old son. However, they both became homesick and decided that they could better support their family if they returned to Afghanistan. They returned to their home province of Helmand in fall 2013, where they now live with Reza A.’s wife, his other children and his widowed sister. His sister also contributes to the household income.



Although he originally considered joining his brother-in-law’s carpentry business, Mr. A. settled on starting a business partnership with an acquaintance who sells iron and steel products. As the business already employed three people, it seemed like a solid enterprise.

When Reza A. visited the IOM office in Kandahar after receiving the first tranche of assistance (EUR 2000 in kind), he confirmed that he earns about EUR 450 a month, which combined with his sister’s income is sufficient to meet their daily needs. His son also helps him in the shop after school is over.

Mr. A. noted that his experience gained abroad is also useful for running the business, as it exposed him to new ideas, which now helps him to attract customers.



Reza A. in his steel and iron shop in the province of Helmand.

**Rahman H.\*, Herat: “I am happy to be living close to my family and friends”**

Before leaving Afghanistan, Rahman H. studied engineering and then began working on a second degree on the topic of Dari philology. Already before leaving Austria, he had a plan to start an internet café with the reintegration assistance and continue his studies in the evening.



Rahman H. in front of his computer shop in Herat.

Mr. H. returned to his home town of Herat in the western region of Afghanistan and moved back in with his parents, four sisters and three brothers. As his siblings are still in school, Rahman H. and his father are responsible for ensuring the financial welfare of the family. Mr. H. assessed the local market and decided to enter into a business partnership with a friend who had a store selling laptop and spare computer parts.



When the IOM colleagues from Herat visited Mr. H. at his store, he said that he was pleased with his business and was able to cover over half of his family’s expenses through his earnings. Since the household is also supported by his father, they have enough to get by. In addition to running his business, Rahman H. is in his second year of studying Dari philology at the University of Herat.

Mr. H. reiterated that he is happy to be living close to his family members, relatives and friends.

## AVRR Pakistan I: Project results

The first phase of the project “*Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to Pakistan (AVRR Pakistan)*” came to an end this spring. It was funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior and implemented by IOM in Austria and in Pakistan from 1 December 2012 to 31 March 2014. In this article, we would like to present to you some of the project’s results.

Altogether, the project assisted 30 returnees and their family members; only one person per household was registered as a direct beneficiary. All of the project participants were men aged 20 to 60 years; the majority of them returned on their own, while two returned with their wives and children. During monitoring visits, 23 returnees reported to IOM about their impressions after return and about their experiences in implementing their business ideas.

Measures to support the returnees’ efforts to reintegrate into their home society were determined in a participatory and consultative manner taking into account their individual needs and skills. Due to the economic conditions in Pakistan, all beneficiaries decided to invest the reintegration grant to start their own small business activity or to join an already existing business.

About half of the project beneficiaries became active in the area of retail: Some opened small grocery stores, started to sell computer hardware, spare parts for cars or fertilizers. The other half opted for income generating activities in the agriculture sector (e.g. cultivation of grain, dairy farming, poultry farming, etc.) or in the transportation business (e.g. as taxi driver).



© IOM 2013

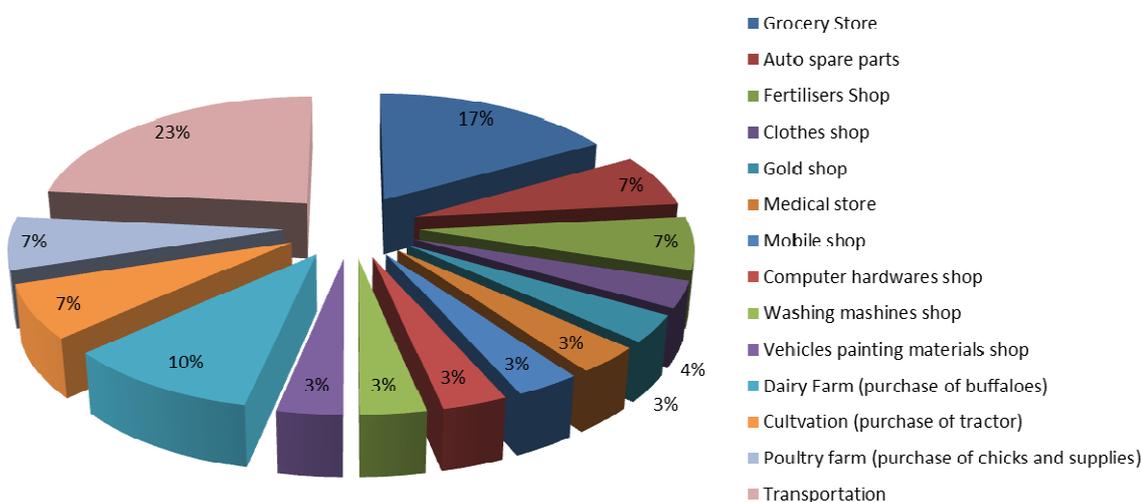
Project beneficiary Ahmad R.\* in his shop. Ahmad returned to Pakistan in May 2013 after having spent eight years in Austria. In summer 2013 he opened a small food store with the help of the reintegration assistance from IOM. His brother, his mother and an employee also help out in the store.

