



AVRR Newsletter

Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from Austria

International Organization for Migration

Spring 2016

Editorial

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

As our readers know, we are convinced that educational and training measures are of particular importance to the reintegration of our project participants. This is why we will be giving you an insight into further steps that we have taken to this end. In addition to two business trainings, which took place at the beginning of this year, 14 RESTART participants from Afghanistan and the Chechen Republic decided to invest a portion of their reintegration assistance in individually-tailored educational and training measures.

You will be getting a further glimpse into the working world of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration at IOM through a first-hand account of our intern Julia Weihs: she accompanied our colleagues from the Operations Department to the airport and witnessed how they assisted voluntary returnees with their last-minute preparations before departure.

Finally we will be introducing you to two of our RESTART participants, who upon returning, decided to open up an internet café and a computer store respectively.

We wish you a pleasant read!

Best Regards,

Your AVRR Team
IOM Country Office for Austria



Four Afghan RESTART participants listen to the explanations of the TSCO Trainer during the first Business Training held in Kabul in January 2016.

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Vienna – Istanbul – Home: A few scenes at the airport while accompanying voluntary returnees

A first-hand account by Julia Weihs

After working as an intern at the Department for Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) at the IOM Country Office for Austria for the past four months, I have, metaphorically speaking, assisted numerous returnees with their return and reintegration. At the end of February 2016, I spent one day at the airport with IOM colleagues from the Operations Department and had the opportunity of accompanying a few returnees all the way to passport control.

At around eleven a.m., Leopold Kraus, who even after having 30 years of work experience under his belt is simply referred to as Leo, Barbara Galante and I, make our way to the airport, as we are scheduled to meet the returnees at the Terminal 1 information counter at 12 p.m. The area in front of the information counter slowly starts filling up: voluntary returnees start flocking around, accompanied by their respective return counsellors or “Zivildienster” (persons carrying out alternative civilian service in lieu of conscription) working at the return counselling organizations, some travelling light while others are not. Leo stands there, like a bastion of calmness, registering returnees and providing information. A young Georgian family arrives, father, mother and a child with shiny brown hair in tow, followed by a quiet Afghan and a young Iranian who arrives with nothing more than a big plaid duffle bag. Suddenly my eye is caught by a familiar face: Seyed M., I know him from a previous encounter, as his wife Fatemeh is one of two female Afghan participants in the RESTART project¹ currently being implemented by the AVRR Department. The family of five arrived in Austria in October 2015. Both daughters and the son had already started attending school; the decision to return did not come easy. I am a little surprised to see them go through with it after all. Fatemeh finally notices me too, she smiles and we nod at each other. As I don’t speak any Dari, we cannot converse with one another without the help of an interpreter. Besides this, we are also short of time. While Leo has his last remaining protégé (an Iraqi who is nowhere to be found) called out, I accompany the young Georgian family to the luggage area; they want to get both their suitcases wrapped in cling film. While the luggage is properly packed, it is – as it soon transpires – unfortunately

Notice regarding participation of Afghan returnees

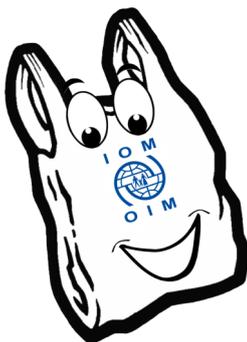
Since 5th April 2016, 40 places are once again available for Afghan returnees wishing to participate in the RESTART project.

As the actual need for reintegration assistance is much greater, unfortunately, we cannot take into consideration all groups of people: These **40 places** are hence only available to **families** and **unaccompanied minors**. The criterion of having lived in Austria for a minimum of three months prior to applying is still in place.

As is the case for the entire RESTART project, these places are open to returnees returning to Afghanistan until 31st October 2016.

much too heavy. 23 kg are allowed per piece of luggage; however one of their bags narrowly skims the 30 kg mark. What now? An additional piece of luggage? Too expensive! A look of desperation sweeps across the young woman’s face, I can tell that she is at her wit’s end. I let Leo know about the situation and he takes it up with the lady at the counter; after a brief back and forth, a solution is reached.

Where have the others gone? I send Zahra, the eldest daughter of Syed and Fatemeh, off to look for her parents. As they advance towards us at a steady pace, I am astonished to see that Seyed is planning to embark on his long journey to Kabul in a suit. The group starts to move, I wish the family all the best in German. Suddenly the young Iranian reappears, this time without his duffle bag; he seems to have taken some time to replenish his supplies at a nearby fast-food chain. I hold the fort while Leo accompanies the others to the gate. When he returns, he is escorted by a man. Leo is carrying the man’s big travelling bag. He turns out to be the Iraqi whose name had previously been called out. As I glance at the endless amount of luggage, it becomes apparent why he needed so long in the first place. At the check-in counter he appears distraught: he asks whether he’ll be allowed to take his small bag, containing his medications, on board. Leo is able to reassure him. With a bag pack slung over his shoulder, a plastic bag in one hand and a travel kit in the other, he finally makes his way to the boarding area to embark on the flight to Istanbul, where the eleven voluntary returnees will go their separate ways.



