
**Return and Reintegration Assistance
External Evaluation**

**Country Study Iraq (focus
on the Kurdistan Region)**

Final Report

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Contracting Authority

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List of Abbreviations

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
FOM	Federal Office of Migration
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government

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The evaluation in Iraq (Kurdistan) could not have been realised without the support IOM, the office both in Erbil and in Dahuk and the office in Berne, who have greatly facilitated the evaluation process and especially the access to returnees. Thanks are also extended to FOM staff that helped with information. Thanks finally and very especially go to the returnees and their families who were willing to meet the evaluator and who – despite their sometimes difficult situations – openly discussed sometimes intimate or delicate aspects of their journey to Switzerland, the times spent there, and the return and reintegration process.

Daniel Kessler

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Country Study

The present report forms part of the evaluation of the Swiss Assisted Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes mandated by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) in 2012. It is to contribute to reaching the evaluation's objectives and providing answers to the three principal evaluation questions (see box) by presenting data and experiences from Iraq (more precisely: the Kurdistan region in the North of the country). At the same time, this report is a document in its own right, designed to be understood by readers without the necessity to consult additional documents, including the six other country studies (Georgia, Guinea, Kosovo, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Turkey) and the overall and synthetic evaluation report.

Evaluation Objectives

- a. Determine the range and extent of outcomes of selected instruments of the Swiss return assistance for different target groups and countries of origin.
- b. Make an overall independent assessment of the outcomes achieved against the objectives envisaged.
- c. Identify key lessons and propose practical recommendations for the optimisation and further development and further development of Return Assistance, especially with regard to different target groups and different native countries.

Central Evaluation Questions

1. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and Individual Return Assistance ... promote voluntary return ... ?
2. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance ... contribute to the process of social and professional reintegration of returnees and thus sustainable reintegration ... ?
3. To what extent and how do country specific return assistance programmes and individual Return Assistance ... contribute to an improved cooperation of Swiss authorities and authorities of the country of origin?

1.2 Evaluation Methods

An analysis of the reports made available by FOM and IOM on the AVRR programmes since 2005 and of reports on other countries' AVRR programmes in general and on Iraq specifically was the first step in the evaluation process. This desk study was followed by interviews with actors in Switzerland – representing IOM and FOM – involved in the realisation of assisted voluntary return and reintegration in Iraq. The evaluation visit in Iraq, realised by Daniel Kessler in January 2013, allowing for interviews with returnees from Switzerland, with the local IOM office, with authorities of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), as well as with Iraqi who have not migrated, was the main data collecting method: the evaluation's term of reference highlight the necessity to present the AVRR programmes from the perspective of the persons most directly concerned, the potential returnees and the returnees. The access to the returnees to Iraq was facilitated by IOM: 60 randomly and anonymously selected persons by the evaluator from the list of all voluntary returnees were contacted by the IOM Office in Erbil and asked whether they consent to be contacted by the evaluators – either by a visit or by phone. IOM established a list of 27 men of whom 22 could be interviewed, with the help of a translator, in Erbil, Dahuk, and Zahko. The contacts with persons, who have not migrated, an additional element of the evaluation, were established without prior planning by the evaluator during his visit to Iraq: opportunities to talk to (mainly) males in their late teens and early twenties were seized in the public sphere, both in Erbil and in Dahuk. Local organisations involved in AVRR, representing authorities of the Democratic Republic of Kurdistan were also consulted, i.e. the Bureau for Migration and

Displacement. Finally a visit was paid to the Netherlands consulate in Erbil whose representative shed a light on voluntary return and assisted reintegration from an additional angle.

It is to be noted that the assessments presented in this report, especially those from chapter 3 onward, in addition to reports available from IOM and FOM, are based on a very limited empirical basis. The selection of returnees was a random one, but it is not, in any way, representative. Also, the preparedness of returnees to talk to the evaluator indicates that their experiences with the return and reintegration support were rather positive. It is quite imaginable that a different set of interlocutors would have shed a different, more negative light on the Swiss AVRR measures for returnees to Iraq. The most important introductory remark concerns the fact that the present "country report" does not provide information on Iraq as a whole, but on the Kurdistan Region exclusively. Both the mandating FOM and the evaluator are confident that insights about AVRR for Iraq asylum seekers in Switzerland could also be gained by visiting Kurdistan only. Also, the security situation in other parts of the country would have required security measures that would not have been in a sensible (financial and other) relation to the results that could be expected.

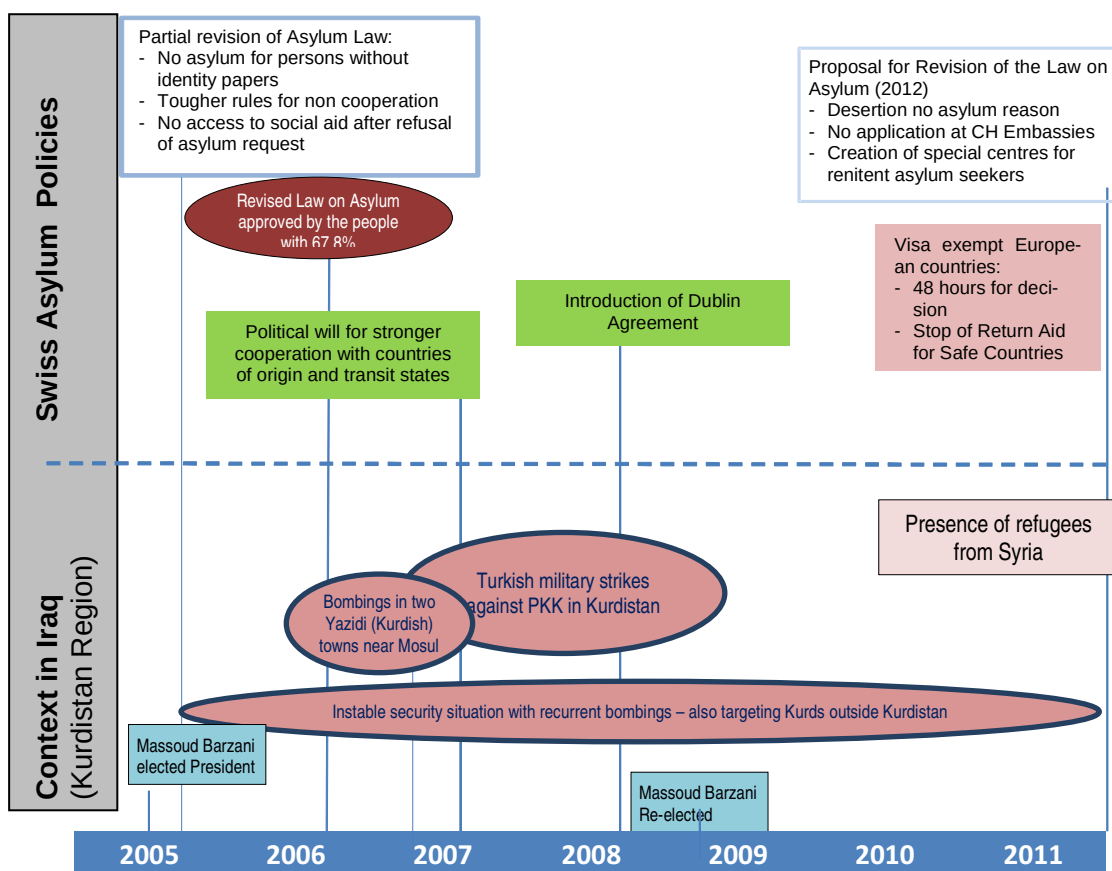
2 Short Presentation of the Programme

2.1 Structure, Duration, Context and Logic of the programme

The Swiss return and reintegration assistance for persons from Iraq started in 2003. It was a reaction of Iraqi (asylum seekers and persons with refugee status) in Switzerland asking to return. Returnees between 2003 and mid 2008 received 2,000 CHF upon departure from Switzerland. In mid-2008, IOM was mandated with the provision of support to returnees. Returnees to the Kurdistan Region currently receive 1,000 CHF (500 CHF per child) upon arriving in Erbil, and are then supported in the realisation of their reintegration project with an amount of 5,000 Swiss Francs. The support can also be used for the returnees' living costs in the first months in Kurdistan, or for paying salaries to employers who will hire the returnee on a permanent basis. Returnees can also opt for receiving vocational education and training – but the IOM Office in Erbil informs that this is very rarely the wish of returnees. Additional support can be provided in the form of medical aid, and, more generally, of training for persons who care for increasing their entrepreneurial skills in view of the implementation of their income generating project. Iraqi migrants have also profited from structural aid, e.g. refugees in Syria – when Syria was still a place where Iraqi sought refuge: ten schools attended by Iraqi migrant children together with Syrian children were rehabilitated.

While the security situation in Iraq remains highly critical, Kurdistan enjoys a comparably stable and safe situation. Also, the economic boom based on the exploitation of the region's energy resources provides opportunities for many. Yet, poverty is still an issue: almost 25% of the population live below the national poverty line according to World Bank statistics, and Iraq ranks 131st in the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index (listing 185 countries). Migration therefore continues to be an option, mainly for poor young male Kurds who are keen to find employment in Europe or in Northern America. More privileged youth try to find possibilities to study at Universities abroad. Kurdistan is not only generating migration, it is also a region through which and to which people

migrate. Kurds and other minority groups (Christians, Yazidi, etc.) from Central and Southern regions of Iraq (several of the returnees interviewed are from Mosul and cannot live there for security reasons), and even from neighbouring regions come to Kurdistan because they are safer here. Amongst others Turkish and South Asian job seekers come to Erbil and to other cities of Kurdistan. Also, tens of thousands of Kurds from Syria currently live in Northern Iraq, many of them unregistered, blending into the local population, many also waiting for a better future in camps. In the Domiz camp (Dahuk governorate) alone, 35,000 Syrian refugees are registered according to the UNHCR. Kurdistan has a migration policy specifically targeting Kurds in neighbouring countries. The Bureau for Migration and Displacement informs that the return of Iraqi Kurds living in Iran is actively promoted and supported, including through financial incentives. Such activities are an expression of Kurdistan's intention to weigh importantly in Iraq's demographic balance, and of the plans to establish itself as an independent state.



