



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

Gambia, West Coast Region



In February 2014, Mr. D. voluntarily returned to The Gambia. Even though Mr. D. did not submit a concrete return assistance project before his departure, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) guaranteed him his financial reintegration assistance. Only a few days after his return, and with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Banjul, Mr. D. decided to invest in a trade with building materials in the capital region.

In August 2014, a staff member from IOM Banjul, the person responsible for the project from IOM Bern as well as a representative of the SEM, visited Mr. D. and conducted a monitoring. Mr. D. stated that he had decided to return to The Gambia primarily because of family reasons. He was satisfied with the implementation of the project which took place without any problems. Accordingly, he considered the return assistance as helpful for his reintegration in The Gambia. Mr. D. said that he earned enough money to be independent and to support his family. But this was precisely his biggest problem: relatives were buying cement on credit and thus deprived him of his profits. This led to the fact that Mr. D. was not sure whether he had good prospects in the Gambia in the longer term. Despite the mentioned difficulties, Mr. D. considered his situation as better than before his travel to Europe – especially because he was able to generate an income by himself.



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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