Two computer stores in Pakistan's tribal area

Two Pakistani RESTART² participants used their respective reintegration assistance, worth 2,500 euros, to invest in a computer store and an internet café in Parachinar, situated in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). What's special about this is that this sort of business is rarely carried out.



Iqrar H. in his computer store in Parachinar, Pakistan, which he was able to buy equipment for, using the reintegration assistance offered by IOM as part of the RESTART project. © IOM 2015.

From the Pakistani returnees having received reintegration assistance from IOM till date, only one person opted to open a store selling computer equipment, and that was back in 2013. Three other returnees had intended to start such a business but changed their minds and decided to invest their assistance in other ventures: two bought a taxi while one opened a grocery store. Today we would like to share the story of two of our RESTART participants with you who have gained a foothold in this sector:

Iqrar H. came to Austria at the age of 17 and returned to Pakistan at the end of July 2015. What drove him to return was his cancer-stricken mother, whose health H. was worried about. Hadi H. returned to Pakistan in summer 2015, after neighbours told him about the poor health of his mother and brothers.

Internet café und computer store: Rare, but fruitful business ideas

Iqrar H. opened an internet café, where he also sells computer accessories. He bought the basic equipment for his store, worth 2,360 euros, with the help of the RESTART reintegration assistance. In addition he received an accommodation allowance amounting to 300 euros. Apart from this, he also participated in a Business Training in Peshawar which was organized by IOM, following which he received the final part of his reintegration assistance: an electricity generator worth 140 euros. Furthermore, he also applied for medical assistance, as he was suffering from kidney stones.

The second project participant Hadi H. also received goods for his computer store, worth 2,500 euros. Moreover he received an accommodation allowance amounting to 300 euros as well as 344 euros to treat a gall bladder inflammation.

During telephonic monitoring interviews carried out in February 2016, Iqrar H. seemed satisfied with his current life: according to him, his internet café is helping him earn approx. 175 euros a month, which is higher than what he had initially envisaged within his business plan. After covering his living ex-

penses and those of his five family members, he is sometimes left with 15 to 20 euros, which he can set aside for the future.

The monitoring interviews also revealed that though Hadi H. is earning more from his business than Iqrar H., it is not as much as he had initially envisaged. Even though 220 euros is sufficient for Hadi H. to take care of his family, whilst setting some money aside or using it to obtain treatment for his ill mother, he nevertheless finds his situation difficult.

Heavy Family Responsibilities

As the sole breadwinner of a family of eight, Hadi H. has a huge responsibility resting on his shoulders: his mother and two of his brothers are ill. Despite his young years, Iqrar H. too must take care of his family, as he is the eldest son. The responsibility he has towards his family was the main reason for his return, as he would not have been able to shoulder this responsibility as an asylum seeker in Austria.

Many Pakistani RESTART participants face a similar situation: illness or family responsibilities are often cited as the reason for return. Due to a lack of government assistance, returnees receive little support in taking care of their relatives and are often left to fend for themselves. This is what makes the reintegration assistance particularly effective and sustainable: opening a shop can - if managed well - allow participants to secure an income for a longer period of time.

Iqrar H. takes notes during the Business Training, which was organised by IOM in Peshawar, Pakistan. © IOM 2015.



^{1&2} The Project "RESTART - Reintegration Assistance for Voluntary Returnees to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Russian Federation/ the Chechen Republic" is co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union as well as the Austria Ministry of the Interior

Special Focus: Educational Measures in the RESTART Project

Education as a means to sustainable reintegration

From IOM's point of view, education represents a particularly sustainable component of the reintegration process. In the words of Benjamin Franklin: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest". IOM hence advocates educational measures as part of its "RESTART- Reintegration Assistance for Voluntary Returnees to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Russian Federation/The Chechen Republic" project, which is co-financed by the Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union and the Austrian Ministry of the Interior.

In practical terms this means that returnees can, inter alia, invest their entire reintegration assistance, i.e. 2,800 euros in educational measures. For business start-ups or partnerships a maximum of 2,500 euros can be used. The full amount is typically used by most RESTART participants in order to start generating income as quickly as possible. Hence a mere 300 euros is left for educational measures. Nevertheless, even this amount alone can have a significant impact on the success of the reintegration process. In mid-March 2016, 14 participants - eight from Afghanistan and six from the Chechen Republic - applied for individually-tailored educational measures.