2.2 Frame Conditions of the Relations Switzerland - Iraq (and Kurdistan Region)

Switzerland and Iraq do not have any formal agreement regarding cooperation in the field of migration, neither do the Kurdistan Regional Government and Switzerland. This appears to be a problem mainly for forced return. It is not easy to coordinate with respective authorities, and to get their consent to bring back persons even if they have had severe problems in Switzerland and were sentenced by a court. Voluntary return is organised without consulting with Iraqi and / or Kurdistan authorities. The latter are well informed about the Swiss AVRR programme operated by IOM – IOM Erbil and the Bureau for Migration and Displacement hold meetings at least every three months – , but despite its mission the Bureau is not actively participating in the Swiss programme's implementation.

2.3 Other return Assistance Programmes in Kurdistan

IOM Iraq has organised or is organising voluntary return programmes for 24 countries. In addition, there may be additional AVRR programmes, but these are certainly comparably smaller than the IOM operated activities. Returnees from Switzerland represent a small part of the overall number of persons returned to Iraq with IOM support. Since no figures are available regarding the global number of asylum seekers from Iraq, a more detailed assessment of the significance part of AVRR returnees from Switzerland cannot be made. But it is fair to assume that the overall share of returnees from Switzerland is larger than its population of Iraqi asylum seekers compared to the worldwide number of asylum seekers from Iraq. (It is to be noted that the figures in the table below concern Iraq as a whole and returnees to all regions of the country. No specific statistical FOM data are available for Kurdistan.)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
IOM operated assisted voluntary returns overall ^{*)}	1,952	2,291	939	2,000	2,748	2,347	2,667	18,225
IOM operated assisted voluntary returns from CH ^{**)}	113	94	37	29	13	32	119	437
%age of IOM-AVRR from Switzerland	5.8%	4.1%	3.9%	1.5%	0.5%	1,4%	4.5%	2.4%

^{*)} Source: IOM: Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration. Annual Report of Activities 2005-11.

^{**)} Source: FOM

European Countries

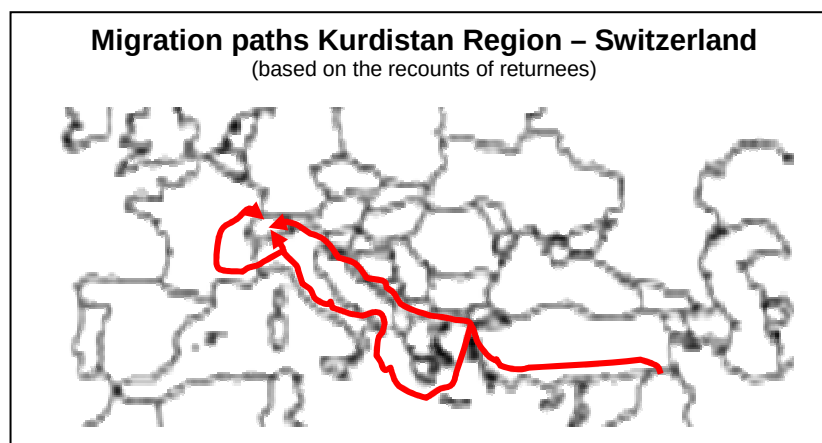
Compared with the 24 return (and reintegration) programmes operated by IOM, the Swiss support for returnees clearly is among the best in the view of returnees. This concerns mainly the volume of financial support for return and reintegration, and the monitoring realised. Still, other countries have provided, for short periods, larger amounts of money (three of the interviewed returnees referred to financial support for reintegration offered by France that was larger than the 5,000 Swiss Francs (plus 1,000 Swiss Francs "return money". And the UK ran a very generous programme during some months as well.).

In 2012, a number of European countries (Austria, Belgium, France and the Netherlands) have joined efforts to launch the **Magnet Project** (www.magnet-project.eu/home). This endeavour is innovative and promotes reintegration taking into account the favourable economic situation in Kurdistan. The Magnet project does not support income generating projects, rather it tries to help returnees finding jobs. It does so by providing pre-departure information (as all AVRR programmes do, or should do), and, in addition and in cooperation with local authorities and the private sector, post-arrival counselling and job referral. An online database contains vacancies and demanded skills; these are compared with the returnee's capacities and experiences in order to match vacancies and applications.

Kurdistan Regional Government

Kurdistan authorities, its Bureau for Migration and Displacement, inform the evaluator that local authorities also provide support to returnees, including financial support. The evaluator was not able to get specific information on respective forms of domestic support, and he could neither find evidence for it in the interviews with returnees from Switzerland nor with other Iraqi during the evaluation visit in Kurdistan.

3 Dynamic of Returns



Voluntary return of migrants is one of many aspects of migratory movements. It is a small one, but it is a very interesting one, because thanks to the assistance offered for returning and for reintegration, it is more structured and accompanied than

usual forms of migration of non-privileged Iraqis. And it is a much safer form of migration. The returnees' journeys to Europe and to Switzerland, on the other hand, had very often been hazardous. Also, the social and emotional investments in migration are very important: families and friends are left behind, even if there are big hopes for successful migration, motivated by ideal images of Europe, uncertainties and nostalgia, doubts and anxieties are always a part of the attempt to make a living elsewhere. And the financial investments made for (hopefully) reaching Europe are considerable. They are systematically and importantly higher than the sum received through the Swiss AVRR programme. In some cases they were said to amount to 15,000 Swiss Francs – obviously without any guarantee to reach Europe, sometimes (allegedly) not even knowing where they would be brought in the trucks or boats that bring them from Turkey onwards.

3.1 Data Overview

It is to be noted that the current report deals with returnees to the Northern Part of Iraq. At the same time, the FOM data on asylum seekers from Iraq in Switzerland and on return to Iraq does not distinguish the Kurdistan Region from the Central and Southern Regions of the country – where return appears to be much more arduous to be realised. IOM Switzerland highlights that the dynamics of return to Iraq from Switzerland have followed the respective overall European tendency.

	2005	2006	2007	2008 ^{*)}	2009	2010	2011	Total
Total Stock								
Number of persons eligible ^{**)}	3,416	3,624	3,501	3,575	3,266	2,831	2,650	n.a.y<<<
New asylum seekers from Iraq ^{***)}	474	844	956	1,440	935	659	504	5,812
Number of persons with asylum	139	109	117	164	161	148	78	916
Departures								
Number of voluntary returnees ^{****)}	113	94	37	29	13	32	119	437
Programme	108	92	33	15	0	1	109	358
Individual	5	2	4	14	13	31	10	79
Forced return	0	1	4	16	28	29	26	104
Forced return to third states	0	0	1	23	8	8	1	41
Uncontrolled exits	5	2	2	80	145	116	63	413
Other exits	0	0	0	10	26	125	71	232
Proportions								
Ratio asylum seekers – voluntary returnees	3.3%	2.6%	1.0%	0.8%	0.4%	1.1%	4.5%	1.9%
Ratio voluntary return – forced return	0	0.01	0.13	1.34	2.7	1.2	0.2	0.33

^{*)} From July 2008 onwards, IOM started supporting returnees to Iraq.

^{**)} Persons in the asylum process (asylum seekers and provisionally admitted persons). Source: Asylstatistik 2005-2012

^{***)} New entries, resumed presence, births

^{****)} Figures provided by FOM

The above table presents data for Iraq overall. No FOM data for Kurdistan specifically is available.

3.2 Discussion of Data

Between 2005 and 2011, 437 persons participated in the Swiss support to voluntary return for Iraq or benefited from individual return assistance. During the same period, more than 13 times as many persons from Iraq requested asylum in Switzerland. The number of returns has evolved erratically, reaching, after a marked downwards tendency starting in 2007, its low in 2009. The 2011 figure has reached the level of 2005 again. Since the new asylum requests have not followed the same evolution, the success of the

project is limited. The number of voluntary returns compared more positively with the number of the whole of the Iraqi population in Switzerland eligible for AVRR support – this figure has constantly diminished. But a plausible link between the two populations cannot be established. Only 1.9% of the eligible Iraqi population in Switzerland participates in the AVRR programme (or profits from the individual integration assistance). At the same time, it must be stressed that the figures of voluntary return compare very positively with the number of forced returns to Iraq or to third countries: they are practically equal. The number of uncontrolled exits of Iraqi asylum seekers from Switzerland is also very similar to that of voluntary returns, only when “other exits” are also included in this figure are the numbers of voluntary returns smaller, but they still amount to two thirds of this value.

3.3 Assessment

Figures of voluntary returnees are small compared to the number of potential returnees, but the possibility of assisted voluntary return does promote return to Iraq, and it importantly contributes to the quality of return and reintegration.

Without the offer of assisted return and reintegration, fewer Iraqi would probably return to their country of origin. The financial return and reintegration assistance helps potential returnees to take the decision to leave Switzerland – but it is to be noted that the financial incentive does not appear to be decisive for the returnees' respective decision. And the return and remigration assistance importantly improves the conditions under which the return to Iraq takes place.

The assisted return to Iraq (regarding the number of returnees) shows results below the overall performance of Swiss return assistance and also below the planned figures.

