



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

Tebessa, Algeria



Before returning to Algeria, Mr. O. was very skeptical and full of doubts about his reintegration. After living away from his home country for at least 25 years, Mr. O. decided to return to Algeria in November 2019. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) had granted him financial assistance to set up a reintegration project and to find accommodation. In addition, IOM was responsible for coordinating the project on site.

As Mr. O.'s family owned land in the Tebessa region, he decided even before his return to set up a livestock farm. Due to the pandemic that broke out in early 2020, Mr. O. was only able to start his reintegration process several months after his return. Initially, he bought building materials and built a small house on his own. However, while there were ongoing restrictions and curfews because of the pandemic, it was difficult for Mr. O. to access the materials and equipment he needed to start his farming project.

During the follow-up visit in the spring of 2021, Mr. O. told our colleagues that he was satisfied with his current situation, despite all the difficulties. In the previous months, Mr. O. managed to build an animal shelter, and was therefore able to buy the animals (chickens and sheep). With his personal savings, Mr. O. also bought a van to be used for his project, in order to sell fruit and vegetables. In addition, he bought a water tank and planted several fruit trees.

Water scarcity is a serious problem that partly hinders the success of Mr. O.'s project. He lives far from the nearest village and has very limited access to water. He therefore plans to talk to the authorities in the area to find a solution for the future of his project.

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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