Sediqullah M. feeds his cows, which he was able to buy thanks to IOM. After attending a literacy course financed by RESTART he is finding it much easier to keep track of the products he has sold. © IOM 2015.

Language and computer courses: Basic education as a solid stepping stone

For many returnees reintegrating into the labour market of their respective countries of return represents a major challenge. Difficulties particularly emerge as a result of longer stays abroad and/or a lack of qualifications. In order to compensate for these deficits, some RESTART participants invest in a basic education course. Sediqullah M., who used his reintegration assistance to purchase three cows in order to sell milk and dairy products, completed a basic literacy course following his return to Afghanistan. With the help of

IOM he was able to acquire basic skills, allowing him to write in Dari, Pashtu and English within six months. During a monitoring visit in December 2015, he expressed his gratefulness for this opportunity and emphasized the benefit he has gained as a result: "The training helped me manage my business in a good way; it helps me keep records of the dairy products I have sold".

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest"

Benjamin Franklin

A total of six returnees to Afghanistan also took English and computer courses, through which they anticipate a rise in their income or employment opportunities in an international environment. Language courses are also viewed as a career stepping stone in the Chechen Republic: With the help of IOM, Alikhan M. was able to resume an English course that he had previously started in Austria. He is currently working as a taxi driver in Grozny, but is hoping to land a lucrative job at one of many international construction firms from Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Slovenia or South Korea. Some participants apply for a language course for their children, as the return can also present considerable hurdles to the latter. This was confirmed by Khadizat C., the mother of Dzhabrail, Mukhamad und Malika. After residing in Austria for more than twelve years, the family returned to the Chechen Republic. All three kids had been born in Austria and found it difficult to follow school lessons in Russian. With the help of IOM, C. subsequently hired a tutor, who spent three months helping the children acquire the necessary linguistic skills.

Courses with tangible career prospects: ideal conditions for earning additional income

The range of career opportunities is diverse - this is also exhibited by the stories of our RESTART participants Dzhambulata Y. and Aminat B. Like the majority of returnees to the Chechen Republic, both participants decided to join the dairy industry after their return. In order to diversify their income sources, they attended additional practical courses in the hope of earning some extra income: Y. learned how to weld, whilst B. attended a cosmetology course.

Special Focus: Educational Measures in the RESTART Project

Smart Start into the year 2016 Impressions of the Business Trainings in Afghanistan and Pakistan

On the 20th and 21st of January 2016, the first business training for RESTART participants² was held in Afghanistan. In Pakistan a second training of its kind took place on the 28th and 29th of January 2016. A total of twelve participants used the opportunity to avail this training measure, free of charge.

Kabul – successfully managing a company

Four persons from various districts of the capital made their way to the first business training for RESTART participants in Afghanistan, which was held in a training facility of the Tanweer Consultancy Services Organisation (TCSO) in Kabul. All four had already received the first tranche of their reintegration assistance from IOM and had used it to enter into business partnerships in the food retail industry. The business training was held in Dari. Over the course of two mid-morning sessions, business trainers Abdul Qadir Wafa and Mohammad Sadiq from TCSO showed the aspiring businessmen how to effectively manage and develop a micro-business.



Participants of the business training discuss among one another during a group exercise, under the watchful eyes of trainer Mohammad Sadiq in Kabul.
© IOM 2016.

Training in Peshawar – small steps to success

The following week, at the Grand Hotel in Peshawar, Pakistan, business trainer George Younas Boota from the Management Development Institute (MDI) trained a group of eight Pakistani RESTART participants from Parachinar, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, in how to economically develop and optimise their businesses. He inspired the participants by telling them success stories of famous companies: only through hard work and continuous efforts to offer qualitatively high products and services were the likes of Coca-Cola or Honda able to make the leap from small businesses to household names.

In both trainings, participants worked in groups of two or four to tackle various tasks, for instance, determining a price for popular products such as pickled food and Qahwa⁴. According to the trainer, active participation was a key component of the training and improved learning outcomes.



MDI Trainer George Boota explains the basic principles of managing micro-businesses to eight RESTART participants in Pakistan © IOM 2016.

RESTART participant Sayed H. receives a training certificate from Trainer George Boota at the end of the two-day business training in Peshawar.
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³The Project “RESTART - Reintegration Assistance for Voluntary Returnees to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Russian Federation/ the Chechen Republic” is co-financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union as well as the Austria Ministry of the Interior

⁴Arabic Coffee