The project document for the phase July 2010 – July 2012 planned up to 300 voluntary returns. For the whole of 2010 and 2011, half of this figure was reached. When comparing the figures with new arrivals of Iraqi in Switzerland who ask for asylum, the figures of voluntary returns are also very limited – the ratio is 13:1. Among the seven countries included in the evaluation, the share of persons returning to their home countries of the total eligible population is 8% (for the period 2005-2011). The respective share for Iraq stands at 1.9 per cent.

Information efforts about assisted return and reintegration is a constant necessity.

The returnees interviewed all confirm that they had been well informed about the programme for assisted return and reintegration – through official channels or through migrants' networks.

4 Individual Returnees

The following portraits are the result of meetings with returnees realised in Erbil, Dahuk and Zakho.

S.M., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, in his 20ies	
Married	
Had operated a bakery, is currently unemployed	
Returned in 2008	

Migration Trajectories

Mr M. came to Switzerland in 2006, after having crossed the border to Turkey and from there entering the EU. Switzerland had apparently been the goal of the journey from the beginning. In Switzerland, after having applied for asylum, S. Mohamed was at the Basel Centre for Reception and Registration, and then, together with three other asylum seekers from Iraq, lived in an apartment in Sissach (BL). While in Switzerland, S.M. had an F permit (which he still carries on him), still, he did not work, and therefore could not send any money home. On the contrary, his family in Erbil even supported him financially while he lived in Switzerland. This was an additional burden on his family.

Motivation for assisted Return

The major motivations for returning to Iraq were the absence of a perspective in Switzerland and the upcoming marriage in Kurdistan. The lack of realistic perspectives in Switzerland made him very homesick, S.M. highlights. Also, he wanted to come back to see his mother. And since his family had found a bride for him, the decision to return to Iraq was finally an easy one, not at all motivated by financial incentives. When asked how he had learned about the possibility of return and reintegration assistance, S.M. remembers two policemen in Frenkendorf who had been very helpful and who had established a contact with IOM where he was informed about the possibility of receiving return assistance.

Reintegration

The returnee’s project was to operate a bakery. He had made this choice because an uncle of his is a baker and he had sometime helped him before his years in Switzerland. He ran his own bakery during a year and stopped the business when the contract for the rent of the premises ran out. Since a year, he is now without a job, but his plan is to have a taxi for which he will pay in 13 instalments. With two children and with the larger family, the integration in Erbil is successful and appears to be stable.

Plans

S.M. underlines that he does not plan to leave Iraq again, even with a permit of residence in a European country or in Australia he would not migrate again.

F.J., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, in his early 40ies	
Married since 20 years, no children	
Transport furniture	
Returned in 2009 (or 2010?)	
Migration Trajectories F.J. lived in Switzerland for approximately a year. He says he lived in Bern in an underground centre, after he had been placed there by the authorities. His travel to Switzerland had led him to Turkey, then to Italy and finally to Switzerland. F.J. has relatives in Greece, Italy and in London, their example clearly contributed to his plan for leaving Iraq. Motivation for assisted Return The reason for returning after a year was mainly the fact that he could not have his wife come to Switzerland and that he missed her very much. The financial incentives were welcome, but were finally not decisive for his decision to return to Erbil. Reintegration F.J.'s project for his economic reintegration consisted in a taxi which he operated for a few months. But he then sold the taxi, because it was not profitable enough to feed his family and pay the rent. Since three months now, he has an agreement, not a stable employment, with a Kurd from Turkey who runs a furniture shop in Erbil and for whom he transports goods to clients. It didn't become quite clear during the interview, whether the pickup with which the furniture is transported belongs to F.J. He informs, though, that he's chosen to do this because he had been active in transportation before he had left Iraq already. His biggest aspiration now is to own his own house, but he admits that this wish will not easily materialise. Prices in Erbil are very high. As a last resort, he could move to a village where he has relatives and try to make a living with farming. But he would clearly prefer to remain in the city and try to find more clients for whom he can work upon request. Plans The returnee says he will not leave Iraq again – also because his age will not give him optimistic perspectives abroad.	

D.A.R., Erbil	
Male, around 35 years	
Married	
Government official	
Returned in 2009	
Migration Trajectories D.A.R. has lived in Switzerland for 2.5 years. After a stay at the Basel Centre he was transferred to Berne, where he occupied an apartment together with other asylum seekers and where he had an occupation with the Municipality. His choice to go to Switzerland (and not another European country) had been motivated, partly, by the fact that two of his sisters live there since 1997. Motivation for assisted Return His decision for return to Erbil was motivated mainly by his wish to live with his wife and the two children with whom he had maintained contact while in Switzerland but whom he could not support financially while in Switzerland. Reintegration The reintegration did not take the form of a FOM funded project properly speaking; rather, the money available was used for the family's living costs. Still, since over a year, Mr R. is a public servant, working for the Ministry for Natural Resources. He says his salary permits his family a decent livelihood. The meeting with Mr R. took place in a company that transports oil out of Iraq to be refined and from the refineries back to Kurdistan. Plans Mr R. intends to keep his job and to remain in Kurdistan. He is satisfied with his situation, he can imagine to return to Switzerland, but only to visit his sister.	

S.M., Erbil	no picture taken
Male, in his early twenties	
Engaged	
Employee at his father’s tire shop	
Returned in 2009	
Migration Trajectories After a journey to Switzerland (through Turkey, Greece and then through unknown countries) for which the sum of 15,000 US\$ had been paid, S.M. resided approximately one year in Glarus. Although he has a sister and several other relatives living in Switzerland (Berne), he had hardly any contact with these persons; rather, his contact was with his family in Erbil. One of five sons, he wanted to try his luck in Europe, despite the opposition of the father – also present during the interview.	
Motivation for assisted Return Since he did not feel welcome in Switzerland and was not allowed to work, his decision to return to Iraq was taken quickly – helped also by the financial support granted for voluntary return.	
Reintegration The sum granted by Switzerland was invested in the family tire shop, where S.M. currently works. The return was also facilitated by the perspective of marriage with a woman the family has chosen for the young man. The reintegration has been excellent, since the family guarantees a job, housing, social inclusion.	
Plans At the same time, an important decision is still pending about the place where S.M. will live with his future wife. This could be either Erbil or Sweden, where the Iraqi women currently lives with a permit of residence. The family in Erbil, S.M.’s father insists, would clearly prefer the new family to establish itself in Kurdistan: “a father wants to see his sons around him”.	

A.H., Erbil	
Male, around 35 years old	
Married, four children	
Car dealer	
Returned in 2009	

Migration Trajectories

Mr H. lived in Switzerland for only six months, in St. Gallen, where he had shared an apartment with another asylum seeker. He had arrived to Switzerland after a journey through Turkey, Greece, and Italy. The fact that he has a brother living in Geneva was part of his motivation to go to Switzerland. The other part was that he knew that Switzerland is a very quiet country. During his stay in Switzerland, he remained in contact with his family (his wife, and then, three children).

Motivation for assisted Return

The information about the possibility of assisted return and reintegration was provided by other Iraqi living in Switzerland. When getting aware that his request for asylum would not be answered positively and that he could not have his family come join him, he quickly took the decision to return to Erbil, proposing to use the reintegration funds available for the establishment for a car repair shop. He opted for this choice, because he had been active in the car business also before he had left Iraq.

Reintegration

A.H. operated his mechanic's shop for approximately a year, and then, together with family members, decided to be active as a car retailer, buying expensive American and German cars in the region (both used and new ones), and then selling them to rich Iraqi and to foreigners, mainly Arabs, living in Erbil. Built on a family owned plot, a spacious hall now allows for displaying the cars in an elegant way.

Plans

Despite his excellent integration, due mainly to the economic success of his family – the car commerce allows him to lead a privileged life – and the wealth of his larger family he would still return to Europe if he could establish himself there, if he could get a permit of residence. And he would advise any young Iraqi to do so – but only if the right of residence is granted.

R.A., Erbil	
Male, less than 25 years	
Single	
Mechanic Shop for Motorbikes	
Returned in 2010	

Migration Trajectories

R.A. had lived in Switzerland for three years, in Geneva, “in a centre with other asylum seekers”. He has come to Europe through Turkey and Greece. His re-request for asylum was answered negatively, but he remained in Switzerland longer due to health problems. A bike accident in Kurdistan had left his right leg damaged, and additional treatment (operation) was necessary. Also, he suffered from the fact that he could not have his bride come from Erbil to Switzerland, even more so when he learnt that she had married another man while he was in Switzerland. His “anger” resulted in psychological problems that were also treated medically. In Switzerland, R.A. never worked.

Motivation for assisted Return

The decision to return was taken when, finally, the negative decision about his request for asylum was delivered. Despite his medical problems, R.A. would have preferred a quicker decision, the waiting for the decision being an additional weight for him. The return and reintegration assistance was a welcome help, but it was certainly not the reason for coming back to Iraq.

Reintegration

Due to the problem with his leg, R.A. could not take up his old job as a construction worker. The project that was funded by Swiss reintegration assistance consisted of a minimarket. He had the shop for a year, but he was not satisfied with this work and the economic success was not good. That is why he now, since a year, rents a shop for 100 Swiss Francs a month where he fixes motorcycles. He does not have the money required to have a stock of spare parts. Rather, he buys parts on credit and reimburses when the reparation is done. R.A. most of the time also sleeps in his shop; he says his relation with his larger family are not good. He considers his work with the motorcycles mainly as a means not to be too angry, not to think about his bride all the time. The bike with which he had the accident is still with him, and he displays the hood of the bike on which one can read “Masha’Allah”. Given the possibility, he would leave Kurdistan instantly, R.A. confirms. Otherwise, he says, he has no plans for his future.

