



# AVRR Newsletter

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration

Winter 2013/14

## Editorial

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

We welcome our readers in the New Year and happily present you the latest edition of our department's newsletter.

At the end of 2013, our main annual event on the topic of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration took place: On 3 and 4 December 2013 we organized the fourth "International Workshop for Return Counsellors" at the premises of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (AT Mol). Beyond staff from IOM and implementation partners from Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and the Russian Federation, approximately 50 representatives of the AT Mol, return counselling institutions and other interested persons were present. The most important aspects and results of our ongoing and completed reintegration projects were presented, and a range of concrete questions were thereafter discussed in topic and country specific working groups. In the next issue of our newsletter, we will share the results of the thematic working groups with you. This edition features the personal view of our department's intern, Petra Steinkogler, on the event.

We also would like to bring to your attention our impressions from a monitoring trip to Pakistan and present the end results of our projects in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia; both initiatives finished with the year 2013. Furthermore, we will provide details about the long-term results of the "AVRR Afghanistan" project, publications, other initiatives as well as our informational trips to some provinces of Austria.

Enjoy the read!

With best regards,  
The Department for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration  
IOM Country Office for Austria



The official group picture of the International Workshop in Vienna, 2013.

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# The International Workshop for Return Counsellors – My first day as an intern in the AVRR Department of the IOM Country Office for Austria (by Petra Steinkogler)

*The “International Workshop for Return Counsellors” took place at the premises of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (AT Mol) for the fourth time on 3 and 4 December 2013. This time I also participated as the new intern of the AVRR Department, on my first day at the IOM Country Office for Austria.*

Right after the introductory note by Thomas Mühlhans of the AT Mol and Andrea Götzelmann of the IOM Country Office for Austria, the 60 participants positioned themselves in the entry hall for the official group picture. All of a sudden, I found myself in the center of the group, the photographer took the picture, and I was eternalized in the middle of the picture. At least like this I will stay a part of the team forever.

The workshop’s main idea is to provide a networking platform for all organizations which are engaged in voluntary return in Austria. I personally think that this is a very valuable goal, in particular since it enables personal contact and exchange, which can never be replaced even by the technology standards we have these days with email and phone calls. The possibility to get first-hand information, especially from our international colleagues from Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan and the Russian Federation was a great enrichment for all of us. Apart from knowledge exchange, we also had the possibility to admire our Pakistani colleague Asma in a wonderful sari.



*IOM interns at the workshop: Tamana Ayobi, Petra Steinkogler & Shanti D'Sa*

Both workshop mornings were filled with presentations about the reintegration projects. The discussions held right after each presentation were rather short, but I’m familiar with that from university classes – who likes to talk in a room fully packaged with 60 people? Hence it was easy to stay on schedule perfectly, and we enjoyed talking during the coffee / tea / pastry breaks. One of the special highlights was a radio report from Ö1, an Austrian public radio station, which was supported visually with pictures of Lagos. Nigerian returnees told about their experiences back in their country of origin, and this way the returnees could also play a certain part in the workshop.

The small working groups in the afternoon were held in a relaxed atmosphere, and participants could ask questions that came up during the workshop. On the first day, the small groups were organized thematically in “Vulnerable Groups”, “Families, Women and Children”, “Medical Cases”, and “Sustainable Reintegration”. The “Sustainable Reintegration” group was particularly well-attended. On the second day, the small groups were divided regionally, in “Russian Federation / Chechen Republic”, “Nigeria”, “Afghanistan” and “Pakistan”, and our country experts from the different IOM Missions, as well as the implementation partner “Vesta”, could provide the participants with interesting and helpful insights into their work, as well as into the current situation in the respective countries. I participated in the groups “Medical Cases” and “Nigeria”. We were lucky to have return counsellors, as well as IOM Vienna staff and our colleague John from IOM Lagos in our small groups. We experienced an integrated discussion, in which we could talk about organizational procedures, as well as information management and conditions in the countries of return.

