

# 2018 MONITORING REPORT

*RAS – Reintegration Assistance from Switzerland*



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This publication has been produced with the support of the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM).

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration (IOM), Coordination Office for Switzerland

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## Summary

Persons who live in Switzerland under the asylum system who choose to return voluntarily to their country of origin are eligible to ask for support with reintegration. Since 2002, the project *Reintegration Assistance from Switzerland* (RAS), funded by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), has responded to this demand by providing financial assistance, paid out in the period immediately following return. This assistance is intended to help the persons concerned to reintegrate, by allowing them to realise their own individual projects (professional, accommodation, medical, education, etc.).

The IOM offices in the countries of return monitor individual reintegration projects, case by case. In addition to this individual monitoring, the SEM and IOM carry out phases of systematic monitoring during which all the beneficiaries of the RAS project receive a monitoring visit over a period of six months. Following the monitoring phases that took place in 2009 and 2012, this report presents the main results of the systematic monitoring that took place from January to June 2016 and makes some recommendations. This report aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the various services provided to RAS beneficiaries, analyse the impact of reintegration assistance and the profile of the beneficiaries and compare the results obtained with those from 2012.

Of the 460 reintegration projects received between January and June 2016, 452 were the subject of a monitoring visit. 48% of these 452 projects were being carried out in Afghanistan (91 cases) and in Iraq (124 cases).

234 projects, i.e. 52% of the total, were visited between May 2016 and October 2017<sup>1</sup> in 29 countries.

The results below are therefore based on the monitoring questionnaires completed in the course of these visits by 293 beneficiaries.

- The beneficiaries of return assistance are in most cases men (91%). The majority of them (54%) had spent less than one year outside their country before deciding to return voluntarily. This decision to return was motivated by personal or family problems (53%) or a negative decision on their application for asylum (41%).
- One beneficiary in four (25%) was informed about the existence of voluntary return assistance by a friend or relative.
- Most of the participants (73%) were interested in setting up their own small business. These small businesses were opened primarily in the fields of commerce and agriculture.
- 91% of those who replied indicated that they were completely or partly satisfied with their personal situation at the time of the investigation. The reasons for dissatisfaction given by the remaining 9% were financial problems and the political/security situation in their country of return.

The results of this monitoring phase demonstrate the effectiveness of return counselling and the RIF<sup>2</sup>, SIM<sup>3</sup> and RAS projects. The beneficiaries felt that they had been well prepared before their

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<sup>1</sup> The visits were scheduled to take place six months after return. However, some visits took place long after the scheduled date because of difficulties in contacting the beneficiaries at the scheduled time of the visit.

<sup>2</sup> Swiss Return Information Fund.

<sup>3</sup> swissREPAT-IOM Movement.

return and were satisfied with the information they received before their departure, with the return journey and with their progress towards reintegration.

This report also includes a more detailed analysis of the conditions for return assistance in West Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq. This analysis shows the impact of cultural, economic and social factors at national or regional level on the chances for returning migrants to reintegrate.

Finally, the recommendations propose methods of improving the reintegration assistance that Switzerland provides. Some of these recommendations were made in 2013, thus confirming their need to be implemented.

Outside the return counselling sessions, information on the possibility of return assistance should be made more widely known, for example through public events or new information technologies. In order to achieve a lasting effect, reintegration assistance has to be based on the migratory route and the aptitudes of the migrants. The beneficiaries' specific needs should begin to be taken into account as part of the return counselling and this should continue after return, while allowing a degree of flexibility in the choice of reintegration project and in the actual procedure for implementing it. The recipients of reintegration assistance should also be given training on how to manage a business. The success of a reintegration project also largely depends on the opportunities offered by the community to which the migrant is returning. Thus reintegration projects would be more effective if they took account of the challenges and opportunities in the places of return. It would be highly desirable to place returning migrants in contact with the public or private institutions already operating in the country of return which can provide support over and above that offered by Switzerland.

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*“When I was in Switzerland, I never thought I would really receive this assistance in the Gambia after my return », Ahmed,<sup>4</sup> returnee to the Gambia.”*

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<sup>4</sup> The first names used in this report have been changed to preserve the anonymity of the beneficiaries interviewed.

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*“I think that everyone who has migrated has used up all their savings, sold their houses ... so they can make it to Europe. When they decide to go back home, I am sure that they really need help to reintegrate. That’s why I am keen to help by explaining the benefits of reintegration assistance any time you need.” Mohamad, returnee to Iraq.*

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*“I have a lot of responsibilities and my family criticises me for deciding to emigrate.” Afshin, returnee to Iran*

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## Introduction

Choosing to return and reintegrate is a decision motivated by a variety of factors. Success often requires the personal commitment of the migrants themselves and the involvement of several institutions that are active in this field.

Persons resident in Switzerland under the asylum system<sup>5</sup> who decide to return voluntarily to their country of origin<sup>6</sup> can benefit from assistance with their return and reintegration financed by the Swiss government.<sup>7</sup> The Reintegration Assistance from Switzerland (RAS) project is a voluntary return and reintegration assistance project which has been conducted by IOM since 2002 with funding from the SEM. Reintegration assistance consists of financial assistance given in order to carry out a reintegration project after returning to the country of origin or going to a third country.<sup>8</sup> Reintegration projects are devised with the help of return counsellors in Switzerland and take account of the specific needs of each beneficiary. As a result, in the vast majority of cases, they are work-related projects, but they may also be projects related to accommodation, education and training and possibly medical assistance. Each individual project is submitted to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) for approval. The SEM then instructs IOM to make the payments and to monitor the cases in the countries of origin.

Founded in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the main intergovernmental organisation active in the field of migration. Since September 2016, IOM has been part of the United Nations system. It currently has 169 member states, while 8 other states have observer status, and has offices in more than 100 countries around the world. IOM activities include international cooperation, providing assistance to migrants, managing borders, and questions relating to reparation for victims of conflict or forced displacements.

As the Swiss representative within the organisation, IOM Bern is the contact and coordination office for national and international questions relating to migration in Switzerland. The office of IOM Bern opened in 1994, after a framework agreement was concluded with the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) relating to return assistance. In this context, the above-mentioned RAS project was launched.

In 2007, the SEM and IOM decided to monitor the individual reintegration projects more closely by conducting, as required, visits to certain reintegration projects a few months after the funding has been paid out. Phases of systematic monitoring have been organised with the aim of obtaining more comprehensive information. The initial monitoring phase took place between 2009 and 2010. Based on the experience gained during this phase, a second monitoring phase was conducted in 2012. All the RAS mandates therefore included a systematic monitoring visit. These monitoring phases were concluded by submitting a report and making recommendations.

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<sup>5</sup> Any person who has applied for asylum, irrespective of their status (asylum seeker, recognised refugee, application rejected, etc.), can request return assistance.

<sup>6</sup> Migrants do not always return to their home country or to the country where they hold citizenship. They can return to a country where they enjoy permanent or long-term residence rights.

<sup>7</sup> See the Asylum Act of 26 June 1998 (status as of 1 January 2018) and the directive of 1 January 2008 (Section 4, status 1 July 2015).

<sup>8</sup> If the beneficiary enjoyed permanent or long-term residence rights there.

In 2013, the SEM commissioned and published an evaluation of projects for return and reintegration assistance from Switzerland. The evaluation report also concluded with recommendations, which have contributed to improving the project.<sup>9</sup>

In 2016, a new phase of systematic monitoring was carried out. In total, 234 monitoring visits were made in 29 countries and territories around the world between May 2016 and October 2017. This report aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the various services provided to RAS beneficiaries, to analyse the impact of reintegration assistance and the profile of the beneficiaries, and to compare the results obtained with those from 2012. In addition, this report includes a more detailed analysis of the opportunities and challenges of reintegration in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), Afghanistan and Iraq. These countries were chosen on the basis of the number of returns recorded in these countries in recent years, and the difficulties that have already been observed there.

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*“I only talked to my closest relatives about return assistance. I don't feel comfortable enough to talk about my return and my experience with neighbours.” Kumar, returnee to Nepal*

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<sup>9</sup> KEK-CDC Consultants/ B,S,S. Economic Consultants, 2013: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, External Evaluation. ODM, Berne.

## Methodology and General Overview

In the course of this monitoring phase, all the reintegration mandates received between 1 January and 30 June 2016 were to receive a monitoring visit.

To carry out the monitoring, the IOM staff visited in person the beneficiaries' workplaces or homes. During these visits, the beneficiaries were required to respond to a questionnaire in English or French, which, if required, was translated by some offices into the local language. Where the visits were impossible because of restrictions specific to a certain country (security, difficulties in accessing certain parties of the territory, etc.), the IOM offices organised telephone interviews with the beneficiaries. In both cases, the monitoring was carried out six to nine months after returning to the country of origin. The results obtained were compiled and analysed using statistical software.

The monitoring visits were planned to take place six months after the return of the beneficiaries (i.e. from July to December 2016). However, the period allowed for the visits was extended by six months, because certain beneficiaries could not be reached at the first attempt.

IOM received a total of 460 mandates<sup>10</sup> during the period mentioned; eight cases were excluded because the beneficiaries:

- decided not to leave Switzerland voluntarily (5 cases);
- only received assistance in cash (2 cases);<sup>11</sup>

### Success rate for monitoring visits

Of the 452 monitoring visits planned, 234 were carried out, which represents a rate of 52% (compared with 46% in 2012). Thus, it was not possible to collect 218 questionnaires for various reasons.

In 134 cases (30%), the beneficiaries could not be reached after the payment of all or part of reintegration assistance despite the repeated attempts by the IOM staff in the country of return. More than half of the beneficiaries that could not be reached were in Afghanistan (28%), the Gambia (17%) and Iraq (12%).

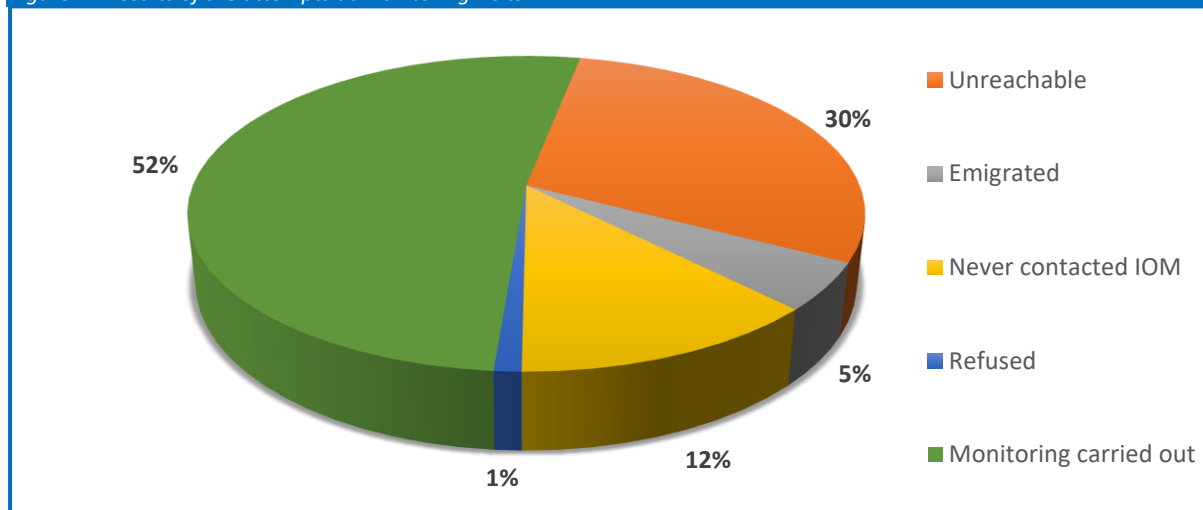
In 57 other cases (13%), the beneficiaries had not been in contact with IOM after their return. In 22 cases (5%), according to the information obtained by IOM from the beneficiaries' families, neighbours or friends, the beneficiaries had left the country. In 5 cases (1%), the beneficiaries expressly refused to participate in the IOM monitoring visits.

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<sup>10</sup> The RAS mandate is a formal request for payment of reintegration assistance made by the SEM to IOM in Bern. A mandate may relate to a single person, a couple or a family. Accordingly, the number of mandates does not equate with the number of persons assisted.

<sup>11</sup> In the latter case, IOM was by way of exception only mandated to make a final payment under the RAS project to a person who voluntarily returned to Tunisia under another project that had ended.

Figure 1 : Results of the attempts at monitoring visits



### Analysis of the differences in the response rate

In general, the response rate to monitoring visits in 2016 (52%) is higher than that obtained in 2012 (46%). However, a fall in the response rate was noted in Asia<sup>12</sup> (79% of visits were carried out in 2012 compared with 45% in 2016). There are no significant differences in response rates between the different geographical regions.

The reasons why visits could not be carried out in 2016 are exactly the same as those recorded in 2012. The relatively poor response rate of 52% can be explained by various factors.

### Common factors

Drawing on the lessons learned in the 2012 monitoring phase, the visits took place in 2016 (in principle) 6 months after the return of the project beneficiaries. This timeline allowed close contact to be maintained with the beneficiaries.

Some beneficiaries were reluctant to respond to the monitoring questions. Others did not want any further contact with IOM once the payments had been completed, regarding the monitoring visit as a form of supervision or infantilisation. In certain regions (in particular in West Africa and Eastern Europe), relatives and friends are also reluctant to provide any information on beneficiaries with whom IOM has lost contact.