Plans

R.A. does not make plans. He says it’s already hard for him to live from day to day. He is still very much worried about the marriage that did not take place and does not see a motivating perspective for himself anywhere in the world.

M.S., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, 24 years	
Married	
Salesman in a carpet shop	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories M.S. had come to Switzerland via Turkey and Greece and remained there during nine months. He had migrated to Switzerland because he has a family member there and hoped he could get a permit of residence. Motivation for assisted Return His return from Switzerland to Iraq is due to the poor conditions in the centre where he lived, and by his hopes that with the reintegration assistance he could start an enterprise of his own. Also, the marriage that had been prepared for him by his family helped him to make a rather quick decision to come back. Reintegration His reintegration project was to be a car salesman. He tried that for a year, but then had to see that the capital he had to work with was way too limited. He then worked as a BMW salesman, employed by a garage. And now, since a year, he is a salesman in a carpet shop. He got married last year and the couple expects a baby in February 2013. He describes his economic situation as very difficult. His salary of 600,000 Iraqi Dinars (less than 500 Swiss Francs) is not enough to have a decent life. Plans His plan is therefore to leave Iraq again – although he will only do it when he is sure that he will be welcome in a country. He hasn't undertaken concrete steps yet to prepare his new migration.	

S.M., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, 35 years old	
Single	
Unemployed	
Returned in 2010	
Migration Trajectories Mr M. left Iraq in 2003 and lived in France and in the UK (London) before coming to Switzerland, where he lived for three years and from where he finally returned to Iraq. His time in Switzerland started with a stay at the Reception Centre in Basel, where he stayed during one month. Then, he lived in the region of Lucerne and in the city of Lucerne, where he shared an apartment with another Iraqi asylum seeker. In Switzerland, he did not work, although he had a working contract with a construction company. He says his F Permit was withdrawn after the visit of an Iraqi Minister to Switzerland. Motivation for assisted Return The decision to return to Iraq was clearly motivated by the abrogation of Mr M's F status. He would have preferred to remain in Switzerland, but he was also too tired to try his luck in another European country. The perspective of the financial return and reintegration assistance then also helped his decision. He had learned about this option when he was informed about the decision that he has to leave Switzerland within a fortnight's time. Reintegration The financial means for reintegration were paid as a salary while he was working with his brother, welding water tanks. This lasted for a little over a year, now Mr M. is unemployed. He occasionally works as a day labourer, but this does not allow him to lead a convenient life, and it does not allow him to support his father who has major leg problems and cannot work himself. Plans S.M. considers his plan to establish his own family as very little realistic. He assesses his situation as very difficult, but does not currently have the energy to make any plans for a longer period of time.	

N.H., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, in his early 40ies	
Married	
Taxi driver (employed)	
Returned 2010	

Migration Trajectories

N.H. has been living in Switzerland during 12 years – first in a centre in Sion, then in Visp, where he shared an apartment with two and sometimes three other asylum seekers. In 2006, he got his F permit, allowing him to take little jobs, all of them short term; he was never employed over a longer period of time. N.H. underlines that for other persons, 12 years in Switzerland allows them to obtain Swiss nationality. He is very disappointed and attributes Switzerland's final decision that he had to leave the country to the visit of the Iraqi President in Switzerland. N.H. left Iraq because of the war, and arrived in Switzerland after a route taking him to Turkey, then to Greece, where he stayed for six months, and from there to Italy. His choice for Switzerland is motivated by TV programmes he had seen on the country which he liked very much.

Motivation for assisted Return

The decision to leave Switzerland was taken when N.H. received a letter informing him that he has to leave the country within 15 days. Together with the letter, he also received information about the possibility of assisted return and reintegration, information he had before already. Since he didn't want to live in Switzerland without any papers, and since he was too tired to go to another European country, he finally accepted to return. Still, he was very angry and sad that his wish to stay in Switzerland was not accepted. Throughout his stay in Switzerland he had psychological problems, he underlines. It had also been painful for him not to be able to travel when his sister and his uncle died in Iraq.

Reintegration

The project for reintegration consisted in joining a friend who is dealing with cloth. After six months, the cooperation not being to his satisfaction, N.H. terminated the joint endeavour and took up a job as a taxi driver. The best thing about his return is the fact that he has married since and his wife gave birth to two children. Still, N.H. wishes that European countries do not send away people who wish to live there.

Plans

The returnee still dreams to go back to Switzerland where people are treated better, where a decent life is possible, where public service is excellent. If he remains in Iraq, he hopes to be given a chance to take up his old job as an electrician again, but chances for this are small, since he does not have a friend or a relative in the respective state service.

K.H., Erbil	No picture taken
Male, 25 years	
Married	
Taxi driver (self employed)	
Returned in 2009	

Migration Trajectories

Arrived in Switzerland looking for a job after having passed through Turkey, Greece, and Italy. K.H. lived in Ticino, first in Lugano and Chiasso, then in an apartment in Bellinzona that he shared with another Iraqi asylum seeker who remained in Switzerland when he left the country. K.H. did not have a steady job, but was part time employed by Caritas in Biasca where earned 500 Swiss Francs. This allowed him to send home some little money once in a while.

Motivation for assisted Return

The return was motivated by his parents' wish to return and get married. The return and reintegration assistance was welcome, but was certainly not the decisive factor for his decision.

Reintegration

K.H. is now married and has a baby. His small family lives in a rented apartment, but the 600,000 Iraqi Dinars (less than 500 Swiss Francs) he earns a month do not allow for an untroubled life. The reintegration project consisted in the purchase of a taxi – the 4,800 US\$ he had received permitted to pay half the car's price. The other half of the taxi was invested by a friend, who also uses the taxi to work. Meanwhile, he still uses the taxi to make his living.

Plans

K.H.'s and his wife's wish is still to migrate to Europe, preferably to Switzerland – where social differences are not displayed as openly as in Iraq, K.H. says, where a decent life is possible, where health and other public services are accessible in good quality and almost for free. Another option, but it is not assessed to be very realistic by the returnee, would be to build a house in or near Erbil.

I.M., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, around 30 years	
Married	
Unemployed	
Returned 2011	

Migration Trajectories

I.M. has left Iraq because his economic situation was not satisfactory. His journey to Switzerland, for which he paid 13,000 US\$ had brought him to Turkey, Greece, Italy, and finally to Switzerland. He says he wanted to go to Switzerland, because he had heard from other Iraqi migrants that it was easy to get asylum there. First in Zürich, then in Bern and finally in Konolfingen, where he performed small “unofficial” jobs (mainly cleaning) for a poor pay, he spent over a year in Switzerland.

Motivation for assisted Return

The main reason for returning to Kurdistan is that he wanted to be with his wife again. The perspective of receiving return assistance had not been important for his decision to return. The project he had had in mind was to buy a taxi or a pick-up and to make a living from transporting persons or goods. But the money provided by Switzerland was clearly not enough to start such a business – and he didn't see another possibility for himself to get something started here. He strongly advises that returnees be given a bigger amount of money in order to permit them to re-establish themselves sustainably in Iraq.

Reintegration

Mr M. lives with his wife in his father's house; he still has no children and doesn't see his future in very bright colours. He had changed his initial plan to buy a taxi or a pick-up and used the money for reintegration to cover his living costs for a few months. I.M. is currently unemployed and lives from the support that the family provides. He knows another Iraqi who's returned to Dahuk, but does not maintain regular contacts with him. Mr M. would still want to go to Europe, and Switzerland would be the country of his choice, but he wouldn't go again without being sure that he would get a permit of residence. And he says he would advise anyone wishing to go Europe to do the same. The returnees's brother, a policeman, who is present during the interview and who had approved his brother's migration to Europe, says he's not tempted by trying a similar adventure; and even with a permit of residence in an European country, he would remain in Dahuk were his situation satisfactory.

Plans

Mr M. has no intention to go back to Europe without a permit of residence. Also, his young family is not the centre of his life, and hopes to have a child soon and providing for his family.

A.H., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, years	
Married	
Works as a freelance electrician	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories Mr H. has travelled to Switzerland via Turkey and there in a ship to Italy in 2008 and returned to Iraq a year later. He had knowingly chosen Switzerland as a country of destination, because he had worked for a Swiss organisation, providing health services in Iraq. He says he has forgotten the name of the organisation, but highlights that this job had also been the reason for him to leave Iraq: He was threatened by terrorists who asked he shares his salary from the foreign organisation with them. This was not acceptable to him, so he left Kurdistan. Motivation for assisted Return A.H. says that in Switzerland he had lived in a centre in Rorschach. After a year in Europe, he didn't see any perspective for himself and therefore decided to come back to Dahuk. The welcome support provided by the Swiss Government through IOM was clearly welcome, but not the reason for him to return. Reintegration The project he had started with the Swiss funds for his reintegration consisted in a shop for children's clothings. He did this during one year, but finally, it was clear that the small enterprise would not become profitable. A.H. therefore decided to stop this activity and to work as electrician, as he had sometimes done before he had left Iraq. He works two to four days a week, depending on work being offered to him by companies and private households. Plans His economic situation being difficult, he would prefer to be in Switzerland with the woman he's married meanwhile, but clearly he would only give it another try if he knew he would be allowed to live permanently in Switzerland and to work.	