Twelve presentations, four small groups, two lunch breaks, four coffee breaks and many interesting discussions later, the “International Workshop for Return Counsellors 2013” came to an end. To be honest, I couldn’t have imagined a better start to my internship - I was provided with a full overview of the projects, the different reintegration measures and the prerequisites, as well as all the stakeholders involved in Austria and the countries of return. Now I am eager to begin my everyday work, and probably I am going to see some of them (and our readers) at the “International Workshop for Return Counsellors 2014”.



*Representatives of IOM Islamabad, Kabul, Lagos, Moscow, Vienna & “Vesta”*

## Publication announcement: Business ideas in the Chechen Republic

In the framework of the project “Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to the Russian Federation / the Chechen Republic”, which is co-financed by the AT Mol of the Interior and the European Return Fund, an information brochure for business ideas was developed at the end of 2013. It is now available for interested persons in English and Russian at the IOM Country Office for Austria.

The 36-page publication aims at giving an overview of possible income-generating activities in the Chechen Republic. The brochure was jointly developed with our local implementation partner, the NGO “Vesta” in Grozny, and will be distributed to returnees.



### Экономическая реинтеграция в Чеченской Республике: бизнес-идеи и варианты открытия малого бизнеса



Данный буклет финансируется совместно Европейским фондом по возвращению и Министерством внутренних дел Австрии.



Декабрь 2013  
Бюро МОМ в Вене



### Economic Reintegration in the Chechen Republic: Ideas and Options for Setting up Your Small Business



This booklet was co-financed by the European Return Fund and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior.



December 2013  
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## Looking back: Reintegration in Moldova

***The project “AVRR CT Moldova”, which aimed to provide targeted reintegration assistance in order to prevent (re-)trafficking in persons, came to an end at the close of 2013.***

Through the framework of the project, 11 young, vulnerable Moldovans received support to re-enter the Moldovan school system, to find shelter and accommodation, to complete professional training and to start an income-generating activity. This assistance socially and economically empowered the project beneficiaries, thereby relieving some of the pressure that many beneficiaries had felt to emigrate in order to contribute to the economic survival of their families. A number of beneficiaries had already begun such migration cycles before participating in the project and stated that they had at times experienced very poor working conditions abroad.

By providing support to break these cycles of forced economic migration, the project contributed to lowering the risk that these socially vulnerable young men and women would enter trafficking situations due to economic necessity.

This preventative approach, which is part of Moldova’s overall strategy of reducing human trafficking from the country, allowed IOM to assist people before they entered exploitative situations. Although the project has come to an end, the IOM office in Chisinau continues to maintain contact with a number of particularly vulnerable project beneficiaries. This individualized case management ensures that beneficiaries can continue to receive social and/or psychological support as needed.

In addition to the reintegration support, the project aimed to increase cooperation between Moldova and Austria in the areas of counter-trafficking and reintegration of vulnerable groups. This proved to be very beneficial to both Austrian and Moldovan stakeholders, particularly in the areas of trafficking in men and voluntary return and reintegration of minors. Even after the project has ended, active exchange continues on the topic of care for unaccompanied minors.

This combination of direct assistance and stakeholder networking proved to be an effective approach that could be used in future projects to prevent human trafficking.



## Review of the “AVRR Georgia” project

**After 14 months of project implementation, the project “Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to Georgia – AVRR Georgia II” came to an end on 31 December 2013. Following the first successful 16 month-project phase (1 July 2011 until 31 October 2012) with 26 participants, the project had been prolonged for another phase in autumn 2012.**

Within the second phase of the project (1 November 2012 until 31 December 2013), 13 people returned voluntarily to Georgia. Thus, altogether 39 voluntarily returnees were assisted in their reintegration in Georgia. Taking into account the family members of beneficiaries who returned to Georgia with them, IOM was able to directly or indirectly assist a total of 61 people in their country of origin throughout the two project phases. 23 project participants were assessed as being especially vulnerable, and were therefore eligible for additional assistance. In most of these cases medical costs were reimbursed, but IOM could also assist some participants with accommodation (helping with rental payments or renovation costs).