### Specific factors

The lack of addresses and of a register of residents and the inadequacy of the landline network in Sub-Saharan Africa prevented IOM from identifying and locating beneficiaries with any precision. Although most of the participants in the RAS project purchase mobile phone cards that are inexpensive and offer better coverage, if the number given to IOM is no longer in use, it becomes very difficult to contact the beneficiary and to organise the monitoring visit.

In addition, the often informal approach to work in numerous countries makes reintegration projects more mobile and less stable. For example, it proved difficult to make contact with project participants who had started a nomadic herding business, because they frequently moved to remote areas badly served by the road and telephone networks.

<sup>12</sup> In this report, Asia includes the countries of the Middle East.

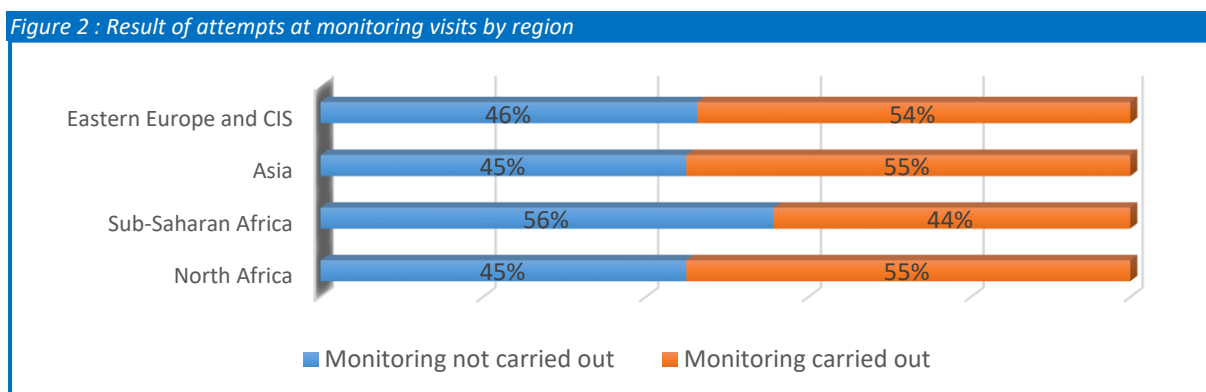
In addition, the principle of free movement of persons within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) facilitates legal migration that is both temporary and permanent.

In certain regions, such as the Casamance, the Caucasus, Iraq and Afghanistan, the monitoring visits were sometimes made impossible by security concerns.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, in Africa and Asia, certain visits had to be postponed or were impossible because of the state of the roads or the monsoon season.

The results and analyses below are therefore based solely on the 52% of cases in which a monitoring visit was made and a monitoring questionnaire completed.

The period from January to June 2016 was notable for an increase in the number of voluntary returns to Asia<sup>14</sup>, and in particular to Iraq<sup>15</sup> and Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> These two countries represent 48% of the reintegration assistance mandates received. The results obtained are therefore heavily influenced by the specifics of these two countries. This peculiarity of the 2016 monitoring phase reflects the dynamics of return assistance from Switzerland. The conclusions drawn apply for the most part to all regions of the globe and reflect the success and the difficulties of reintegration processes.




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*“I have not been in contact with other migrants since my return... But if I can give them some advice, I would tell them that if they really want to go home and have an opportunity to start an activity, the assisted return project is an opportunity...” Tirdad, returnee to Iran*

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<sup>13</sup> IOM is subject to the directives of the United Nations Department for Safety and Security, which may restrict travel to certain regions.

<sup>14</sup> In order to simplify the analysis of the monitoring reports obtained, the region of Asia includes the Middle East.

<sup>15</sup> 124 cases between January and June 2016 in comparison with 13 cases in the same period in 2015.

<sup>16</sup> 91 cases between January and June 2016 in comparison with 2 cases in the same period in 2015.

## Analysis of the results of monitoring

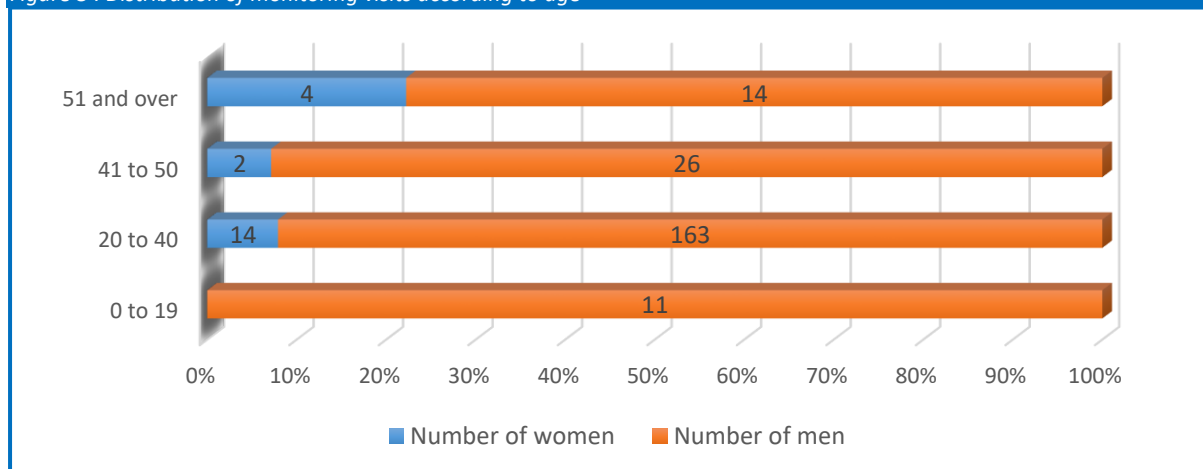
### Profile of the beneficiaries questioned

The typical beneficiary of the RAS project (64% of cases) is man aged between 21 and 40 who returns alone without a wife or dependants to his country of origin.

However, this description does not apply in numerous cases. In reality, the age of the beneficiaries varies between 16 and 80. In addition, while in Asia children<sup>17</sup> were involved in the project, no migrant of African origin was under 21 years of age. And lastly, 9% of interviewees were women.

40% of beneficiaries had been educated to secondary level and 11% had studied at university.

Figure 3 : Distribution of monitoring visits according to age

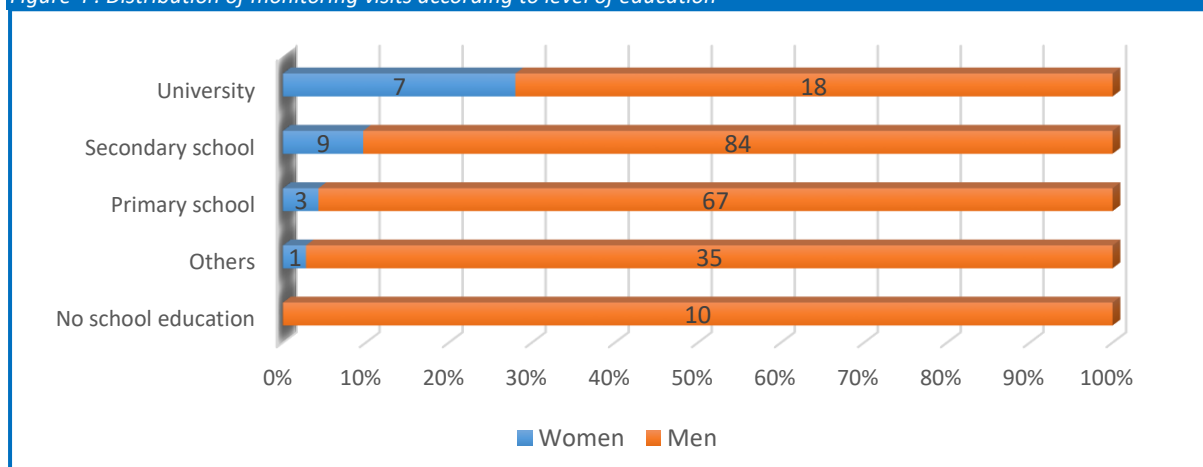


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*“Without this assistance, I would have had a lot of trouble finding accommodation and a source of income.” Yalda, returnee to Iran*

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Figure 4 : Distribution of monitoring visits according to level of education

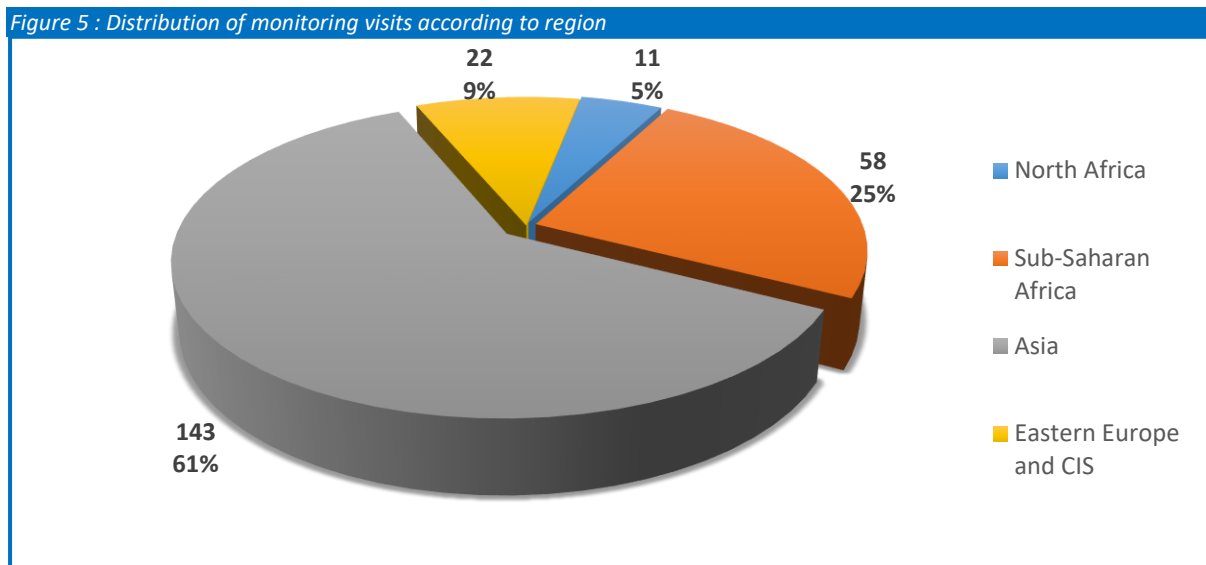


<sup>17</sup> Sometimes only aged 16.

## Geographical distribution of the monitoring visits

As previously mentioned, most of the monitoring visits took place in Asia because of the high number of returns to Afghanistan and Iraq.

In Africa, Senegal (9%), Nigeria (4%) and the Gambia (3%) are represented the most.



## General information on the migratory path

### *Duration of stay*

The beneficiaries were asked how long they had been outside their country in general and not simply how long they had been in Switzerland. 54% indicated they had been less than one year outside their country of origin. In 2012, the majority (46%) had stayed between one and three years in a country other than their own, and this result was 82% in 2016. On this point, no difference was noted with regard to the type of beneficiaries.

In Switzerland, 2015 and 2016 saw a significant increase in the number of requests for asylum (23,765 in 2014, 39,523 requests in 2015 and 27,207 in 2016)<sup>18</sup>. In the same period, the number of voluntary returns also increased. We can therefore conclude that the influx of asylum applicants observed in Switzerland was followed by a movement to return to the country of origin within a short period.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that of the 234 cases that were followed up, 62 (27%) involve persons who returned directly from a reception and procedure centre and therefore stayed less than three months in Switzerland.

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*“My life before I left to go abroad was better, because I lived in a nice house. Even if I only rented it, the living conditions were excellent,*

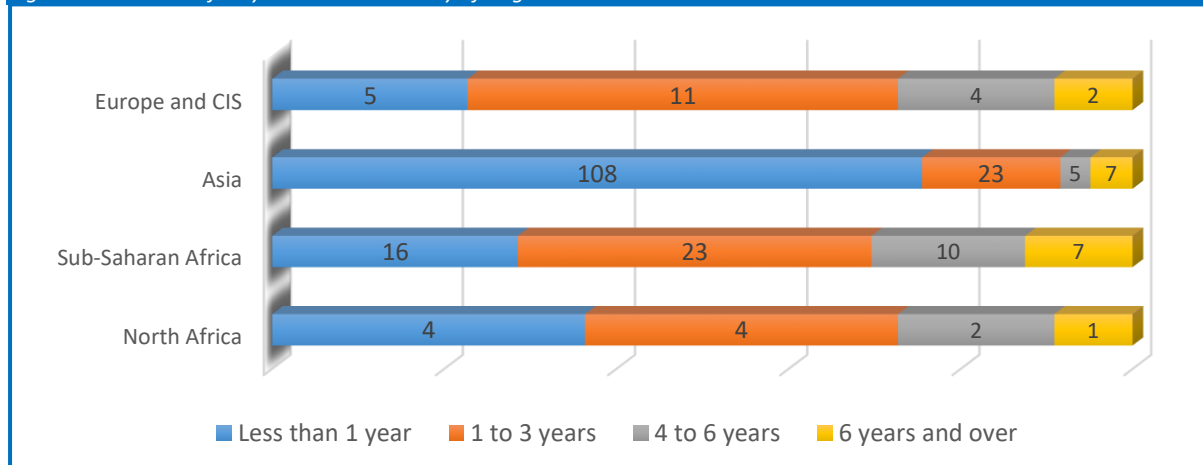
<sup>18</sup> « L’asile en 2016 en chiffres », SEM, <https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/2016/faktenblatt-asylstatistik-2016-f.pdf>, version of 3 November 2017.