B.A., Dahuk	No picture taken B.A. is the only returnee to Iraq with whom the interview was realised in German. His seven years stay in Switzerland has allowed him for learning very decent high German.
Male, years	
Married (2x), two children	
Soldier in the Iraqi Army	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories B.A. has lived in Switzerland during seven years, during more than six years in Zurich where, thanks to his F permit, he was able to work in a restaurant. His trip to Europe had been a complicated one. Arrested in Turkey, because he had no papers, he spent two months and two days in jail where he had his nose and his hand broken (he states his gratitude for the medical treatment he received in Switzerland for correcting the damages coming from the injuries). Later in Italy, he also spent time in prison (a few days), and then was released without any kind of support. He then heard that living conditions for asylum seekers in Switzerland were better and therefore decided to go there. During his stay in Switzerland, he married a woman from Slovakia with whom he has a child. The women then left Switzerland together with the child – not returning from a holiday in Slovakia. Despite his insistent invitations for her to return to Zürich, she remained in her country of origin. The separation from his wife and his daughter, to whom he continued to send the money he could (while also still sending money to his relatives in Iraq), was the reason for his psychological problems which resulted in an suicide attempt and a hospitalisation at the Burghölzli clinic and, finally, continuous medication. He had felt he was very well integrated and does not understand why Swiss authorities did not help him get his daughter back. Meanwhile it is five years he hasn't seen his daughter.	
Motivation for assisted Return His medical condition, the psychological problems due to his wife leaving him are the main reason for B.A.'s return to Iraq. He simply didn't see any perspective anymore in Switzerland.	
Reintegration B.A. is from Mosul. He had left this city because he was threatened by Arab Iraqi. Now, he lives in Dahuk where he is a soldier in the Iraqi army. His salary is 380 US\$ and does not really allow him to live correctly. He has married a second wife here, with whom he has two children and who knows he is also married to a Slovak. Before joining the army, he had worked in a restaurant, but the quality of the relation with his superior made him quit. The money received from IOM was not used for a project, but, during his initial time in Iraq, to pay for his living costs.	
Plans Mr A. know thinks he should go back to Switzerland, trying to establish contact with his first wife in Slovakia again and trying to get help from Swiss authorities to have her come back to Switzerland.	

S.M., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, in his late 20ies	
Married	
Performs occasional jobs	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories S.M.'s motivation for leaving Iraq were the threats from terrorists who told him that he must quit his job at the airport in Mosul where he worked with foreigners, including Americans. He has left Iraq for Turkey where he embarked in a truck that brought him directly to Switzerland, without any possibility to go out of the vehicle and living only on water and biscuits. He wanted to go to Switzerland because he had heard that there was no violence in this country and one could lead a peaceful life. He spent one year in Switzerland, first in Chiasso, then in a place the name of which he does not remember, and finally in Zürich. Motivation for assisted Return Since he could not have his wife join him in Switzerland, he decided to come back here. The money given to him by IOM was not invested in a project, but was paid as monthly instalments of approximately 750 US\$, allowing him to cover his living costs. Reintegration Originally from Mosul, where his family owns a house, Mr M. did not return there because the situation for Kurds is not safe there and because his family had meanwhile moved to Dahuk. Married already before he left Iraq, he now works whenever the occasion presents itself, mainly as a hand on construction sites. Plans Mr M. believes he will remain in Kurdistan, and probably in Dahuk. He doesn't intend to migrate again, although his economic situation and perspective are not good.	

A.S., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, around fourty years of age	
Married, four children	
Unemployed	
Returned 2009	

Migration Trajectories

A.S. informs he had left Iraq because he was threatened by his brother-in-law who pretended his wife and two children had died asphyxiated due to the malfunction of a heater that had been installed in their apartment by A.S.. Formerly a cameraman and also employed by a company trading goods (aluminium, plastic) with partners in Turkey, Russia and Bulgaria – A.S. had visited those countries – he says he did not go to Europe for economic or political reasons, but simply because he was afraid for his life. He says he has arrived in Switzerland rather by coincidence; he could also have arrived in another country. He spent 1 year and eight months in the Basel Centre, in centres in Bern, Aarwangen and Langenthal, without working and without the possibility to support his wife and three children financially, since he received only 100 Swiss Francs every month.

Motivation for assisted Return

He decided to return to Switzerland because the head of his larger family has declared him not guilty of the death of his sister and their children. This whitewashing allowed for returning to the country he had never wanted to leave in the first place. Financial incentives had not been a motivation for returning to Kurdistan, but the return and reintegration assistance had obviously been welcome.

Reintegration

The 5,000 CHF he received were used to buy a professional video camera. He had hoped that he would get jobs to film marriages and other family events and even mandates from TV stations. But this never materialised – still due to (wrong) reputation he has due to the reason that had him made leave Iraq. He is currently unemployed, and receives support from the mother of his wife and his own family. He says he also is still afraid his brother-in-law will try to do him harm and that he therefore does not leave the apartment at daytime. Meanwhile father of four children, the perspectives for being able to nourish his family and to lead a decent life, unafraid and in security are poor, he says.

Plans

Despite his economic and familial difficulties, he does not plan to migrate again, he affirms. Also, he is married again and has now four children; he has to see to his family and cannot leave Dahuk, nor does he want to do so.

I.N., Dahuk	
Male, approximately 30 years of age	
Married, one child	
Work in a bakery	
Returned 2010	

Migration Trajectories

I.N. says he left Iraq due to economic difficulties. He planned to go to Norway, where he has family. But his trip brought him to Switzerland, where he first lived in the Chiasso Centre, from there he was sent to a camp in Biel-Bienne where he stayed for approximately a year.

Motivation for assisted Return

I.N.'s hope to obtain a permit of residence and to be able his wife to Switzerland could not be realised, and after he had received two negative decisions regarding his request for asylum and a letter telling him he had to leave the country within ten days, he opted for the assisted return and reintegration.

Reintegration

After his return to Dahuk, from where he had migrated, I.N. started a bakery with the Swiss reintegration assistance funds. He operated the bakery during one year, working on his own. He made the choice of a bakery because he had always been a baker. After a year, Mr N. decided to stop his little enterprise “because work was not good”, meaning that his business was not profitable. He is now employed in a bakery in the centre of Dahuk where he works seven days a week, baking bread. This allows him to feed his wife and his child and to rent a small house. He is satisfied with his prospects and says he does not want to leave Iraq again. I.N. suffers from a skin disease, most probably due to an allergy, a reaction to an ingredient he uses for the production of bread.

Plans

Mr N. will remain in Dahuk, he has no intention to migrate again – despite the fact that he still considers himself poor and with little perspective for economic improvement.

N.A., Dahuk	
Male, 24 years	
Single	
Taxi driver	
Returned 2008	

Migration Trajectories
N.A. is a Kurd from Mosul who left his country because Kurds were not welcome in Mosul anymore, and since individuals could freely move to another city then, he chose to go to Europe in order to escape from the threats he was faced with. He went to Turkey, from where, against payment of 13,000 US\$, a truck brought him straight to Switzerland. He was let off the truck with his other companions, and they had no idea where they were. For a few weeks he lived at the Centre in Basel, and then was transferred to a centre in Tramelan. During this time, he couldn't work or support his family who had meanwhile moved to Dahuk.

Motivation for assisted Return
N.A. insists on the fact that it had never been his intention to remain in Switzerland. He always wanted to come back to Iraq. He also never had received a negative decision on his asylum request in Switzerland, and contacted IOM out of his own will to prepare his return to Kurdistan. The money proposed for assisted return and reintegration was welcome, but it was not the reason for the decision to return.

Reintegration
The reintegration funds were invested in the purchasing of goods for a minimarket N.A., together with another man, opened in Dahuk. They had the shop for one year, but the enterprise was never profitable. The two men therefore stopped their cooperation and both tried to find another occupation. After a time of unemployment and of small jobs, N.A., together with a friend, bought a taxi. They are operating the taxi jointly, and Mr A. hopes that this business will turn out well, although he suspects that one taxi cannot make live two families. Returning to Mosul, where N.A.'s family owns a house that is currently rented to another Iraqi family, is not an option. The returnee clearly states that the reintegration assistance money was too little to allow him to start a solid business. He compares the 5,000 Swiss Francs with the 6,000 € returnees from France allegedly receive. He also complains about the fact that he cannot prove the fact that he has lived in Switzerland, since all respective document had been taken off of him. The United Kingdom provides returnees with an attestation that they have lived there. Such a document could help when seeking support from Kurdistan's Bureau of Migration and Displacement. N.A. insists that, before his return, Swiss authorities had announced that he could contact them, once in Iraq, if he faced any problems there. But he's back since four years now, and never have Swiss authorities contacted him – a thing they should have done, in his eyes. He clearly would wish that some sort of contact with Swiss authorities could be maintained, possibly even in the form of group meetings of returnees. The purpose of continued contacts with Swiss authorities would be recognition of the fact that N.A. has lived in Switzerland, and the possibility of getting a visa if would like to visit Switzerland in the future.

Plans
Mr A. has no plans to migrate – for the moment, he says. Rather, he wants to improve his situation in Dahuk. His actual aspiration would be to have a minimarket again – but on his own, this time.