13 participants opted for reintegration measures in agriculture (livestock breeding, production of milk and cheese), and another 13 participants decided to start a business in the area of transportation (acquisition of used cars for founding a taxi business). Seven persons established small shops. Business partnerships with people who already had established a business or who were familiar with a certain area of work were popular as well because they facilitated the start of the work for returnees.

During the two “AVRR Georgia” project phases, representatives of the IOM Country Office for Austria and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior concluded two monitoring visits to Georgia (in September 2012 and in October 2013) to gain insights into the lives of project participants after their return.

Like the number of asylum applications of Georgian citizens in Austria, the number of persons who choose to return to Georgia has declined in recent years. While in 2011 IOM assisted 102 persons to return voluntarily to Georgia, in 2012 only 95 persons, and in 2013 only 76 persons were assisted. Due to this declining trend, the Austrian project for the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration for Georgian returnees phased out.

However, since 1 January 2014 a new EU-initiative has been offering reintegration support in Georgia, including for returnees from Austria. For further information please contact Andrea Götzelmann (agoetzelmann@iom.int).

The following pictures from the AVRR Georgia project phases show beneficiaries after their return:



Mr. Shota E. with his second-hand car



Mr. Tarel Z. with puppies of his dog breeding business



Mr. Aleksandre K. in front of his car repair shop



Ms. Eteri G. with home-made cheese



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## Assessing reintegration in Afghanistan

***The “AVRR Afghanistan I” project, which had started in May 2012, came to an end in December 2013. Altogether, the project assisted 68 voluntary returnees to restart their lives in Afghanistan.***

Apart from the main monitoring, which was conducted after project beneficiaries had received the first tranche of assistance (EUR 2000 in kind), IOM Kabul conducted 11 additional monitoring interviews with project participants after they had received both tranches of assistance (EUR 3500 in kind in total). This article presents the results of these last interviews.

Whether active in construction or metal workshops, grocery or fuel shops, these project beneficiaries informed IOM that they were able to rely on a regular income provided by their businesses and that this had directly affected the general well-being of their entire families. All 11 interviewees stated that they were fully satisfied on a personal level and extremely happy having rejoined their families. As one project participant put it: *“with a regular income source the personal and culture life will automatically improve”*.



*A successful returnee in his shoe shop in Herat*

While some project beneficiaries had extended their businesses by opening a second shop in a different area, others chose to invest the profits of their businesses in personal development, i.e. to attend business school or even the police academy. One participant invested his reintegration grant in two business areas, thereby enabling him to focus at a later stage on the more profitable business model. Participants highlighted the project’s flexibility together with the extensive consultation and advice received from IOM staff in Austria and Afghanistan as very important factors for their success. However, they all stressed that they would have preferred to receive the reintegration grant in cash and not in-kind services, as less documentation and fewer bureaucratic hurdles would be necessary.

While all 11 interviewed project beneficiaries would advise their friends in Austria without legal status to participate in the project due to its very useful start-up assistance, they expressed general concern about the political situation in Afghanistan, especially once ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) withdraws this year.



*A returnee whose reintegration was made easier thanks to his shop in Mazar*

Economically speaking, the results of this monitoring are very satisfactory (project beneficiaries were successfully running their business and were able to provide for themselves and their families). Project beneficiaries were content with their decision to return to Afghanistan and were enjoying living in their own communities with their families. Both aspects speak for the sustainability of this project, as it mirrors an integrated view of the beneficiary’s world (economic, social, and cultural).

However, the uncertainty of the Afghan political scene may prove to be an impediment in the further development of our beneficiaries’ business and it points to a long-lasting conflict between finite project management, ever-changing needs and the regenerative aspect of sustainability.