*and I had a job. However, I got scared because of the lack of security and I had to leave my country.” Kasim, returnee to Iraq*

Finally, only 24% claimed to have stayed in a country of the European Union before heading to Switzerland to ask for asylum there. The European countries most commonly mentioned were Italy and Spain. This observation contradicts the popular belief that asylum seekers already registered for a long time in certain European Union countries often file a new request for asylum in Switzerland in the expectation of receiving more favourable treatment.

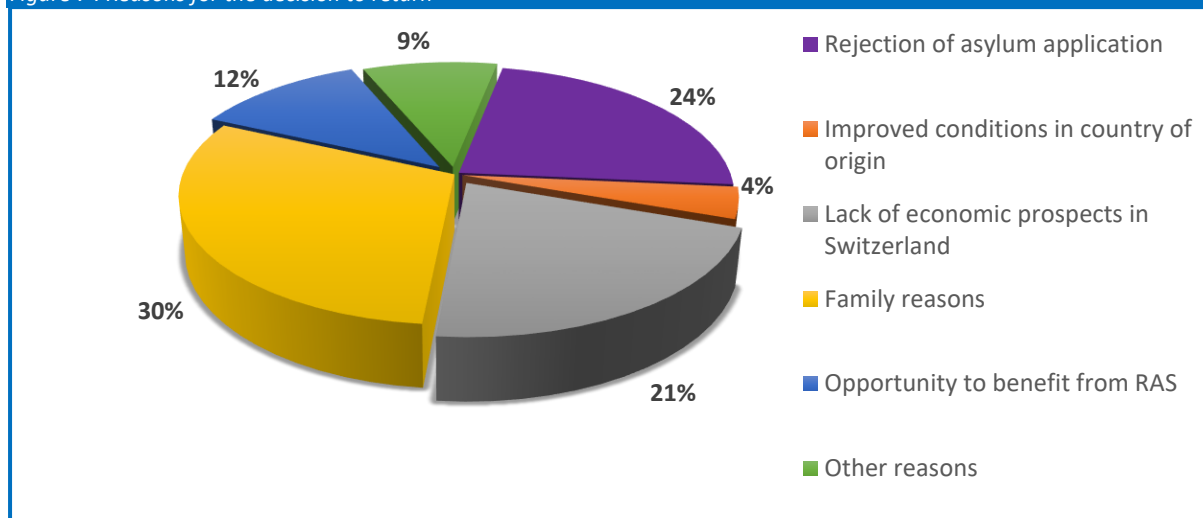
Figure 6 : Duration of stay outside the country of origin



### Reasons for leaving Switzerland

Most beneficiaries indicated that they decided to leave Switzerland voluntarily for personal or family reasons (53% of cases monitored). The second motive was the rejection of their application for asylum (41% of cases). This motive was the most significant in 2012. The lack of economic opportunities in Switzerland was only in third position (37%), followed by the possibility of receiving assistance with reintegration (21%).<sup>19</sup>

Figure 7 : Reasons for the decision to return



<sup>19</sup> Beneficiaries could indicate more than one reason.

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*“Staying in a country without having refugee status is a waste of time.” Fadil, returnee to Iraq*

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## Analysis of the counselling received before leaving and reintegration assistance process

### *Finding out about return assistance*

38% of participants said they were informed of the existence of return assistance when receiving return counselling. It is however worth noting that 25% received this information from their relatives and friends. Third parties are therefore important as sources of information. Improvements can be made in this area by continuing to raise public awareness of what is available and promoting the use of digital information media (websites, social media).

### *Counselling received before leaving*

With regard to preparation before departure, more than 97% of those interviewed said they were satisfied with the information provided by the return counsellors on the travel arrangements and the procedure to follow after their return. This represents an improvement of 2% in comparison with the result obtained in 2012. These results reflect the effectiveness of the return counselling (both in the cantons and in the reception and processing centres), and the pre-return information gathering process.<sup>20</sup>

The few complaints related to a lack of clarity with regard to exactly what documentation had to be presented to the IOM office in the country of return, difficulty in finding an interpreter in Switzerland and the feeling of not having been given enough emotional support.

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*“The counsellor gave me almost all the information that I needed before my departure. As far as the documentation is concerned, friends who returned voluntarily before me gave me further information. So while I was in Switzerland, I was given enough information on reintegration assistance.” Ali, returnee to Iraq*

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### *Process of travelling back to the country of origin*

93% of the participants in monitoring visits were satisfied with the process of travelling back to their country of return. For the remainder, problems related to:

- checking in or collecting baggage;
- immigration formalities on arrival, interviews conducted by the police from the country of origin at the airport, long queues; and
- difficulties in transit (long delays, difficulties finding their way, etc.).

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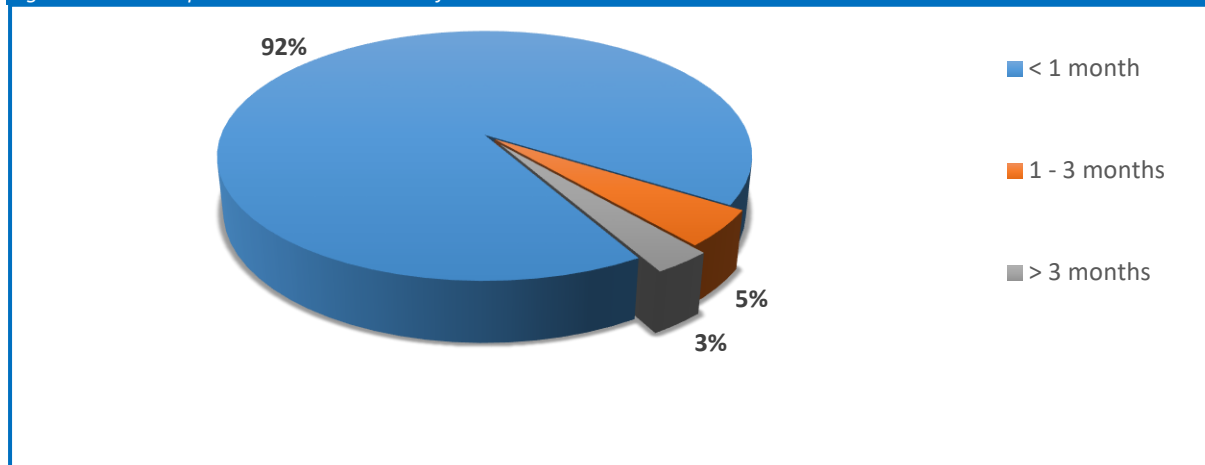
<sup>20</sup> The Swiss Return Information Fund project, which is financed by the SEM, offers precise up-to-date information on countries of origin to persons who want to return voluntarily to their country of origin. This information allows migrants to make an informed decision on returning to their country of origin, and to prepare a viable reintegration project.

In order to provide assistance on the journey to vulnerable people, the SEM finances a project known as SIM (“swissREPAT-IOM Movement”). None of those who travelled under the supervision of IOM as part of the SIM project indicated that they had any difficulties on the journey.

### *Process of reintegration assistance in the country of return*

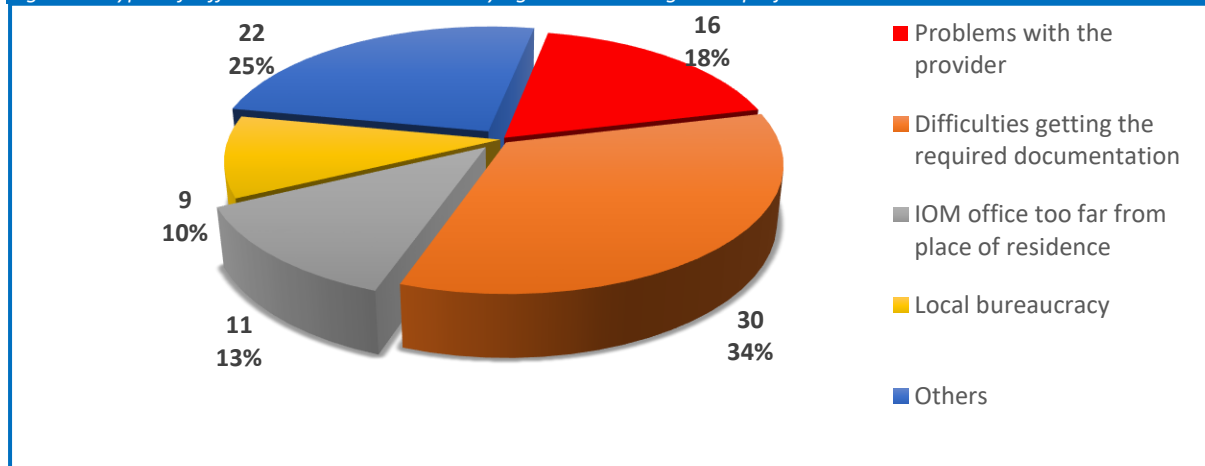
As in 2012, the beneficiaries that responded to the questionnaire contacted IOM in their country within one month of their return (92% of beneficiaries).

**Figure 8 : Time elapsed between return and first contact with IOM**



78% (183 cases) of beneficiaries did not experience any particular problems with their reintegration project. However, 19% (45 cases) encountered various difficulties<sup>21</sup>: relations with the providers, local bureaucracy, documentation, etc.<sup>22</sup>

**Figure 9 : Types of difficulties encountered in carrying out the reintegration project**



30 beneficiaries mentioned the difficulty of getting the documentation requested and one beneficiary found this procedure prohibitively difficult. As a matter of principle, IOM requests all beneficiaries to register their business with the competent national/local authorities, to provide evidence of payment before any reimbursement is made and, where applicable, to bring three pro forma invoices for the items/services that they want to purchase. These procedures aim to guarantee the legality of the work carried out under the law in the country of return, ensure that the beneficiary concerned can be traced and monitored and lastly allow the beneficiary to compare the

<sup>21</sup> 3% of beneficiaries did not want to respond to this question.

<sup>22</sup> 6 beneficiaries did not want to respond to this question. Some beneficiaries reported several difficulties, which explains why the occurrences of difficulties encountered exceed 45.

prices offered by different providers. Without this last guarantee, numerous beneficiaries could fall victim to less scrupulous suppliers. It also allows IOM to make sure that the funds provided by the SEM are used wisely and solely for the project approved in Switzerland or at the location.

However, wherever possible, IOM tries to reduce these formalities by using other ways of making checks (visits to suppliers, payments in cash made by IOM staff, payment by instalments, etc.) or, in certain exceptional cases, by discussing with the SEM the possibility of relaxing the usual rules. IOM and the SEM will therefore have to continue to try to find a happy medium between the need to carry out rigorous checks on expenditure in order to avoid any abuse and the need for flexibility/to adapt the reintegration assistance to the realities that the beneficiary faces.

### *Assistance provided by IOM*

Globally, 97% of the persons interviewed are very satisfied or moderately satisfied with the services provided by IOM on the ground. 2% of beneficiaries said they were dissatisfied because the amount of reintegration assistance was insufficient (two cases in Sudan, one case in Iraq and one case in Kosovo<sup>23</sup>). This aspect however is beyond IOM's control, because the amount of assistance is fixed by the law in force in Switzerland.

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*“My business project was set up very quickly and that ensured I had a job.” Pape, returnee to Senegal*

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### **Types of reintegration project**

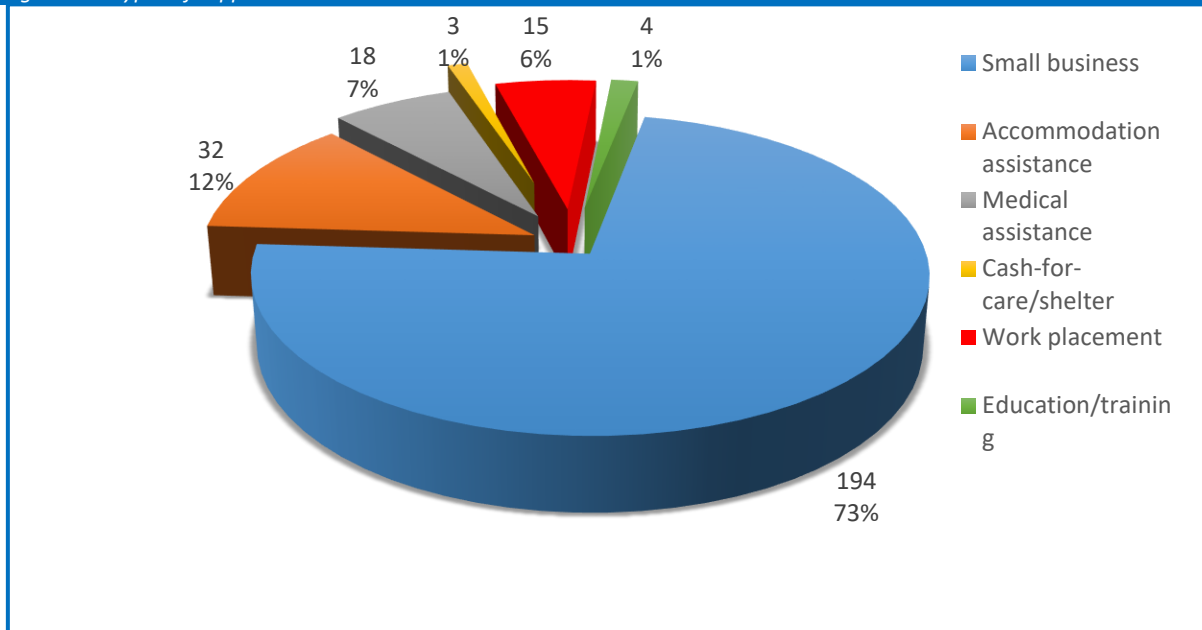
Just as in 2012, work-related projects (small businesses in general) constitute the principal type of assistance. In 73% of cases, reintegration assistance was used to set up a small business (from a total of 266 types of assistance).<sup>24</sup> The choice of the type of support depends on each beneficiary's needs, skills and prospects.