B.M., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, in his early mid thirties	
Married, 2 children	
Unemployed	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories Living in Mosul, the situation became very difficult for him due to terrorists who wanted him to contribute financially, B.M. had left Iraq a year earlier. He had travelled Europe via Turkey and a truck with about 25 other persons from different countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan. He didn't know where he was brought and arrived in Basel, where he lived at the Reception Centre for a few weeks and then was transferred to Birsfelden. During his time in Switzerland, he didn't work, and regretted he wasn't allowed to remain in Switzerland.	
Motivation for assisted Return The 5,000 Swiss Francs promised to B.M. if he returned were attractive and it helped him make his decision for returning to Iraq. But it was mainly his wish to get married which motivated his return.	
Reintegration B.M. says he currently lives in Mosul – although the meeting takes place in Dahuk. Asked if the situation in Mosul had improved, he says no, but that he couldn't help it. The project he had for his reintegration was a car trade. This lasted two and a half years, then, he had to stop, because he was losing money. Now, he is unemployed, and depends on support from his larger family, of which a part lives in the environments of Dahuk. Mr M. hadn't been married before he left Iraq, but now he is and has two children.	
Plans He has no precise plans for his future, but he hopes to become active again in the car selling trade. Migration is currently not an option: his family needs him, and he wants to be with his wife and children. Migrating with his family is not an option for him.	

L.T., Dahuk	No picture taken
Male, late 20ies	
Single	
Support staff in a car trede	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories L.T. is from Mosul where he worked in a restaurant. Because terrorists wanted him to share his salary with them, he decided to leave Iraq. From Turkey, he travelled on to Greece on foot, and from there a boat brought him to Italy. He arrived in Switzerland on a train. Living first in Bern and then in Büren an der Aare, he stayed for 1 year and 2 months in Switzerland. Mr T. had wanted to go to Switzerland, because he had heard that it would be possible for him to get a permit of residence and a job. Motivation for assisted Return The negative decision on his request for asylum had L.T. decide to return, together with the prospective to establish himself in Dahuk. The reintegration support was additional motivation. Reintegration With the support money, L.T., together with a colleague, opened a service where the oil of cars was changed. He stayed at the place only for 6 months, his colleague still has the shop. L.T. then found a job with a car salesman, where he cleans, makes tea for the other employees and runs errands, etc. He earns 300,000 Iraqi Dinar a month (less than 300 Swiss Francs) and lives, together with his parents in a house with four other families. Although he had requested it, the Bureau for Migration and Displacement did not provide him any support. Plans Mr T. considers he is in a difficult situation, but intends to stay in Dahuk.	

S.A., Zakho	No picture taken
Male, mid 30ies	
Married, 6 children	
Construction worker	
Returned 2009	
Migration Trajectories	
S.A. has lived one year in Switzerland – first in the Centre of Kreuzlingen, then in Zürich, where he shared an apartment with other asylum seekers. Her arrived in Switzerland after a truck had him brought here straight from Turkey, without any stops, and was happy to be away from Iraq since the he was facing a trial in his country of origin – for having participated in the trafficking of Bangladeshi to Iraq in one of his version, for having brought Bangladeshi from Baghdad to Dahuk in the other.	
Motivation for assisted Return	
The return to Switzerland was motivated by his desire to be with his wife and his, then, five children, and despite the fact that he was going to face trial. S.A. says he has not received a negative decision on his request for asylum nor a letter telling him to leave the country. The financial return and reintegration support was obviously welcome, but not relevant for the decision.	
Reintegration	
Once back in Iraq, S.A. was sentenced to the payment of 12,000 US\$ for his participation in human trafficking. The Swiss money was foreseen to buy a taxi. But since a taxi costs 15,000 US\$, and since he did not have a partner or the support from his family to be able to purchase a taxi, the funds were finally used for his families living costs. He received monthly payments from IOM. S.A. now is active as a construction worker. The salary does not really allow his family to live. He says he hasn't paid the rent for his house for three month and expects to be evacuated any day. Finding a new home will be very difficult, since there are not many empty houses affordable for him in Zakho. Living in his father's home would be a possibility, but the space there is very scarce. Mr A. also informs that he had built a house by himself, but that he had been driven away from there by the Municipal authorities who did not confirm that the ground he built the house on was his.	
Plans	
Mr A. still hopes he will be able to buy a taxi, but he is aware that he does not have access to a credit. Meanwhile he's happy his children can attend school, a public service that is free of charge.	

M.S., Zakho	
Male, 26 years	
Single	
Construction worker	
Returned 2009	

Migration Trajectories

S.M. had been with the Peshmerga before he left Kurdistan. He was attracted by Europe by movies he had seen and by what he had heard from other Iraqis about the life there. He had first gone to Turkey, then a truck brought him from Izmir to Rome where he spent time with other Iraqi. The transfer had cost him 13,000 US\$. He could not get a permit of residence in Italy, and therefore travelled on to France and later to Germany where he also was not successful to get residence. After four months of such attempts, S.M. arrived in Switzerland and lived during a year and eight months in Chur. He says he was employed as a construction worker six months after he had arrived in Switzerland.

Motivation for assisted Return

His return was motivated by his homesickness, S.M. says. Also, the living conditions in Switzerland were not as he had hoped for.

Reintegration

The reintegration assistance was used for his placement at a construction company – with which he had stayed six months. He is currently still active as a construction worker and has been employed by several companies since.

Plans

S.M. wished he could start his own construction company, but for that he would need at least 20'000 US\$ - a sum that he cannot realistically hope to get from anyone. Still, he sees his future in Kurdistan and will not migrate again.

M.A.Z., Zakho	
Male, mid 30ies	
Single	
Construction worker	
Returned 2009	

Migration Trajectories

M.A.Z. had left Zakho – where he had been working in restaurants and in shops – because he had hoped for a better job in Europe. And also because he had heard that life in Switzerland was quiet and peaceful. He left via Istanbul, then crossed to border to Greece by foot and a boat then brought him to Italy where he stayed for two months with friends. Since he could not a job in Italy, he decided to try his luck in Switzerland. There, he was first in the Centre in Basel and then transferred to Uetendorf. His stay in Switzerland lasted a year and eight months.

Motivation for Assisted Return

The living conditions in Switzerland were very difficult for Mr A.Z., most importantly, because he could not get a job and because of the confinement in camps that could only be left at certain hours. Since his hopes did not materialise, he decided to go back to Kurdistan – although this had been a very difficult decision to take: he had to admit that he had had wrong hopes. The support provided for return and reintegration were very much welcome.

Reintegration

The reintegration project he realised with his family was the setting-up of a sheep production. With the Swiss money, the family had bought 13 sheep that were kept in the village of his father. The family worked with the sheep during one year, but the endeavour was more difficult than expected; and when two sheep died, the family decided to stop the sheep raising. Instead, they opened a shop with the money they got when selling the sheep. But the food shop did not work well either.

Plans

Currently active as a construction worker, M.A.Z. hopes he can join the Peshmerga. With such a job, he could lead a decent life and would be able to lead a decent life.

5 Reintegration

Successful reintegration of returnees from Switzerland to Kurdistan is in the interest of all stakeholders: Returnees aspire to live decent lives, the society of Kurdistan profits from diminished marginalisation and increased cohesion, and Switzerland can assume that successful reintegration diminishes the probability of renewed attempts for irregular migration.

5.1 Frame Conditions for Reintegration

Politics and security situation: Northern Iraq, Kurdistan, is in a very specific position, formally a part of Iraq, the region prepares its autonomy and its authorities and official representatives appear quite convinced Kurdistan will be an independent state within a few years. The security situation of Kurdistan is much better than that of the rest of Iraq, bombings were very rare in the last years. The civil war between the adherents of the two major political parties – the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party KDP – of the 1990ies which has resulted in around 50,000 displaced persons and hundreds of dead, is not forgotten, but the two parties appear to maintain stable relations. The importance of Kurdish fundamentalist groups has decreased over the last ten years. Kurds living outside Kurdistan, in Mosul for instance, suffer from harassment and many decide to move to Kurdistan. Civil rights are not guaranteed, the two big parties control political life, and the press does not enjoy the freedom it needs to fully play its role.

Economic Conditions: Kurdistan's economy is booming thanks to the exploitation of the oil reserves; Erbil is sometimes referred to as "little Dubai". This presents very positive preconditions for economic reintegration of returnees. Job opportunities are available – the Swiss AVRRO programme therefore also funds attempts for reintegration consisting of salaries paid to employers of returnees. The Government of Kurdistan is also attempting to attract foreign investment, but the political situation, an outdated legal framework and corruption, as well as shortages in skilled labour are obstacles to a sustainable diversification of the region's economy. Also, the macroeconomic stability does not profit the entire population of which large parts still are poor and require support, for instance from family members living abroad.

Social Conditions: Family networks are crucial for the reintegration of returnees. They provide important assistance to members who come back to Kurdistan after months or years spent abroad, including housing and jobs or financial support. Economically successful returnees – the interviewed sample of persons does not pertain to this group – obviously reintegrate with much less difficulty into their families and into Kurdistan's society in general. The State does provide services for Kurds coming to Kurdistan – refugees from Syria, Kurds living in Iran (where many had been displaced during the Iraq-Iran war) – but none of the interviewed returnees from Switzerland says he has enjoyed support from the Bureau of Migration and Displacement or from the Municipality.

5.2 Assessment of the Quality of the reintegration

The success of supported reintegration is assessed in the following paragraphs according to its effects in time, and, although the evaluator's access to respective data is

limited, in comparison with AVRR programmes of other countries (respective information was gathered mainly from IOM).

Short term outcomes: The most important short term outcome of Swiss support for reintegration is the – compared with returnees from other countries who receive less assistance for their reintegration – privileged starting situation from which returnees can commence their reintegration process. The short term effect of Swiss AVRR support can therefore be assessed very positively and as fully in line with the foreseen outcomes. Most returnees visited have utilised their reintegration allocation to start a small enterprise or to realise an investment in the family's agricultural activities (sheep and goat raising). Others used the financial support for initial integration for paying a rent for housing, and in one case, it was used as a salary subsidy for an employer.