\* Name has been changed

Half of the beneficiaries indicated that they already had experience in the area of the chosen profession; the others hoped to benefit from the experiences of their friends or relatives. About 70 per cent of the beneficiaries did not rely entirely on the funding through IOM (which was limited to EUR 3,000), but provided their own financial contribution, albeit with smaller amounts (not exceeding EUR 500).

Three returnees and their families received additional assistance because of their particular vulnerability: two families received accommodation support, while one beneficiary received medical assistance for his wife.

### Businesses



n= 30

During the monitoring interviews conducted by IOM in Pakistan, the majority of the beneficiaries indicated they felt settled at home, although they did not feel their situation was easy: many described that the security, health and economic situation had deteriorated in comparison to the time before they had left Pakistan, as had cultural life. However, the infrastructure in the eyes of most returnees had slightly improved.

Due to the high interest in the project, a follow-up project started in July 2013 with co-funding from the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior and the European Return Fund. This project, which will be implemented until the end of 2014, aims to support up to 50 beneficiaries in their socio-economic reintegration in Pakistan.



© IOM 2014

Project beneficiary Shalid A.\* used his reintegration assistance for the purchase of buffaloes and is now producing dairy products.

\* Name has been changed

## **Beyond Vienna! *Trips of the AVRR Department to the Austrian provinces***

**The Department for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration is in constant contact with return counsellors and organizations from the provinces of Austria. However, we have realized that we sometimes focus our attention too much on Vienna and that we are not aware of the specific and often different situations of other parts of Austria.**

This is why our department has decided to increasingly venture beyond the borders of Vienna in order to interact more with actors in the provinces. Such forms of exchange help us to get a better picture of what is happening in different regions of the country as well as to deepen collaboration with partners and explore new areas for cooperation.

Last year and at the beginning of this year we already visited Graz, Innsbruck, Salzburg and Linz, where we held a series of interesting discussions: We met with representatives of Caritas, Verein Menschenrechte, the provincial governments, the youth welfare, as well as different NGOs which offer counselling for migrants and other actors.

In May and June this year, an IOM delegation again visited Salzburg and also the furthest flung province of Vorarlberg. There we met with representatives of the provincial governments (basic welfare and youth welfare), return counselling institutions and diaspora organizations. Through these trips, we were able to give a presentation of our reintegration projects to almost all of the Caritas Vorarlberg employees in the area of



© IOM 2014

Representatives of the AVRR department of IOM during the trip to Salzburg.

refugee assistance and get to know local NGOs such as the Frauentreffpunkt (Women's Meeting Place) in Salzburg. More representatives of organizations in the area of migration were thus able to learn about IOM's work and the possibility of voluntary return and reintegration. At the same time, these meetings opened up new possibilities for working together.

**We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our hosts and are looking forward to our further cooperation!**

## New Business Ideas in the Chechen Republic

Although most business activities of participants of the “AVRR Chechnya” project concentrate on agriculture (for instance cattle breeding), there have been several new and interesting business ideas in the current project phase.

The Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation is a region which is mainly dominated by agriculture, and many beneficiaries of the “AVRR Chechnya” project return to rural areas where the alternatives to engaging in agriculture are limited. Thus a majority of project beneficiaries decide to invest the reintegration assistance provided by IOM in agricultural activities, mainly cattle breeding. However, in comparison to previous project phases, an increasing number of returnees has decided to venture into other business sectors. For instance, beneficiaries opened car repair shops and household supply stores; they offered the rental of display refrigerators, and one beneficiary decided to produce souvenir articles and sell them on the internet.

In the following, we would like to present to you the example of Ramsan S., who has started a business as an individual entrepreneur in the field of metal working and who is relatively successful with his business.

### Ramsan S.\* , 32 years old

Ramsan S. spent several years in Austria before he decided to return voluntarily to the Chechen Republic in autumn 2013 and to apply for participation in the “AVRR Chechnya” project. Together with his wife and three little daughters, one of whom was born in Austria, he returned to the Chechen Republic in February 2014.

A short time after his return, Ramsan talked to an employee of Vesta, IOM’s local implementing partner in the Chechen Republic. At that time, Ramsan mentioned that his situation after return was quite difficult: He could not find a job, and the family had difficulties in financing their every day needs.

Ramsan was a trained welder and had attended courses in Austria in order to deepen his knowledge. For two years, he worked as a welder at an Austrian steel company. Finally, Ramsan was able to use his work experience gained in Austria: He decided to use the reintegration assistance from IOM to start a business in the field of metal working. With the help of Vesta and IOM, Ramsan



Project beneficiary Ramsan S. works as a welder and is producing metal coverages, which there is a high demand for in the Chechen Republic.

prepared a business plan and received the necessary equipment. In March 2014 he took up work. He now produces metal constructions like metal coverages, fences, gates, iron bars and safes.

According to Ramsan, there currently is a big demand for metal coverages in the Chechen Republic, as they are used on construction sites, and currently there is a lot of construction works going on. Ramsan is thus currently concentrating on the production of metal coverages, but in the future he plans to produce other metal products for private households, like safes or stoves.

According to Ramsan, because of his work he now has an income which allows him to support his family and improve his living conditions.



Ramsan S. at work.

\* Name has been changed