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<sup>23</sup> Any reference to Kosovo must be understood in the context of Resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council (1999).

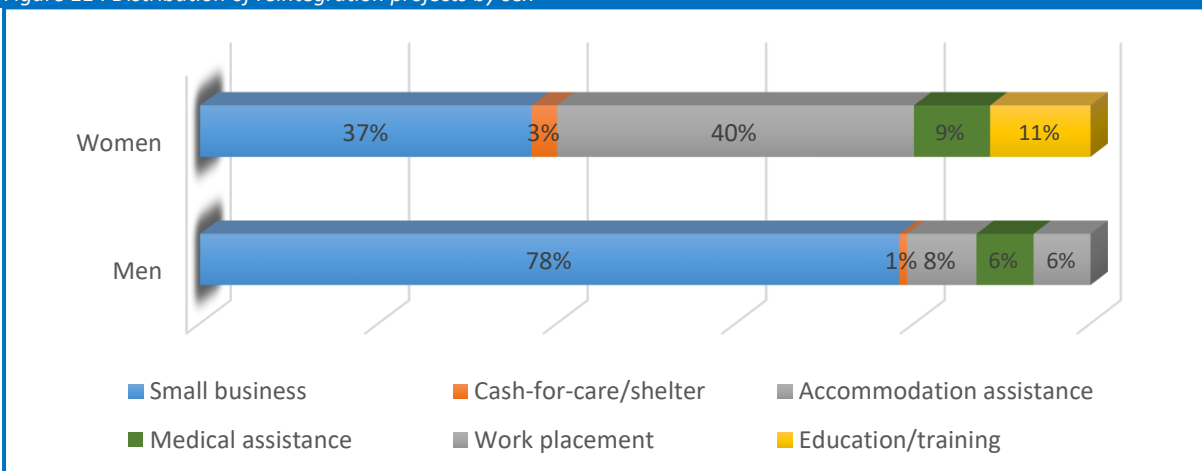
<sup>24</sup> A reintegration mandate may cover various forms of support. In 10 cases, the beneficiaries made use of two or three forms of support. The results below are based on a total of 266 types of support.

Figure 10 : Types of support



It is worth mentioning that the choices made by the female beneficiaries are more varied. While 78% of men opted to set up a small business, only 37% of women made the same choice. 40% of women opted for assistance with accommodation and 11% chose to take a course or vocational training (whereas none of the men made that choice). These results can be explained by the limited opportunities that women have to earn a living by running their own business in certain countries, and by gender-related social pressures.

Figure 11 : Distribution of reintegration projects by sex



There are also quite marked differences between the regions. In Africa, beneficiaries almost systematically tend towards activities that generate income (87%) and to a lesser extent towards assistance with accommodation (8%). In Eastern Europe and the CIS however, 33% of beneficiaries obtained assistance with accommodation and 30% medical assistance. These differences could be explained by sociological factors (for example in Sub-Saharan Africa, returnees could receive significant support with accommodation from their extended family), historical factors (history of war with confiscation of properties in certain countries of Eastern Europe) and personal factors (young beneficiaries who prefer to opt for assistance with education).

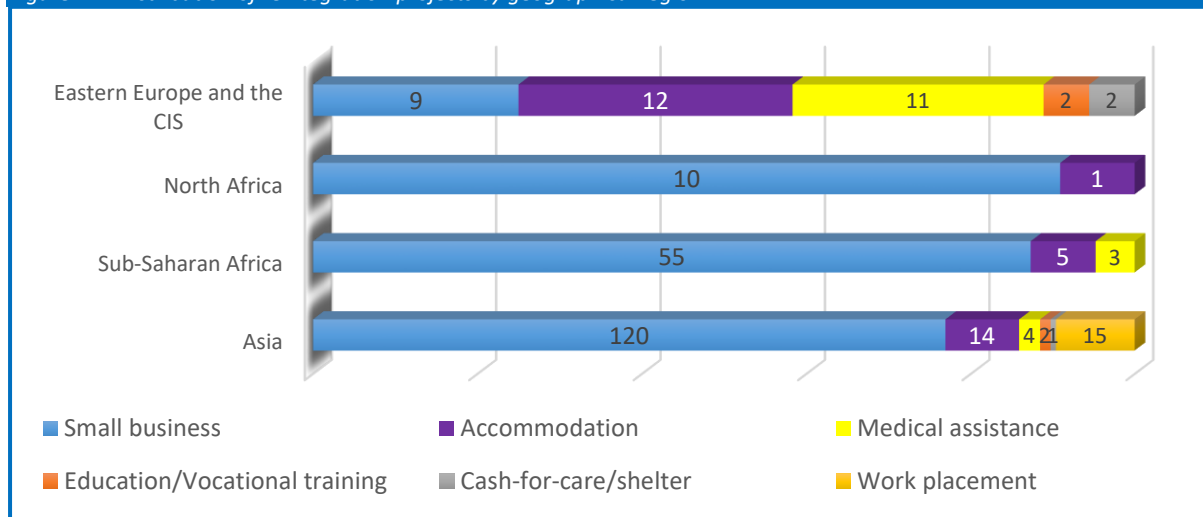
Of the 234 projects that were the subject of monitoring, in 41 cases (18%) the beneficiaries changed the form of the reintegration project after returning.

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*“In my experience, IOM should set up a school for ‘business and social challenges’ for all the returnees before they choose a reintegration project.” Sami, returnee to Iraq*

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Figure 12 : Distribution of reintegration projects by geographical region



### Assistance with setting up a small business

This section covers all the beneficiaries who, thanks to reintegration assistance, have started a business in their country of return. In 2016, 73% of beneficiaries opted to set up a small business compared with 84% in 2012.

Commerce and agriculture make up 80% of the small businesses established, opening a business guaranteeing a quick and relatively stable source of income. The businesses opened included grocery stores and shops selling building materials or clothing.<sup>25</sup> In the field of agriculture, the main activities were cattle and goat farming, fish-farming and subsistence crops.<sup>26</sup> Service providers included those in the restaurant business, skilled tradespeople, etc.<sup>27</sup>

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*“The help offered by all the counsellors was very useful, they made me feel important.” Kerim, returnee to Tunisia*

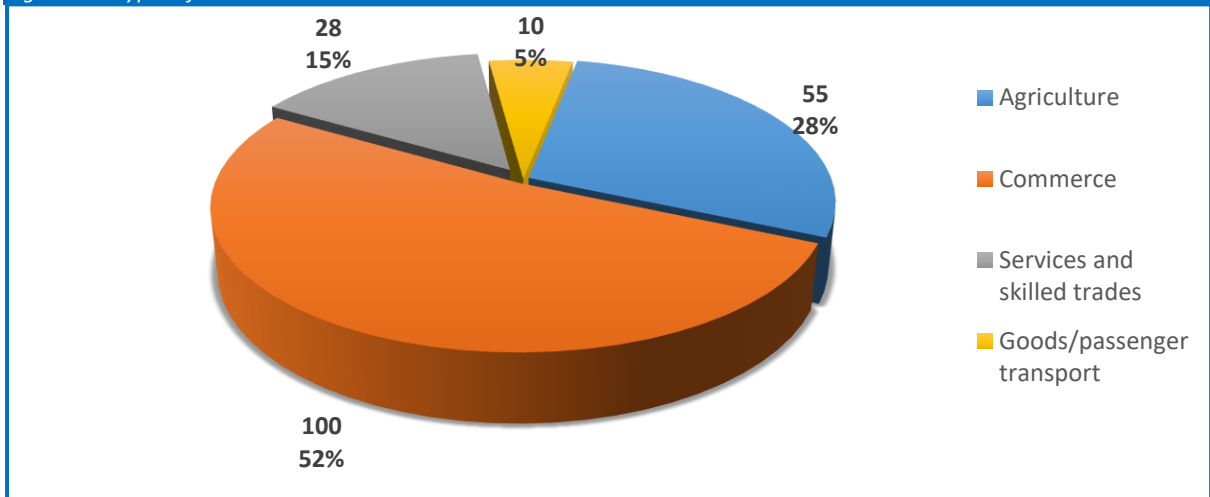
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<sup>25</sup> Other activities included the sale of car parts, carpets, childcare articles, household appliances and high-tech appliances.

<sup>26</sup> Other activities were poultry farming and beekeeping.

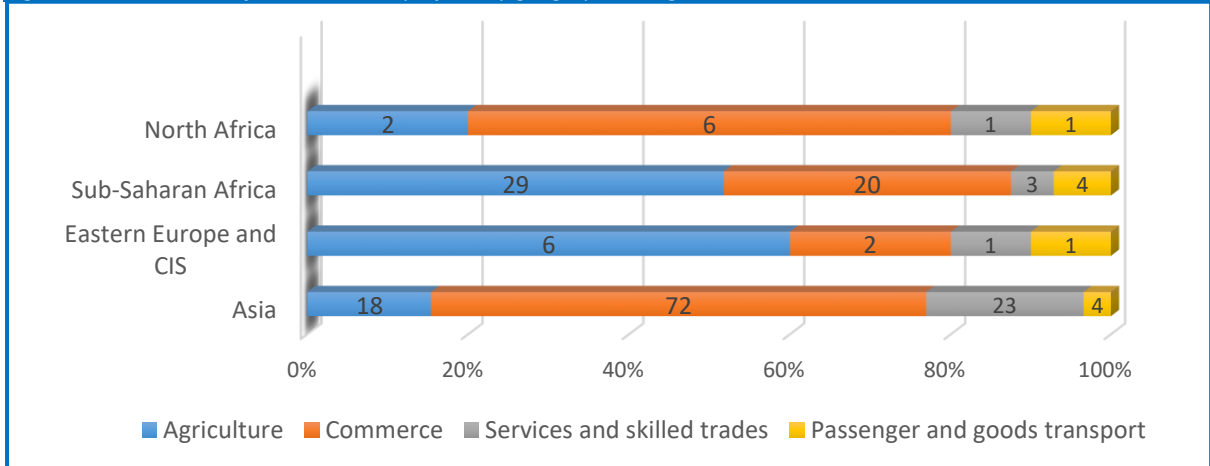
<sup>27</sup> They included jewellers, welders, dressmakers, mechanics, carpenters and estate agents.

Figure 13 : Types of small businesses



In Asia 61% of small business owners chose to open a shop, whereas in Sub-Saharan Africa around 52% began agricultural business.

Figure 14 : Distribution of small business projects by geographical region

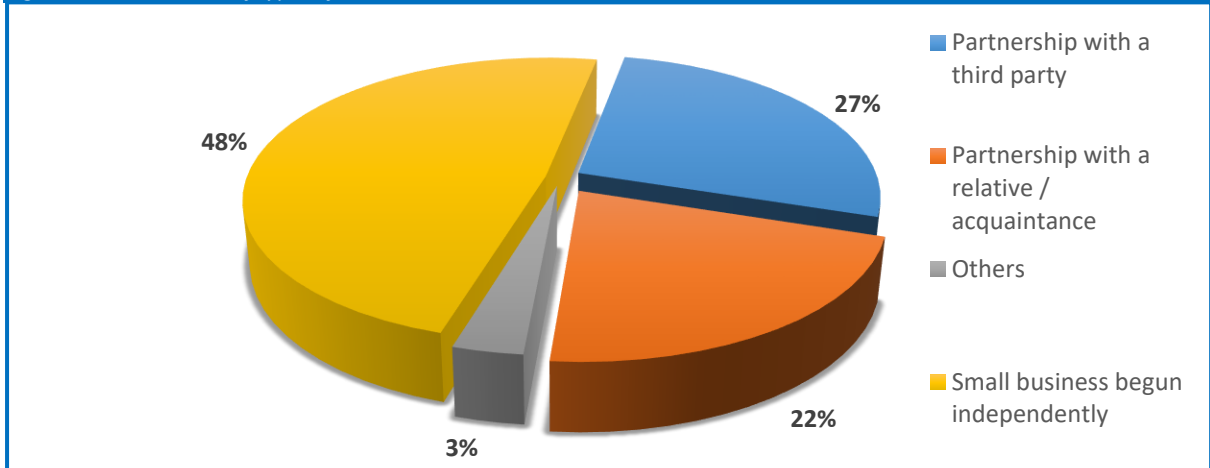


63% of beneficiaries that chose to start a small business kept to the activity they had initially identified in Switzerland with their return counsellor, which once again illustrates the effectiveness of the counselling provided in Switzerland before departure.