*A new building entrepreneur in Kabul*

*\*The second phase of the project “Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to Afghanistan” runs until 30 June 2014.*



## Impressions of the monitoring visit to Pakistan, 18 to 23 November 2013

*A delegation composed of the IOM Country Office for Austria and the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior (AT Mol) travelled to Pakistan from 18 to 23 November in order to gain impressions of the implementation and results of the ongoing first phase of the project "Assistance for the Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Returnees to Pakistan (AVRR Pakistan)". Andrea Götzelmann and Ondine Delavelle representing the IOM Country Office for Austria and Caroline Hutter representing the AT Mol participated to the monitoring visit.*

On 20 November we set out together with our Pakistani colleague, Asma Kashif, from the capital Islamabad in the direction of Lahore, surrounded by everlasting smog which troubled the scenery. The scope of the transportation means we saw in these three days - from hand trucks over donkey carts or rickshaws to big colourful painted trucks - was very striking and mirrored the diversity of the people and the area. Despite some limitations due to the security situation, we were able to conduct numerous interesting conversations.



*The delegation at a meeting with a returnee and accompanying people*

On the first day we met three returnees near Gujranwala. The first visit took place with Mr. N., who greeted us on the main road and then showed us the way to his home through narrow and dusty streets with his bus. He and his family welcomed us in a very hospitable manner and served us fruits and refreshments, in a room which served as a living room as well as a bedroom. He vividly recounted his migration experience and route, its costs, and his decision to return. He described his return after nine years abroad as a "necessary decision". He proudly posed for photographs with his both sons in front of the minibus that he purchased with his father's support and from the IOM reintegration assistance. With this bus he started up a taxi company that he named after his elder son, and from which he earns approximately four to five thousand rupees (EUR 34-37) a week.



*Mr. H. with his sons in front of the minibus*

Next, after a long drive, we met Mr. C. off of the main road during a colourful sunset and between green fields. He also came to pick us up and guided us to his uncle's farm, this time with a motorcycle. He was clothed in a western manner with jeans and a red t-shirt, while all the people who curiously gathered little by little around us were wearing traditional clothing: light "shalwar kamiz" for the men and coloured ones for the women. Mr. C. used the reintegration assistance to buy buffalos to keep on his uncle's farm. His family has experience with dairy production and farming. Mr. C. employs one person for the milking. He sells the milk to a shop, which is his fixed customer. He earns approximately 20,000 rupees (EUR 130) per month from this activity. At the time we visited him, two of the buffalos were pregnant and Mr. C. was experiencing an income gap due to the interruption of the milk production. He told us that because of this he is planning to work as a photographer and cameraman at events, in order to complement his income. He voiced his wish to acquire his own piece of land in the future so that he can keep his buffalos independently from his uncle.

During the meetings with the returnees and other stakeholders, we discussed migration and travel conditions that the participants had experienced on their way to Europe and back. They often emphasized that return and reintegration without established networks are very difficult. In respect of this, all returnees expressed their gratitude for the support they received, even if they found the amount of the assistance (up to EUR 3000) not to be sufficient considering the increasingly expensive living costs in Pakistan. *(continued on the next page)*

The monitoring visit also made it possible for us to talk more with our Pakistani colleagues about the logistical procedures and their improvement. We learned that our colleague Saima Amjad in the Lahore office meets approximately 60 per cent of the returnees for the submission of the business plans and supporting documents, while around 40 per cent of the returnees submit their documents via post. During the monitoring phase, where the business activities of the participants are verified, it is planned that she will see all the returnees (again).

During this stay, we felt that the distance of almost 5,000 kilometres between Austria and Pakistan was somehow reduced. We gained an insight into the colourful and challenging everyday life in Pakistan as well as into the returnees' situations. As we usually make decisions from far away, through the trip we could get a feeling of the locally prevailing conditions.