Medium term outcomes: Even if most income generating projects are not durable, their realisation is an important means for the returnees to start their reintegration in their country of origin. Without such a project, they might be less motivated not to remain idle. The preparation and implementation of the reintegration project requires their attention and commitment, and, after often long periods in Switzerland without working, gets them used to a steady occupation. This is valuable for their insertion in the local labour market or for economic projects they realise.

Long term outcomes: The durability of the effects of reintegration support is obviously most difficult to assess. Based on the interviews realised in Iraq, no evidence based statements can be made. Still, the local IOM office can provide two types of information hinting that there are examples of very successful reintegration that can be attributed, at least in parts, to the Swiss support. Some investments in agriculture appear to be sustainable, for the family in any case, and if someone in the family is well experienced in sheep and goat raising. The number of its livestock and could be increased / or more marketable fruit and vegetable could be produced, thus improving its livelihood. Except for two persons, none of the returnees visited by the evaluator is still active with the initial reintegration project. It is to be noted that both men had returned to Erbil in 2009 – the sustainability is therefore to be appreciated. It is to be noted that one of the two men is from a wealthy family and is practically employed in the family network. The other man, together with a friend, is operating a taxi.

Compared with IOM managed AVRR programmes of other countries, the Swiss support for return and reintegration, according to the IOM Office in Erbil, is to be considered among the best. The quality of the Swiss AVRR programme comes from its financial volume, from the fact that it offers different options (realising an income generating project, paying salaries to employers who hire returnees, vocational training and education, paying for living costs during the first months after return), and from the monitoring of income generating projects that is longer and more intensive than in the framework of other projects – monitoring visits and contacts always also being a means to provide additional motivational support and counselling. And since the decision was taken that Swiss actors do not have to approve the proposed income generating projects, as was the case from July 2008 and until 2010, the starting of their implementation could be commenced quit shortly after return. This had not always been the case previously, resulting in delays and sometimes dissatisfaction.

5.3 Effects on and Perception of non-migrant Populations

Many of the returnees interviewed underline that, knowing what they know now, they would not attempt to go to Europe anymore. The benefits from the months or years lived in Europe are too small to weigh out the hardships undergone during journeys and during the months and years in European countries, including Switzerland. But these experiences hardly enter public awareness. Europe continues to be a promising continent, and a worthwhile perspective to be considered or even tested. Therefore, several of the interviewed returnees say they would like to go back to Europe, including Switzerland. Most of them are aware and experienced enough, though, that they shall not attempt to live in Europe without papers and a working permit. The hardships of asylum seeking or of illegal stays are still too present for them to consider another trip to Europe without a proper perspective. Still, the **perception of migration** is not shaped primarily by the experiences and recounts of returnees. Films and TV, stories of successful migrants, the idea of getting a steady job in a wealthy country and of being able to send some money to the family is still enough of a motivation for trying to leave Iraq for a Western destination. In some cases, the reasons for leaving Iraq or Kurdistan can also lie in judicial or family problems someone may have. In order to avoid clashes or to escape persecution by the police or a court, travelling to Europe and trying to find a living there may be an option especially for young men. The IOM Office in Erbil is currently realising a study concerning the motivation for migration among young Kurds of Iraq. A pilot study provided evidence that literally everyone included in the study would like to leave Kurdistan – for educational purposes, but also to lead a more secure life and to enjoy bigger individual and economic freedom.

Pull effects of the Swiss AVRRE efforts on Iraq's resident population cannot be found. Support for reintegration is not a reason for Iraqi to leave their country. The push effects resulting from war and the security situation, together with general pull effects, i. e. the idealising images Iraqi may have of life in Europe (less control, more individual freedom, possibilities to be economically successful) motivate emigration. Returnees are not faced with jealousy based on the AVRRE support received from Swiss authorities. Since money is rather owned by the family than by individuals, envy within the family is not really an issue; and neighbours and friends do not comment on reintegration assistance – of which they are not always aware – but on the fact that a person has migrated and was able to try his luck in Europe.

5.4 Assessment

The programme clearly supports **social reintegration** of returnees.

Returnees do not come home with empty hands. They themselves and their families do have a short term perspective thanks to the reintegration support. This importantly facilitates the social reintegration of returnees; they are not tagged as unsuccessful returnees, but as persons who – although not coming back wealthy – have profited from their time spent abroad.

The programme allows returnees for having a perspective for starting their **economic reintegration**.

The revenue generating projects are to be considered as a means for the returnees to have a perspective, not to be idle. And so are the possibilities for employment or –

although used very seldom – the vocational education and training. Only in second priority is the economic viability of their projects to be taken as a criterion for their successful economic integration. Returnees interviewed highlight that more substantial financial contributions provided in the framework of the AVRR programme would allow for realising more solid projects that also have better chances for sustainability.

The **sustainability of reintegration support** is limited if the initial reintegration projects are considered.

Most of the returnees visited are not active in their initial reintegration project, started with Swiss support, anymore. At the same time, the sustainability of support is a delicate issue: The AVRR programme alone cannot be (held) responsible for the successful reintegration of returnees, and even less so in a long term perspective. And returnees are not persons who will be assisted over time. Rather, they become actors in the local economy – as entrepreneurs, as self-employed persons, as farmers, as employees, etc. – based on their own capacities and initiatives. Sustainability of reintegration is not to be measured against the initial reintegration project (exclusively), but it is rather to be assessed by criteria such as (i) permanent residence in the country of origin (or in the region), (ii) possibility to establish and raise a family, (iii) social integration in general, (iv) status above or below the national poverty line.

The Swiss AVRR programme for Kurdistan is being **implemented flexibly**.

IOM, which has an overall view on the AVRR programmes of European (and other) countries identifies the Swiss programme for supporting reintegration as clearly a very successful one. This is to do with (i) the volume of financial reintegration assistance, (ii) the possibility to choose among different options for support offered to returnees (vocational training, living costs, salaries for employers, income generating projects), (iii) the possibility, for persons with special needs, to get additional support, e.g. medication for persons with health problems, and (iv) the resources invested in the monitoring of the integration of returnees – at least two contacts (usually there are many more, necessitated also by the preparation and the realisation of the reintegration project), the last one consisting in a visit in situ by IOM staff, taking place usually 6 months after return. A very important aspect of success regarding the individual integration is therefore the flexibility with which the Swiss funded reintegration activities are realised. The IOM office provides services in a friendly manner, and they respond, in the framework of IOM's possibilities, to the needs arising during the process of the realisation of the income generating project and of reintegration overall.

6 Cooperation Switzerland – Iraq / Kurdistan Regional Government

Iraq and the Kurdistan region's cooperation with Switzerland in the field of migration are not regulated by agreements. The autonomous behaviour of KRG requires Swiss actors to cooperate and coordinate with two partners. There is no Swiss Embassy in Bagdad or a consulate in Bagdad or in Erbil that could facilitate contacts between Swiss and Iraqi / Kurdistan administrations mandated with the management of migration issues.

6.1 Assessment by the Kurdistan Authorities

The contacted representatives of Kurdistan's Bureau for Migration and Displacement in Erbil are aware about the Swiss AVRR programme and about occasional forced returns of Iraqi to Kurdistan. They also say that their current focus is on the Kurds arriving from Syria in search of safety and the provision of care to internally displaced persons (arriving, amongst other, from Iraqi governorates outside Kurdistan). Also, returnees arrive from many European (and other) countries, making it difficult for the Bureau to maintain close contacts with Swiss authorities. Rather, regular contacts do exist with IOM, a well-known and a well-recognised partner of Kurdistan authorities regarding migration issues.

6.2 Assessment by the Swiss authorities

The major concern for FOM, besides the AVRR programme, appears to be the possibility to implement forced return from Switzerland to Iraq – both to Bagdad and to Kurdistan. Without an agreement facilitating forced return, respective transfers to Erbil or Bagdad have to be prepared with partners within competent administrations. This is not always easy, because partners are not necessarily keen on receiving persons who may have had major problems with the police and the judicial system in Switzerland. The realisation of the IOM operated AVRR programme, on the other hand, is not faced with any problems due to the fact that there is no migration agreement with Iraq.

6.3 Basis of the Cooperation

There is no formal agreement between the two countries (or between Berne and Bagdad and Bern and Erbil). Representatives of the Federal Office for Migration inform that no initiative is planned from the Swiss side to establish a contractual basis that would allow for organising forced returns more smoothly.

6.4 Assessment

The absence of a contractual basis regarding cooperation in the field of migration results in ad hoc cooperation between Switzerland and Iraq (both Bagdad and Erbil).

Interest of Iraqi and Kurdistan authorities in establishing more formal working relations in the field of migrations and a respective contractual basis is most probably small. Switzerland is therefore to continue organising forced return in a case-to-case approach. Meanwhile, the implementation of the AVRR programme by IOM is not negatively affected by the absence of agreements between the two states.

7 Conclusions

The following paragraphs present conclusions which emerge from the assessments displayed in the above chapters. They are an attempt to focus on central points that,

together with the recommendations, are to be taken into consideration when planning and implementing future AVRR activities.

7.1 Return

Like the departure from Iraq, return is not a decision taken by the person individually, it is a collective decision.

Migration is not planned and realised individually. Even if a single person migrates – or returns to Iraq – the decision to do so is always taken after consultation with friends and, mainly, the family.

Financial incentives are not decisive for Iraqi asylum seekers' decision to return to their country of origin.

Financial support is obviously welcome, but none of the interviewed returnees made his decision based on this aspect of AVRR. Rather, personal and / or familial reasons are the strongest motivation for return – these may include fatigue with the living conditions in Switzerland and sickness or death of a parent in Iraq. Also, the imminent forced return can be an important motivation for enrolling in the AVRR programme. All interviewed returnees have negatively compared their initial investment in migration to Europe with what they received in the framework of Swiss AVRR – stressing that they would not do such an investment again, certainly not knowing what they know about the difficulties to live in Europe and in Switzerland without a permit of residence and to be kept from the labour market.