As in 2012, the majority of beneficiaries (48%) were sole investors in the new activity. However, the number of activities that were begun in partnership with third parties increased, rising from 7% in 2012 to 22% in 2016.



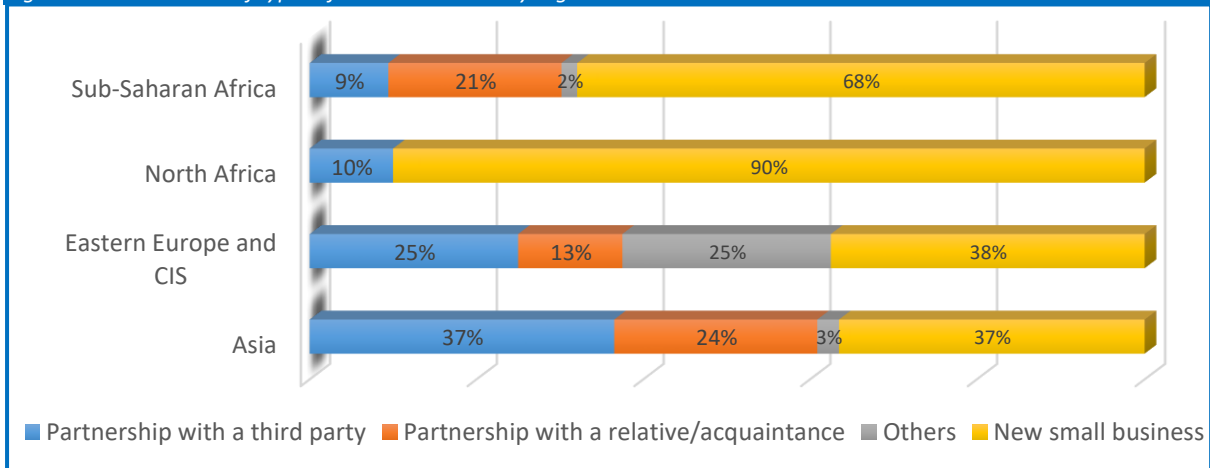
Figure 15 : Distribution of types of small businesses



*“I think that everyone should live among their own people. My country is unstable, but as soon as the situation improves, I don’t think that anyone will want to live as a refugee.” Zamanlabib, returnee to Iraq*

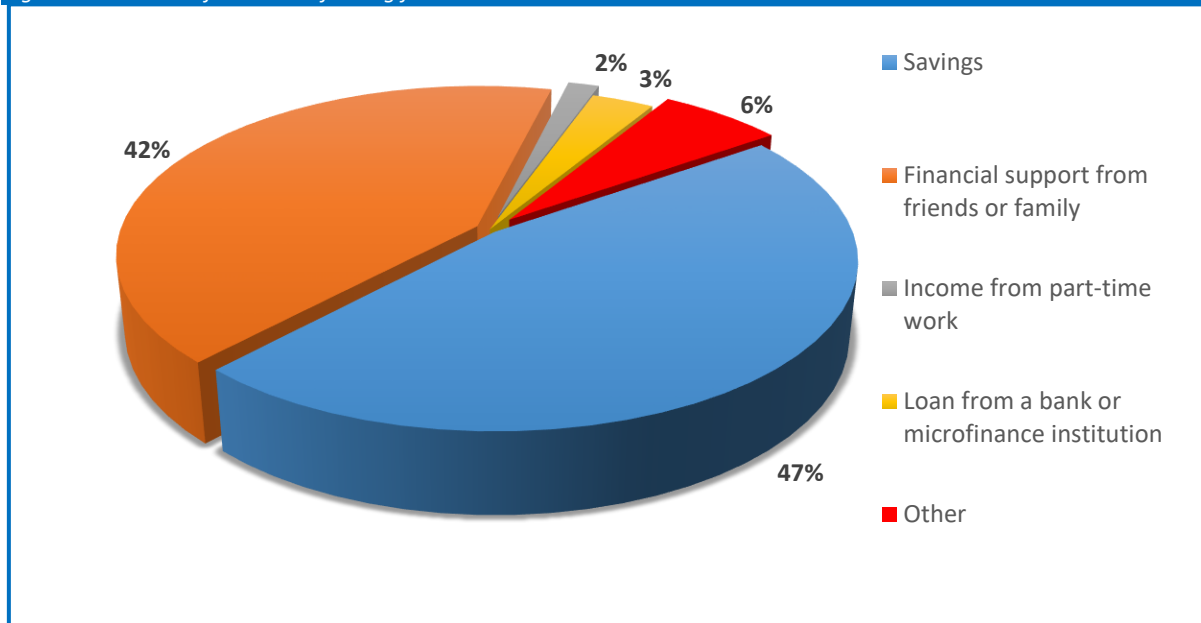
In Asia, more returnees entered into partnerships with third parties in existing businesses. In Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, beneficiaries preferred to start new activities on their own. Partnerships should be encouraged, because they allow the beneficiary to benefit from an existing business capital, to share the risks of implementing the project and to obtain additional funding.

Figure 16 : Distribution of types of small businesses by region



IOM also asked RAS beneficiaries if they needed other funds in addition to the assistance received from Switzerland to be able to start their reintegration project. 43% of beneficiaries said that they did. Most commonly, beneficiaries used their own savings (47%) or were supported by their family (42%).

Figure 17 : Sources of additional funding for small businesses



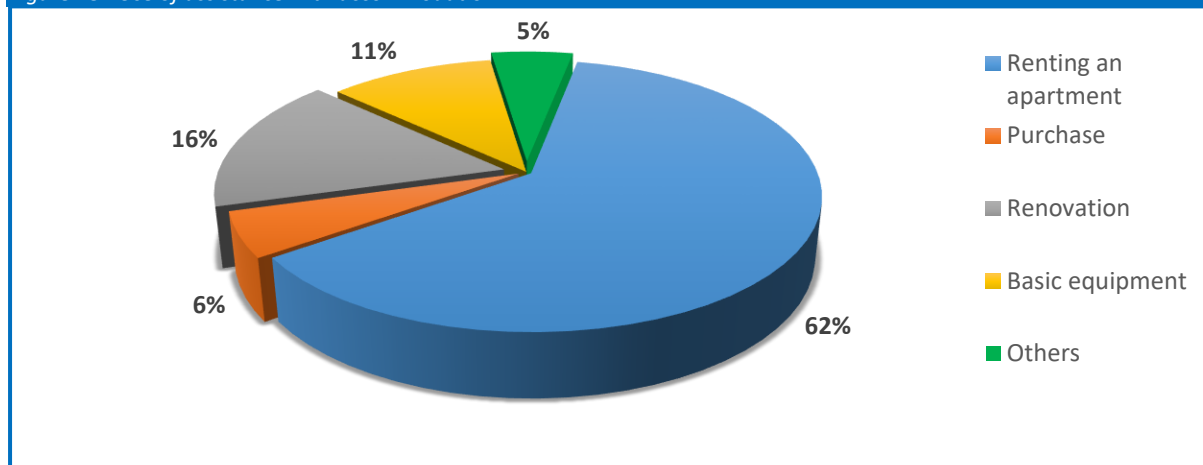
This raises the obvious issue of the sources of additional financing that voluntary returnees can access. These could be banking or microfinance institutions. In 2015, IOM Bern carried out a study into returnees' access to microcredits in five countries.<sup>28</sup> Based on the study results, IOM strongly recommends microcredits as a solution for the returnees who need additional funds to carry out their reintegration projects. However, the study proposes that this solution should only be considered on a case by case basis. The study is available online at [www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications](http://www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications). The results of the study also show that financial assistance remains crucial to the reintegration of migrants returning to their home countries from Switzerland.

#### *Assistance with accommodation*

Assistance with accommodation helps recipients of reintegration assistance to find temporary or permanent accommodation in their country of return. In specific terms, it involves renting an apartment, rebuilding homes that have been damaged or destroyed, or buying basic equipment for existing homes. This form of assistance was chosen by 12% of those interviewed. This percentage was 11% in 2012.

<sup>28</sup> IOM Bern (2016): Access to Microcredit Opportunities for Returned Migrants during and beyond IOM Support - A Study on Microcredit in the AVRR Context ([http://www.ch.iom.int/sites/default/files/Access%20to%20Microcredit%20Opportunities\\_0.pdf](http://www.ch.iom.int/sites/default/files/Access%20to%20Microcredit%20Opportunities_0.pdf))

Figure 18 : Use of assistance with accommodation



Of the 32 persons that received assistance with accommodation, 29 agreed to answer the question relating to their situation at the time of the monitoring visit. 83% were still living in the accommodation that had been funded by reintegration assistance. In 5 cases, the participants had changed their accommodation for their own convenience (to be closer to their place of education and training for example) or because their home was undergoing work at the time of the survey. One beneficiary said he had changed accommodation because of difficulties with his landlord. Assistance with accommodation is therefore a viable form of assistance that complements other types of reintegration.

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*“I spoke to members of my family about return and reintegration assistance. I told them about the hardship I experienced in eleven years on the migratory route. From Burkina Faso, to Niger, Libya, Italy and Switzerland. I let them know that thanks to return assistance..., I returned home for free and what’s more, I have benefited from help with reintegration as well as having money in my pocket.” Moudibou, returnee to Mali*

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### Medical assistance

Where necessary, medical assistance allows beneficiaries to have access to vital treatment in their country of return.

Of the 234 reintegration mandates that were the subject of monitoring, 18 included a medical component. Of those who responded to the questionnaire, 64% were able to continue their treatment after the medical assistance ran out, while 14% no longer needed the treatment (having been completely cured of their condition). The remainder of those interviewed said they had changed their treatment after their return.

In addition, 55% of those questioned have been able to reintegrate themselves into the national health insurance system in their country of return (not all countries have such a system). This demonstrates the synergy between the medical assistance provided by Switzerland and integration into the national system for caring for the sick.

### *Cash-for-Care, Cash-for-Shelter*

For certain vulnerable people (for example very elderly persons or sick people), a work-related reintegration project is not an option. For these persons, it is important to help their family to support them after their return. Financial assistance is therefore paid in cash to cover certain basic needs in the first few months following their return.

This type of assistance was given to only 1% of the persons interviewed. The only beneficiary that agreed to respond to the question said that she continues to benefit from the services that she received thanks to Cash-for-Care, as her family had taken over.

### *Assistance with an education and training project*

Reintegration assistance can be also used to begin or continue academic studies or vocational training. Two beneficiaries who opted for education and training agreed to take part in the monitoring. One had decided to go to university (she was studying at the time of the survey) and the other had opted for vocational training.

### *Work placements*

Between 2008 and 2013, the SEM funded a specific return assistance project to Iraq. This project offered its participants the opportunity to benefit, among other things, from a work placement. As a result, most of the work placement projects have been carried out in Iraq (14 cases), while there was one case in Afghanistan.

For certain returning migrants, direct integration into a working environment has proven to be the best method of reintegration. IOM assistance with this type of project can take one of the following forms:

- Putting people in touch with potential employers (private or public), generally in the context of pre-existing partnerships;
- Payment of reintegration assistance in several instalments when an employer agrees to offer a job for a certain period;
- Payment of a 'traineeship grant' in several instalments in order to gain work experience in a sector where the chances of getting a proper job are high.

15 work placement projects were the subject of a monitoring visit. The beneficiaries found the job either through acquaintances (14 cases), or thanks to job offers made (1 case).

After the probationary period, 12 beneficiaries (75%) continued to work in the same job. Two others found a different job thanks to the experience acquired and one beneficiary was still without a job.

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*"I am financially independent, which means I can plan for the future and think about starting a family." Kais, returnee to Tunisia*

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### **Impact of reintegration assistance on the migrants' personal circumstances**

The monitoring visits also allowed an assessment of the beneficiaries' current situation and the impact of reintegration assistance, through questions on the beneficiaries' standard of living, their plans for the future and their own views about return assistance.

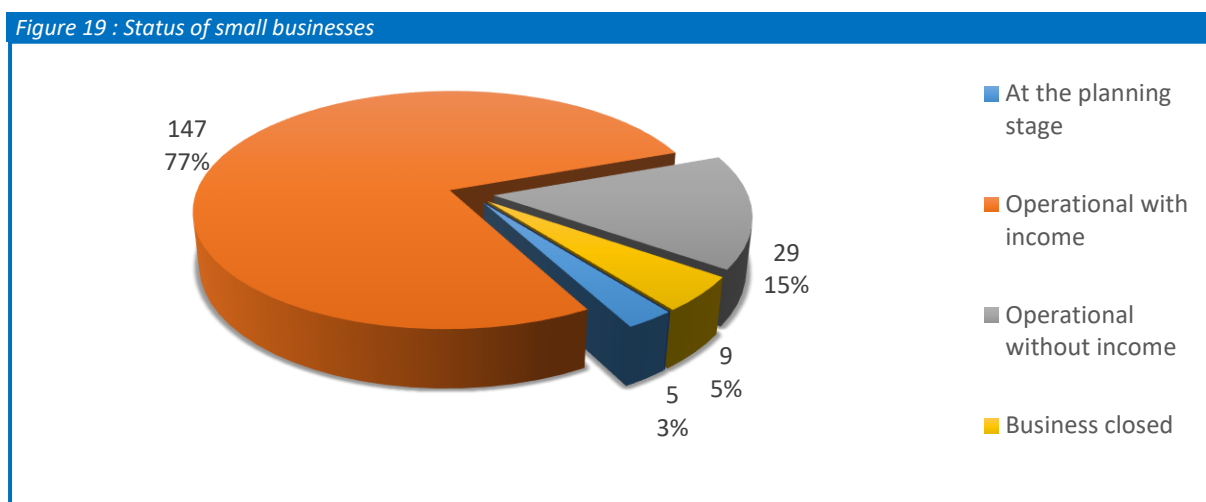
15% of those who agreed to assess their current standard of living regarded it as 'good', 68% as 'average' and 17% as 'poor'.