A returnee during a conversation with Asma Kashif and Ondine Delavelle

## Information meetings in Austrian provinces

***In order to have direct contact and exchange information with important stakeholders outside of Vienna, the AVRR Department of the IOM Country Office for Austria is increasingly undertaking trips to the provinces.***

One of these visits brought us to Graz on 17 and 18 October 2013. In the course of this trip, meetings with important partner organizations like Caritas Styria and VMÖ Styria took place, during which open questions as well as the procedures of the reintegration projects were discussed. In the meetings with the Department of the Provincial Government of Styria and the Migrants' Council of the City of Graz, the IOM delegation gained a number of new insights about the current situation and specific challenges of

migrants in Styria and in Graz in particular. Furthermore, meetings with representatives of the Afghan Diaspora, the Centre for Culture and Solidarity of Afghans in Styria and the Afghan Youth Club, as well as the Nigerian Diaspora, the Igbo Community Styria, were part of the programme. During talks with the associations IKEMBA (Association for Interculture, Conflict Management, Empowerment, Migration Accompanying, Education and Work) and ZEBRA (Intercultural Counselling and Therapy Centre), the representatives of the AVRR Department were introduced to the wide spectrum of counselling and support possibilities of these two NGOs.

On 13 January 2014, Ondine Delavelle and Petra Steinkogler met the return counsellors of Caritas and VMÖ in Salzburg. In addition, they held two information meetings with participants of the project "AVRR Pakistan", and presented the reintegration project to a representative of the Pakistani community.

From 20 to 22 January 2014, a delegation of the AVRR Department went to Innsbruck and Linz. Meetings with the Office of the Tyrolian Provincial Government (Department for Refugee Coordination and the Youth Welfare Tyrol) and the Office of the Upper Austrian Provincial Government (Department for Social Issues) as well as with the Youth Welfare Linz took place. In the course of the visit, the representatives of the AVRR Department learned about the implementation of the refugee-related agendas in both provinces, and discussed possibilities for cooperation with Youth Welfare institutions in the case of return of unaccompanied minors. *(continued on the next page)*



At the Migrants' Council of the city of Graz



The meeting with the association ZeMiT (Centre for Migrants in Tyrol) brought new knowledge about the situation of migrants in Tyrol and the wide range of tasks and projects of ZeMiT. Project-related issues were discussed during meetings with VMÖ and Caritas in Tyrol and Upper Austria.

We would like to use this opportunity to once again thank all our interlocutors for the very productive exchange of information, experience and views, which is of great value for the daily work of the AVRR team.



IOM at Verein Menschenrechte Österreich in Salzburg

## Helping Trafficked Persons to Return Home Safely: The CARE Project

Individuals who have experienced exploitative situations abroad and wish to return to their home country face particular difficulties in restarting their lives after the return. First and foremost, depending on the circumstances of their trafficking experience and the situation in the country of return, they could be in danger of reprisals from their traffickers, whether physical or psychological. They could also face stigmatization in their community, either because their friends and family are aware that they were trafficked or because they returned from Europe empty-handed. Furthermore, they may find it difficult to re-enter the workplace, whether due to psychological trauma or the poor economic conditions in their country.

All these aspects put returning trafficked persons at risk of being re-trafficked.

IOM is trying to address these challenges through the CARE project (Coordinated Approach to the Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking). The project provides targeted assistance measures to trafficked persons who voluntarily return to their country of origin in order to jump-start their reintegration. Based on the needs of the individuals and the resources available in the country of origin, this assistance could take the form of medical or psychological support, professional training, education, job placement and / or business start-ups.

A risk assessment prior to return is undertaken in each case to assess whether it is safe for the person to return. The project is open to men, women and minors who have been trafficked. If you think that one of your clients may have been trafficked and could benefit from the project, please contact Katie Klaffenböck at 01 585 3322 46 or [kklaffenboeck@iom.int](mailto:kklaffenboeck@iom.int)



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