The most important effect quality of return and reintegration assistance is not the number of returnees, but the quality of conditions under which migrants return from Switzerland to Iraq.

Voluntary return and reintegration assistance is one of the ways for Iraqi citizens to leave Switzerland, and it is a way rarely chosen: less than 2 per cent of the eligible Iraqi population enrol in AVRR the programme. When they do, they clearly profit from decent conditions for transportation, and from the chance to start their reintegration process safely, without major financial worries during the first weeks and months. Here lies the most important effect of the return and reintegration assistance for the individual returnee.

Returnees and (potential returnees) are well informed about AVRR.

This is due to the fact that information is provided by different actors (FOM (reception centres and headquarters, Cantons, IOM, NGO) and through different channels (in written and orally, with videos also). The contacts within the Iraqi (and Kurd) community in Switzerland also appear to be a very important means of for potential returnees to access information on the conditions of return.

The shorter the duration of migrants' stay in Switzerland the higher the probability of successful reintegration.

Switzerland undertakes respective efforts – by organising the asylum process more efficiently, by allowing assisted return from the reception centres, by showing flexibility in the granting of AVRR. Returnees contacted who've lived in Switzerland for longer periods, but without having access to the labour market, highlight that their experiences in Switzerland did not allow them to establish themselves there and they now feel

they've lost their time. As presented in one of the portraits in chapter four, a stay of twelve years in Switzerland is a handicap for reintegration: The disappointment with not obtaining residence, or, in the quoted case, even citizenship, results in diminished motivation for reintegration efforts, the time spent in Switzerland still being very much on the person's mind.

7.2 Reintegration

The potential returnees are well aware of the reintegration assistance they are entitled to, and they do realise the planned projects; but once returned to Iraq, they don't necessarily use the whole of the support offer.

The realisation of an income generating project is an excellent way to start and structure reintegration. And the motivation of returnees to commit to their plans appears to be high. Motivation is less important for accessing the additional support offer consisting of training preparing them for different aspects of their future activities as project managers and entrepreneurs.

The Swiss reintegration assistance for returnees to Iraq is, compared to the assistance provided by other countries, substantial.

The volume of financial support provided in the framework of the Swiss reintegration assistance compares very well with the provisions of other countries' AVRR programmes. And with the offer of individual training in view of the income generation project (for 30 returnees and for an amount up to 700 US\$ per person), the assistance is also comprised of additional forms of support.

Nevertheless, returnees suggest that the support for income generation projects be increased in order to enhance their chances to be successful.

But the volume of the support does not allow for establishing a business autonomously and operate it during a first critical phase of several months without mobilising additional financial resources. As a rule, the projects last a few months, possibly up to 18; then, the returnees usually have terminated it (mainly due to the absence of financial success), having found or hoping for another activity allowing them for having an income.

Expectations regarding reintegration, and especially about its sustainability, need to be formulated in realistic terms.

AVRR helps returnees to have a decent start in their old / new context, but it cannot guarantee durable solutions for their livelihood. Income generation projects are often terminated after a year or so. But this does not mean that returnees remain inactive. They start other types of activities – either on their own or together with others, possibly also as employees.

7.3 The Cooperation between Switzerland and Iraq (Kurdistan)

The cooperation between Switzerland and Iraq (both Bagdad and Erbil) in the field of migration is organised ad hoc.

While the AVRR programme operated by IOM can be organised without problems, forced returns are rather difficult to manage. Establishing formal agreements with Iraq

and with Kurdistan on the topic of migration, possibly even a migration partnership, is not a realistic option in the short term.

8 Recommendations

8.1 Preconditions and their Shaping

⇒ No efforts are to be invested in establishing a migration partnership with Iraq / Kurdistan, or even pass general agreements (e.g. on forced return)

The absence of agreements between the two countries is a handicap especially for the swift realisation of forced return. Even if it would be very welcomed by Swiss actors involved in organising return to have formal agreements allowing for asking support from Iraqi and Kurd counterparts, it can be assumed that the efforts required to achieve such agreements are rather too big, and they cannot guarantee that negotiations on such agreements can be successfully led and actually result in a joint understanding and in binding documents.

8.2 Incentives for Return

⇒ Efforts for informing about the conditions of return and reintegration need to be continuous, and they are to make use of the potential returnees' social networks.

The information system appears to be well in place, and potential returnees are reached through different information channels (reception centres, cantonal administration, NGO). Current practice of IOM and FOM to have returnees inform potential returnees about return and reintegration can increase the trust in the promised measures. Video messages of returnees that are shown to potential returnees (in centres, wherever Iraqi gather), but also investments in the communication through the social networks of potential returnees to Iraq are also worthwhile and promising measures. This can be realised, for instance, by key persons from the Iraqi community, including Iraqi staff of the IOM Office in Erbil (and from the other IOM Offices in Iraq for Arab Iraqi) who are trained and paid for their services, etc. Information about return is even more thoroughly to consist of the demonstration of lacking perspectives in Switzerland and of the perspectives opening in Iraq thanks to the reintegration assistance.

8.3 Realisation of Return

⇒ Information about AVRR – as is the case already – is to be provided through different communication channels in the future as well.

Well informed potential returnees are likely to agree to voluntary return more quickly. Information in written form and orally is to be provided by reception centres, by cantonal services or mandated organisations specialised in return counselling as well as by other organisations in contact with asylum seekers. Also, the networks of migrants themselves can be used for the dissemination of information on AVRR.

⇒ Current practice of the organisation of return is to be maintained.

The attempt to realise return quickly after the decision for return is taken, the reception of returnees at the airport, the payment of the return assistance money upon arrival in Iraq, the provision of transportation services and of one overnight stay in Erbil – these are all good practices that are to be continued.

⇒ Obviously within the regulations in place and respecting all of the rights of asylum seekers, return is to be realised as quickly as possible.

The longer the stay in Switzerland and the uncertainties that go with it, the more complex, and often also: the more desolate the situations of the asylum seekers. It is therefore important that return takes place as quickly as possible after the arrival in Switzerland, and without hazarding the diligent processing of the asylum request.

8.4 Implementation of Reintegration Assistance

⇒ In order to make returnee's economic reintegration more effective, the respective amount granted would have to be significantly larger. FOM is invited to check respective possibilities.

The financial incentives do not appear to be decisive for the decision to return. On the other hand, the amounts reserved for economic reintegration projects allow for an initial investment in an economic activity, but they do not permit the realisation of medium term projects.

⇒ As is the case already, the final designing of reintegration projects is to be possible in Iraq.

Projects conceived after return may risk having a slower start, especially if the person lives in areas far away from Iraq. Still, it is probable that planning in Iraq or Kurdistan can result in more realistic and therefore also more successful projects. At the same time, such a procedure contains the risk that returnees do not speedily prepare their project, which would result in delays and, even more importantly, in frustration, thus importantly handicapping the success of support to reintegration, and reintegration itself.

⇒ The variety of options for promoting reintegration is to be maintained.

Not all returnees are fit for self-employment or for establishing even a small enterprise. The possibility to opt for employment is a very good alternative – especially in the context of Kurdistan's booming economy – and so is that of receiving vocational education and training which prepares a returnee for the labour market.

⇒ The possibility to enlarge offer for additional support provided to returnees – currently mainly consisting of medical aid in the form of medication – is to be assessed by FOM.

The IOM Office in Erbil, based on its in-depth experience with the situation of returnees and the important difficulties of reintegration some of them are faced with, suggests that the support offer be complemented with a psychosocial follow-up. Such services would obviously have to be provided by specialists. IOM knows that such specialists can be found in Kurdistan, and certainly in Erbil. An additional possibility to widen the scope of reintegration assistance could also be the introduction of socio-economic orientation for returnees. A new Norwegian project currently provides this form of support, realised in the form of small groups who regularly meet and discuss matters amongst themselves and with a specialist.

8.5 Follow-up of Reintegration

⇒ The monitoring of reintegration is to be continued as of now.

A more intense monitoring is not likely to be more productive. If, nevertheless, more data on the returnees should be gathered over a longer period, FOM and IOM are to be prepared to make the necessary financial investments and investments in working time required.

⇒ Flexibility in accompanying returnees with special needs is to be continued.

Returnees with medical conditions, for instance, are to profit from support that addresses also their health problem. Such support is to be provided based on a plan defined jointly by IOM and the returnee and competent medical staff.

8.6 Other

⇒ The realisation of awareness raising regarding migration or the participation in such efforts together with other (European) and local actors is to be considered by FOM.

The prevention of irregular migration should be part of the migration policies – both of receiving countries and of the countries of origin. The knowledge and know-how present in FOM and IOM can be important contributions to the design and the implementation modalities of awareness raising campaigns realised by local actors, possibly with the support and close cooperation of multilateral organisations specialised in migration.

⇒ The communication about results of AVRR is to be continued – both in view of the Swiss public and of potential returnees.

AVRR only reaches its scope if its results are made available to potential returnees – convincing them that assisted return and reintegration is a valid option for them. The effects of AVRR also interest actors in Switzerland who shape public opinions about migration and migration policies.

Persons interviewed in Switzerland and in Iraq

Returnees

22 persons in Erbil, Dahuk and Zakho

IOM

Wria Rashid, Erbil

Nizar Mousa, Dahuk

Sylvie Heuschmann, Bern

Migration and Displacement

Shakir Yasseen Yasseen

Consulate of the Netherlands

Jeroen Kelderhuis

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