### Situation with regard to small business projects

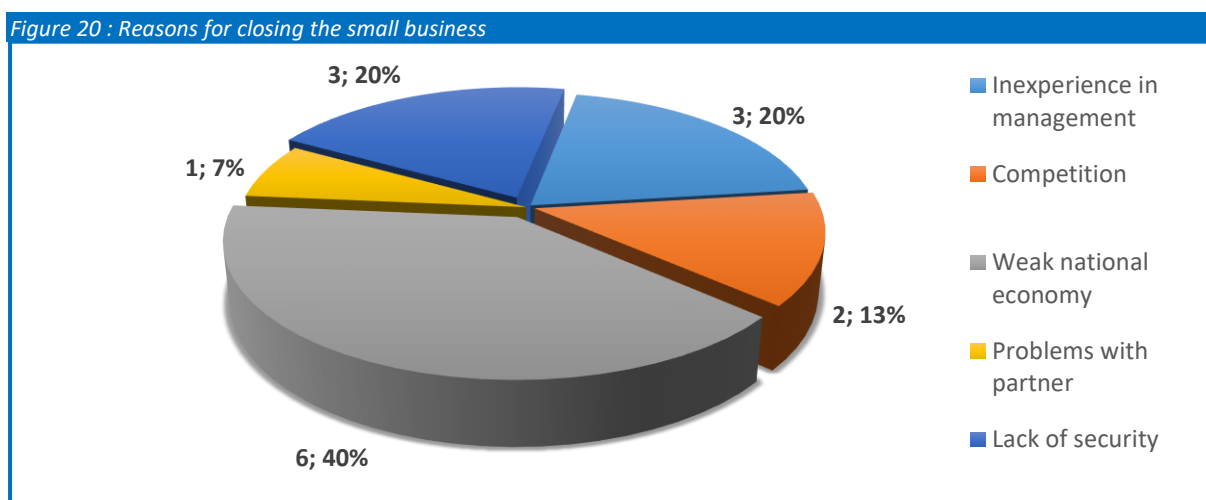
77% of small businesses that had been opened were operational and generating regular income. This compares with 69% in 2012. Of these successful ventures, 71% were still one-person businesses while 28% of entrepreneurs were employing other staff.

5 projects (3%) were still at the planning stage compared with 1% in 2012.

29 projects were operational but were not generating any income at the time of the monitoring visit. It should be noted that 21 of the projects (72%) that were still not generating income were agricultural projects. These projects are profitable in the long term, however the beneficiaries have to wait for several months before they start to earn a regular income.



Nine of those who had started a small business (5%) had to close their businesses for one or more of the following reasons: lack of security in the country of return, competition, lack of knowledge of how to manage a business. However, the main reason for closing down was the weakness of the economy in the country or place of return, which shows that success with reintegration also depends on the general economic situation in the place of return. A lack of security was mentioned in Afghanistan and Iraq, which rather demonstrates the fragility of these states.

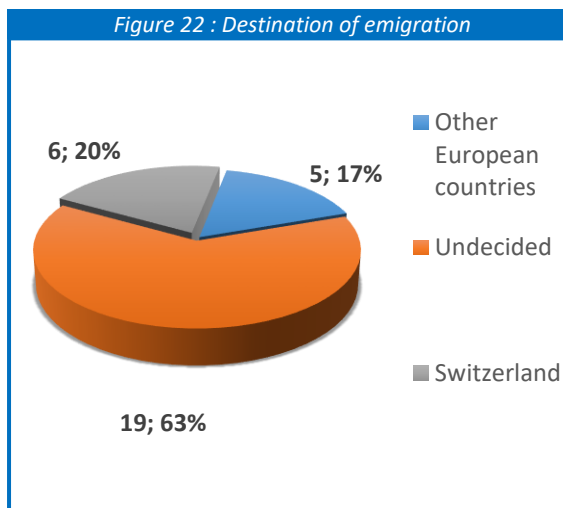
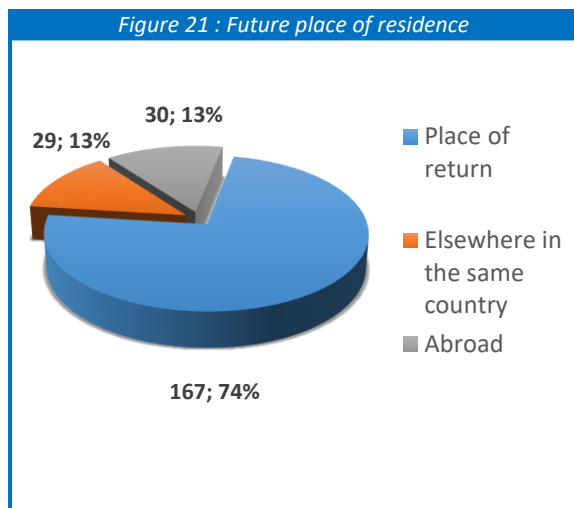


Finally, 28% of participants who have a small business had an alternative source of income (second small business, support from their family, another job, social security).

### *Current and future place of residence*

As in 2012, 91% of the persons that took part in the survey were still living in the place they had returned to. The remainder of the participants were living in another part of the same country. Only one beneficiary was living abroad, according to information obtained from members of his family.

With regard to their future place of residence, 87% wanted to remain in their country of origin, while 13% wanted to emigrate to another country.




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*“I want to try emigrating again, but I would do it legally this time.”  
Aymen, returnee to Tunisia*

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### *Current standard of living and situation*

91% of the persons that responded said they were completely or partly satisfied with their personal situation at the time of the survey. In 21 cases, the beneficiaries said they were totally dissatisfied for several of the following reasons:

- financial difficulties: this is main cause of dissatisfaction (37%). This difficulty was mentioned with the same frequency in all the regions covered by the project;
- political or security situation in the country of return (22%),
- general disillusionment following return, etc.

Figure 23 : Satisfaction with current situation

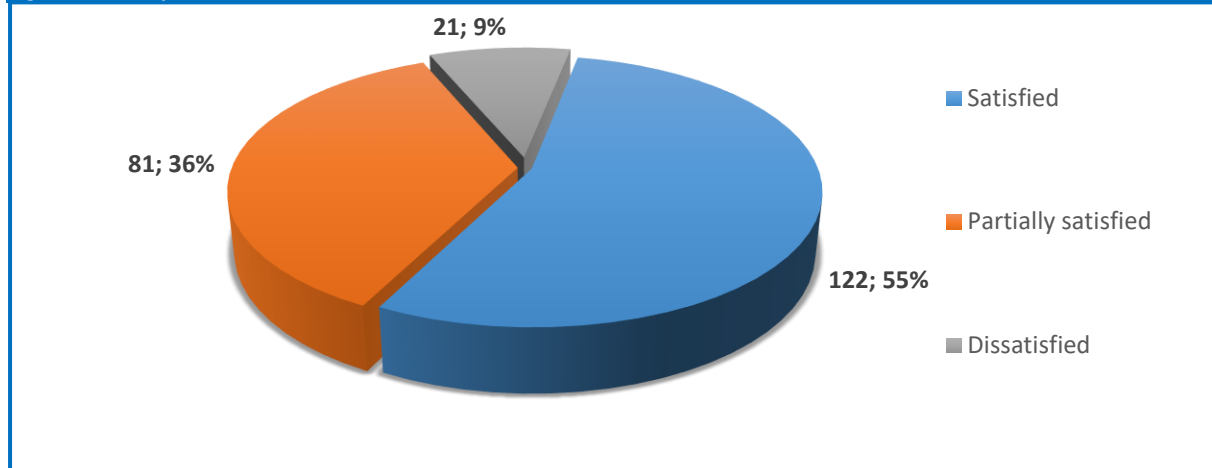
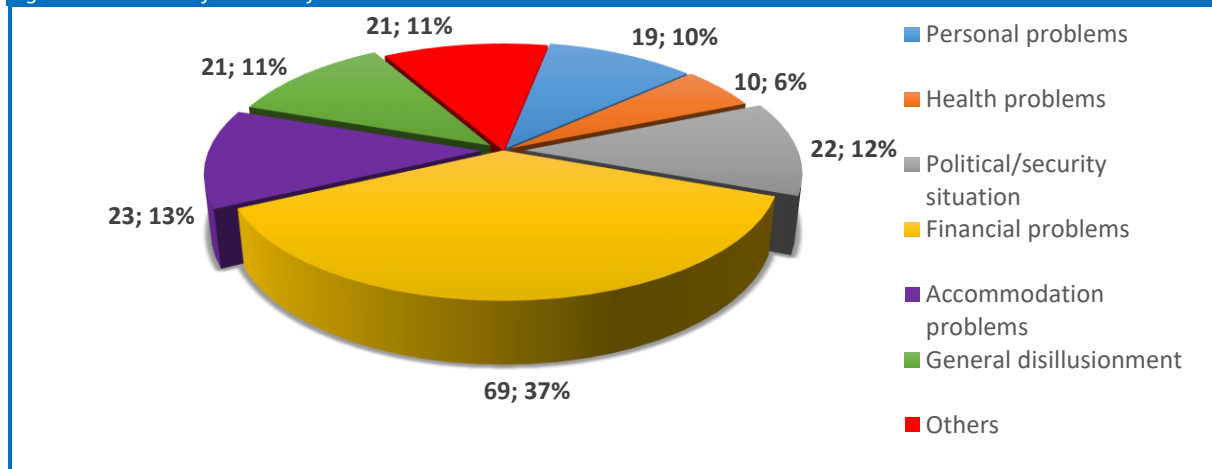


Figure 24 : Reasons for dissatisfaction with current situation



In addition, of the 225 persons that responded to the question “Do you consider that you live in better conditions today than before you left for Switzerland?”, 58% considered that they lived in better conditions. 12% considered that their situation was worse.

The reasons given for the improvement in the situation were, in the majority of cases, being independent, being free, or being able to plan for the future thanks to their work-related project. Others mentioned an improvement in the security situation. Some interviewees simply mentioned that it was better to be home and surrounded by their family.

The persons who thought that their situation had not improved put this down to financial problems (the reintegration project did not allow them to earn as much or more money than they earned before their departure) or personal reasons.

### Plans for the future

The beneficiaries were also questioned on their future plans. Given that the majority of returnees have started a small business, 51% of those who responded to this question wanted to expand their business. Others wanted to open a second business, emigrate, gain new qualifications, etc. In the category “Others” in the graphic below, the plans mentioned primarily concern getting married and having a family.

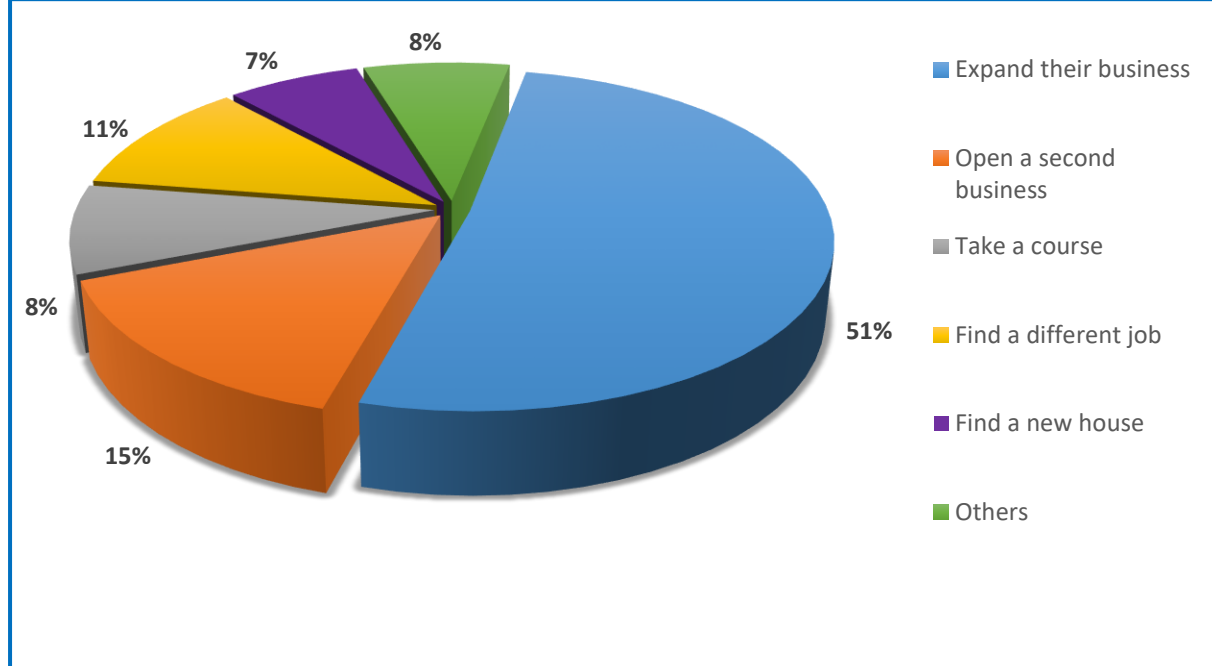


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*“Before I left my country, I thought that going abroad would change my life completely and that I would have a better life. However, after going there and realising that I was wrong, I have concentrated solely on my life in my own country.” Yazen, returnee to Iraq*

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Figure 25 : Future plans



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*“I would recommend others to return home unless they have a way of living abroad”, Anna, returnee to Ukraine*

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### Comparison with previous monitoring phases

#### *Methodology*

Monitoring visits were carried out nine months after the beneficiaries' return in 2012, and six months afterwards for the 2009 report. In 2012, even though the visits after nine months helped to reduce the number of projects not yet implemented at the time of visiting, the effect on the number contactable persons was negative. Essentially, the more time that had passed since receiving assistance, the more difficult it was to maintain contact with all the beneficiaries. Having learned lessons from this experience, for this report the visits were made between six and twelve months after return. This method enabled the authors of the report to follow up on projects that had been set up soon after return as well as on those that took longer to start. This improved the response rates by 6% in comparison with the report from 2012. However, the response remains well below the 65% rate obtained in 2009.

#### *Geographical coverage*

As previously mentioned, a peculiarity of this monitoring phase is that 61% of the questionnaires collected came from Asia due to the high numbers of return to this region in this time frame, while the geographical distribution had been relatively balanced in the previous phases. This is due to higher number of asylum seekers because of conflicts in the Middle East and the deterioration of the security situation in certain countries.

#### *Results*

The marked increase in returns to Asia was followed by a decrease in the response rates to monitoring visits in this region (79% in 2012 and 45% in 2016) due to the deterioration of the security situation. More than half (55%) of cases were not monitored, because the beneficiaries could not be contacted or IOM was unable to visit due to security problems. In addition, 31% of projects could not be monitored because the beneficiaries never contacted IOM after their return (above all in the case of returns to Iraq and Afghanistan). Leaving aside the particular case of Asia, the differences in response rates between the regions were less marked than in 2016. Greater differences were observed, for example, in 2016, when more than 69% of projects in Sub-Saharan Africa could not be monitored. The improvement can partly be attributed to extension of the monitoring period in 2016.

The satisfaction rates with respect to return counselling have continued to improve over the years (94% in 2009, 95% in 2002 and 97% in 2016). The satisfaction rates concerning IOM's services have seen a slight increase from 93% to 95%, confirming the importance of the role of IOM in voluntary return assistance and reintegration.

97% of the persons interviewed wish to stay in their country of return, compared to just 80% in 2012 and 92% in 2009. The beneficiaries were also questioned on satisfaction with their current standard of living. The positive response rate fell slightly from 95% in 2012 to 91%. However, it remains higher than the 55% satisfaction recorded in 2009. The percentage of closed small business projects (5%) fell compared with 2012 (9%). This means that more businesses were viable in 2016. Likewise, the percentage of income-generating activities increased from 69% in 2012 to 77% in 2016. The other results in the three monitoring phases are largely identical.

## Comparison with the external evaluation in 2013

The external evaluation mandated by the SEM was conducted in July 2013.<sup>29</sup> The results recorded at the time are similar to the observations made in 2016, in particular on the type of participants, their age, the duration of their stay in Switzerland, etc.

The evaluators drew up recommendations on preparing to return, implementing the reintegration project and cooperation between the countries involved. They included improvements to return counselling and providing clear information from the beginning of the asylum process, continued opportunities to decide on a reintegration project after return and the possibility of adapting financial assistance to the realities that the beneficiary faces and his or her return environment. These points, which are essential to the success of assisted return and reintegration from Switzerland, also stand out in the results of the 2016 monitoring phase.

Over and above these points, the evaluators also highlighted the importance of combining return assistance with development programmes in the countries or communities of return.

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<sup>29</sup> KEK-CDC Consultants/ B,S,S. Economic Consultants, 2013: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration, External Evaluation. ODM, Bern.

### Focus on West Africa<sup>30</sup>

#### *Profile of beneficiaries*

In the period between January and June 2016, 107 persons (corresponding to 107 individual reintegration mandates) returning voluntarily to West Africa received reintegration assistance under the auspices of IOM. 54 of these beneficiaries could be contacted during monitoring visits, which represents a rate of 51% (only 1% below the overall average).

The beneficiaries were single men with an average age of 38 who had stayed outside their country of origin for less than three years (69%). They originated from Senegal (21 persons, 39%), Nigeria (9 persons), Guinea-Bissau (8 persons), the Gambia (8 persons), Ghana (5 persons), Mali (1), Ivory Coast (1) and Benin (1).

The two principal motives for the decision to return were the rejection of the application for asylum and a lack of economic prospects in Switzerland.

#### *Impact of reintegration assistance*

51 beneficiaries (94%) of reintegration assistance opted to set up a small business. The main activities were farming (57%), commerce (35%) and passenger transport (6%).

The difficulties encountered in implementing the plans were linked to the poor economic situation in the place of return and the inexperience of the returnees in managing a business.

At the time of the monitoring visit, 59% of those interviewed were earning an income from their activities, while 33% of activities not yet generating a profit. 85% of beneficiaries were satisfied with their current situation.

Finally, only 3 beneficiaries (whose age varied between 36 and 39) envisaged their future in a country other than the one they had returned to.

#### *Challenges and opportunities*

- A majority of persons returning to West Africa from Switzerland originate from places whose inhabitants have a long tradition of travel (the south-west of Senegal for example). The IOM offices in the countries of return in West Africa have observed that young people above all are supported in this by their families. Therefore, there are cases in which return is followed by emigration to another country.
- These migrants often originate from places that are difficult to access due to the poor road system in the area.
- Many migrants perceive the monitoring visits as a form of inspection. Some have even reported during visits that they thought that IOM wished to meet them in order to withdraw the funding they had been allocated. They are therefore less inclined to participate in monitoring visits and to provide photos or videos of their activities.
- The returning migrants often have the tendency to pursue activities already being carried out by other persons in their place of origin or to try to set up a business in sectors that are well-regarded by their community. In other cases, the returnees feel alienated from their place of return (due to their extended absence). It is important therefore to supplement the counselling

<sup>30</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

provided in Switzerland and by the IOM offices in the country of return by education and training in the creation and management of a business. This service is currently offered to beneficiaries who return voluntarily to Guinea and Nigeria.

- The family unit is very important in West Africa. As a result, beneficiaries often receive help from their relatives after their return, in the form of accommodation or other means of support. The adverse effect of this situation is that very quickly the returnees must in turn support numerous relatives, which prevents them from prospering financially.
- The economic sector is dominated by informal work activities, which are not registered by the authorities and are carried out without authorisation or proper accounting. As a result, many beneficiaries find the practices that IOM demands of them tiresome (registering activities, providing receipts/sales contracts, etc.).
- The monitoring visits are sometimes difficult, or even impossible, due to the distance between the place of return and the IOM office, and due to the poor state of the roads in the area.
- Ideas for reintegration projects in West Africa (with the examples of Senegal and the Gambia) are presented in the document “Ideas for Business Development”, available at: [www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications](http://www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications).

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*“My business is going well, but the economic situation is not good.”*  
*Mbaye, returnee to Senegal*

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## Focus on Afghanistan

### *Profile of beneficiaries*

Between January and June 2016, 118 beneficiaries (corresponding to 91 reintegration mandates) received reintegration assistance in Afghanistan. 34 monitoring visits were carried out, which represents a rate of 37%. The 34 beneficiaries questioned were men, who with one exception were aged between 19 and 42.

At the moment of writing this report, IOM is still trying to contact or to obtain information about the beneficiary in 31 cases. Eight beneficiaries could not be contacted, and eight others had emigrated to Iran. Six other monitoring visits could not be carried out because the beneficiaries had moved to an unsecure area and could not be reached by telephone. In two cases, the beneficiaries had not contacted IOM after their return. In one case, the beneficiary was in prison and in a last case, the beneficiary had emigrated to Turkey.

The two principal motives for the decision to return were family (sick parents, personal problems, etc.) and financial issues.

### *Impact of reintegration assistance*

33 beneficiaries out of 34 opted to set up a small business. One beneficiary received assistance in the form of a work placement. The activities included commerce (67%), farming (26%) and skilled trades (7%).

Only two beneficiaries encountered difficulties in carrying out their projects: these concerned the weakness of the local economy and the poor security situation.

At the time of the monitoring visit, 29 beneficiaries earned an income from their activities while 2 of them had stopped their activities because of the security situation and a lack of buying power. With the exception of these two persons who had had to close their businesses, all the beneficiaries were satisfied with their current situation.

Finally, only 3 beneficiaries (who were aged between 27 and 37) envisaged their future in another country.

### *Challenges and opportunities*

- In general, families in Afghanistan are extended. Family members live together, pool their incomes and share expenses. As a result, the persons who return to Afghanistan receive advice and additional funds from their relatives, and also contribute to the family income. However, this also results in strong familial pressure because the returnees are soon expected to contribute to family expenditure.
- Women returning to Afghanistan cannot generally start businesses on their own, other than in Kabul and in other urban centres. This is due to the importance of culture and tradition. Most of the time, they therefore opt to be craftswomen working from their family home.
- The majority of returnees lack professional experience, have a relatively low level of education and are unaware of the realities of the market as a result of their absence from Afghanistan, because even after only one year's absence, the situation in their country had changed greatly. Their choice of activities is therefore not always well-informed but based on relatives' advice. Competition is often very strong in the sectors in which the returnees wish to be active.
- Afghanistan has suffered numerous conflicts over recent decades, resulting in a declining economy and the destruction of infrastructure. In addition, the security situation remains precarious.

- Some beneficiaries could not be visited because they live in areas that IOM is not permitted to access because of security restrictions. Contact by telephone is not always easy. Essentially, the returnees buy mobile phone cards from unauthorised dealers, and do not always register them with the service providers. Their numbers are therefore deactivated after a certain time. The relatives of many of the returnees live in Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, in particular in Iran and Pakistan. Frequently, the returnees travel regularly to these countries in order to visit their relatives, which also makes monitoring visits difficult.

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*“Reintegration assistance met my most urgent needs. However, if I had been given more money, it would have allowed me to take up an even more lucrative activity and earn an even higher income.”*  
*Fawad, returnee to Afghanistan*

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## Focus on Iraq

### *Profile of beneficiaries*

Between January and June 2016, 162 beneficiaries (corresponding to 124 reintegration mandates) received reintegration assistance in Iraq. 79 monitoring visits were carried out, which represents a success rate of 64%. 67 of these visits concerned single men. The two principal motives for the decision to return were family (sick parents, personal problems, etc.) and economic issues (unemployment, lack of prospects, etc.).

### *Impact of reintegration assistance*

58 reintegration projects (73%) were small businesses and 14 (18%) were job placements. Around half (48%) of the beneficiaries started their activities in partnership with other persons. The small businesses were mostly in commerce (72%), skilled trades (16%), farming (7%) and services (5%).

37% of beneficiaries indicated they were having difficulties in implementing their plan, which is a higher rate than in Afghanistan or West Africa. The most common problems were the poor local economic situation (41%), competition (26%), a lack of experience in managing a business (21%), the security situation (6%), problems with the partner (3%) and natural disasters (3%).

At the time of the monitoring visit, 43 small businesses (74%) were generating income, and 7 had been closed for the reasons cited above. 87% of beneficiaries declared themselves satisfied with their current situation.

Finally, only 10 beneficiaries (who were aged between 19 and 35 years) envisaged their future in another country.

### *Challenges and opportunities*

- In addition to dealing with persons returning to Iraq, the Iraqi government must address the question of internally displaced persons, the number of which is estimated at 3,000,000,<sup>31</sup> their return to their places of origin and setting up aid structures in the arrival zones.
- The number of voluntary returns to Iraq is expected to remain stable or even increase in the coming years, thanks to the liberation of areas that had been under control of terrorist groups.
- As in all countries that have suffered conflicts, much of the infrastructure in Iraq has been destroyed and the security situation is still poor in certain areas. The conflicts between Iraq's central government and the authorities of the Regional Government of Kurdistan exacerbate the divisions within the country, which can have a negative impact on the reintegration of beneficiaries of the RAS project. The economic situation remains poor in Iraq and, due to the cost of living, reintegration assistance alone is often not enough to start a successful business. As a result, the returnees must appeal to their relatives for support (they therefore start with debts or under strong pressure from their relatives) or form a partnership with third parties.
- As Iraq is still in the process of rebuilding, numerous opportunities for employment are available, which is an advantage for the professional reintegration of beneficiaries.
- The support of the returnees' families is crucial to the success of the reintegration projects. The strength of these family ties has a tendency to wane, sometimes making the reintegration of the voluntarily returnees more difficult.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://iomiraq.net/issues-focus/iraq-idp-crisis>, version of 29 December 2017.

- The returnees lack experience of managing a business or are out of practice in the jobs that they did before their departure for Switzerland. They need some time to get used to doing their jobs again and through practice gradually learn how to run their business better.
- It is difficult to organise monitoring visits, because, as in Afghanistan, the beneficiaries resort to using unreliable mobile phones and are not always reachable. Other beneficiaries refuse to participate in monitoring visits, as they believe the reintegration assistance they have been provided to have been insufficient. Despite the efforts of IOM staff on the ground, other beneficiaries hope the monitoring visits will result in them receiving additional reintegration assistance. They may therefore have a tendency to paint a bleaker picture of their actual situation than it really is. Certain places are very difficult to access, or IOM is not permitted to go there due to security restrictions.

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*“It is true that my financial circumstances are not great at the moment and this makes me think about emigrating again. However, when I compare my life with my friends and family to the life that I had in the camps, I feel that I would never want to leave them again. If my business goes well, I won’t think about leaving any more. I am working hard to make sure my business prospers. Life in Iraq is difficult because of the crisis. That’s why I think it would be good if IOM increased the amount of reintegration assistance.”* Mahmud, returnee to Iraq

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## Recommendations

These recommendations, which cover aspects from preparing for voluntary return to monitoring reintegration, are not based solely on the analyses made above. Based on discussions with other IOM offices and recent studies on return assistance, they propose further approaches aimed at improving the RAS project.

### Recommendations relating to the results of the monitoring phase

#### *Continue and improve return counselling*

The return counselling offered in Switzerland is a key element in the system of return and reintegration assistance. This counselling is currently very effective, given that 97% of beneficiaries say that they are satisfied with it. It is essential that counselling goes on and continues to receive support, such as that provided by the RIF (Swiss Return Information Fund) project. This project, financed by the SEM, supports return counsellors in their work and this synergy should be encouraged.

The publications regularly issued as part of the RIF project (factsheets on countries, business ideas in certain countries) provide a broad overview of reintegration opportunities. However, it is important to focus as often as possible on individual questions (another mechanism of the RIF project) in order to obtain information that is more relevant to the beneficiary. The RIF project also offers beneficiaries the opportunity to speak to IOM staff in their country of return, and to do this in their mother tongue, in order to obtain further information.

Finally, as part of return counselling, beneficiaries should systematically receive all the information they need about IOM's rules on payment. Even if the planned activity is within the informal sector, beneficiaries should be advised that, for reasons of transparency and administrative supervision, they will be asked to provide documentary evidence of payments.

#### *Taking account of beneficiaries' vulnerabilities when organising the return*

The SIM project<sup>32</sup>, also funded by the SEM, makes it possible to organise the return of vulnerable people.<sup>33</sup> This project includes services such as assistance on arrival in the country of return, which can involve initial contact with the beneficiary on his or her arrival. This facilitates relations between IOM and the beneficiary and has a positive influence on the rest of the reintegration procedure. This makes the process of reintegration for these vulnerable people considerably easier. The mechanisms that SIM offers should be used systematically in the case of all vulnerable people.

#### *Reintegration adapted to the beneficiary's needs*

Assistance with reintegration must remain flexible and be adapted to the beneficiary. This means that after return, the option of changing the type of reintegration project and redefining the way reintegration assistance is allocated among different activities should be left open or even encouraged. Beneficiaries often need to speak to their family and sometimes have to re-familiarise themselves with the realities of their country before starting a project. This recommendation is all the more important because it was one of the conclusions reached after the monitoring phase conducted in 2012.

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<sup>32</sup> swissREPAT IOM Movement.

<sup>33</sup> For the conditions of eligibility for the SIM project, see: <http://ch.iom.int/fr/sim-fr>

In addition, while the IOM's internal control rules should be respected, by agreement with the SEM, the rules on the financial documentation that beneficiaries must provide in order to obtain reintegration assistance must be made more flexible where the case in question requires.

### *More options for business management training*

Three returnees out of four start new businesses, most often taking account of the economic and cultural realities in their place of return. However, managing these projects is not something that can be improvised, as it requires discipline and a good understanding of financial management and customer relations.

Accordingly, it would be desirable to expand options for business management training in order to ensure that the funding given to returnees is used as effectively as possible. Evaluations of similar projects in Nigeria and Guinea have shown the value of these projects and their impact on the sustainability of reintegration. Such training could be offered also in other main countries of return.

Finally, this type of training offers an opportunity to bring together beneficiaries who have conducted a successful reintegration project with beneficiaries who have recently returned, with a view to setting up a mentoring system.

## **Going even further: other recommendations for the RAS project**

### *Using innovative means of communication to provide information on voluntary return and reintegration*

Many beneficiaries said that they had found out about return assistance from other migrants or from third parties. The opportunity to receive counselling must be supplemented by information aimed at the general public. Innovative ways could be used to provide information to the maximum number of people on the ins and outs of voluntary return assistance. These ways could for example include smartphone apps, a free helpline providing information in confidence, or public events involving the key players in return assistance and former beneficiaries, who could share their experiences. For example, a description of voluntary return assistance projects from Switzerland and a list of return counsellors could be added to "MigApp", the free smartphone app developed by IOM.

### *More diversified assistance with reintegration*

As in 2012, this monitoring phase has revealed that recipients of reintegration assistance should be given more encouragement to pursue academic studies or vocational training. Given that the vast majority of beneficiaries are young men with a relatively low level of education, it is important to encourage them to obtain vocational training. Beneficiaries often reject long-term options for education and training because they do not guarantee an immediate source of income. One solution that should be considered, in particular in order to encourage the very young, would be to offer financial support in cash to cover everyday expenses during their studies or training and possibly to use part of the money allocated to allow the beneficiary to start his or her activity effectively.

In addition, in certain cases where a cash-for-care or cash-for-shelter plan is approved, this assistance in-kind should go hand-in-hand with a long-term plan.

### **Increased reintegration assistance**

Although grateful for the assistance they have been given, most of the beneficiaries believe that the sum of CHF 3,000 is often insufficient to organise a sustainable project. The level of reintegration assistance could be increased not only for vulnerable people, but also in cases where the project

seems particularly promising. If the amount of reintegration assistance is not in itself the decisive factor in the decision to return, it plays an important role in setting up a reintegration project and in its sustainability.

### **Reintegration assistance supported by existing institutions in the country of return**

The funds given to participants in the RAS project can quickly become insufficient, depending on the type of project implemented. In addition, reintegration assistance is only paid out for a limited period.

In order to guarantee the continuity of reintegration assistance from Switzerland, IOM proposes that this assistance should be supplemented through existing mechanisms in the country of return. To this end, discussions on establishing relations between returnees and microfinance institutions (MFIs) or banks should be relaunched and supported. With this in mind, IOM published a study on access to MFIs in five target countries in 2016<sup>34</sup>, and, since 2015, implements in Nigeria a project for former returnees to access micro credits.

The returnees could also be automatically registered in a medical or social insurance system in their country of return and put in contact with the public authorities or other organisations (international or national) that can support them in their reintegration. On the basis of information gathered as part of the RIF project, the SEM could increase the medical assistance granted so that part of this assistance could be used to help the beneficiary to take out medical insurance.

IOM will need more human and financial resources in the country of return in order to provide assistance of this type. Based on the model of the country information sheets,<sup>35</sup> a pilot project could be carried out in the countries receiving flat funding<sup>36</sup> in order to identify all the institutions that can assist the beneficiaries. This project could also allow a referral system to be set up for migrants returning voluntarily from Switzerland.

## **Monitoring reintegration**

### *Systematic monitoring of cases*

Once payment has been made, monitoring visits should take place systematically in order to monitor progress with the project and identify any needs in the months after the project is launched. A first stage could be, on an experimental basis, to carry out systematic monitoring in the countries that receive flat funding from 2019. Monitoring of this type would make it possible for beneficiaries to express their opinions and make comments more regularly and would facilitate the continuous evaluation of reintegration assistance. In order to do this, the returnees should be made aware at the return counselling stage of the importance of monitoring visits to the progress of their return assistance project. It should also be stressed that a monitoring visit will not result in additional funding being given.

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<sup>34</sup> This study is available at: [www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications](http://www.ch.iom.int/fr/publications)

<sup>35</sup> IOM Bern regularly produces factsheets on voluntary return to certain countries chosen on the basis of the number of people who return there or the need for information. These factsheets contain general information (geography, economic situation, etc.) as well as specific information on return and reintegration (accommodation, healthcare system, job opportunities, growth sectors, transport, telecommunications, education, etc.). For more information, see <http://ch.iom.int/fr/rif-fr>

<sup>36</sup> Flat funding is a mechanism that ensures that the IOM offices dealing with the most returnees from Switzerland have sufficient human and financial resources to assist the beneficiaries.

### *Improving the method of monitoring*

Between 2016 and 2017, IOM conducted a study involving 290 recipients of reintegration assistance, and 212 community leaders and policy makers in 5 countries.<sup>37</sup> This study identified quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to evaluate the success of reintegration more effectively. The evaluation covers the three aspects (cultural, social, economic). In a pilot phase carried out in the countries receiving flat funding, these indicators could be used to assess persons returning voluntarily to their country from Switzerland. This is a new approach which should be discussed in more detail with the SEM.

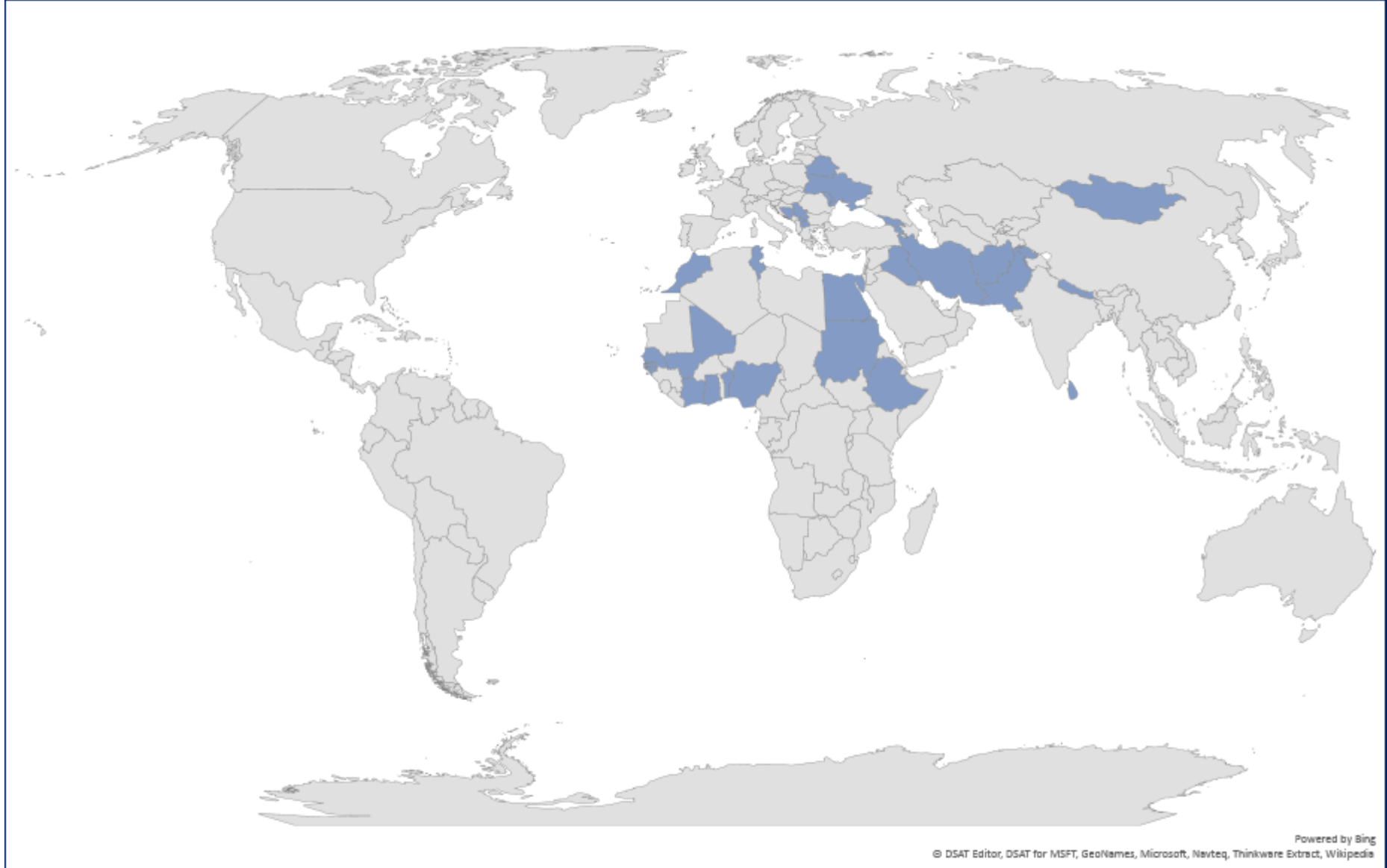
### *Changes to the frequency of monitoring phases*

As mentioned above, despite the differences linked to socio-political factors, the results observed over the various monitoring phases are quite similar. The next monitoring phase should therefore be conducted only one or two years after the restructuring of the asylum system, which comes into effect on 1 March 2019. This will make it possible to assess and compare the impact of the future system on beneficiaries of return and reintegration assistance.

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<sup>37</sup> Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Senegal and Somalia. The MEASURE project funded by the UK Department for International Development.  
[www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/DMM/AVRR/IOM\\_SAMUEL\\_HALL\\_MEASURE\\_REPORT%202017.pdf](http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/IOM_SAMUEL_HALL_MEASURE_REPORT%202017.pdf)

Map 1 : Countries where monitoring visits took place



The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official recognition or acceptance by IOM.

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