

Stories of Return

South America/Caribbean





Who we are

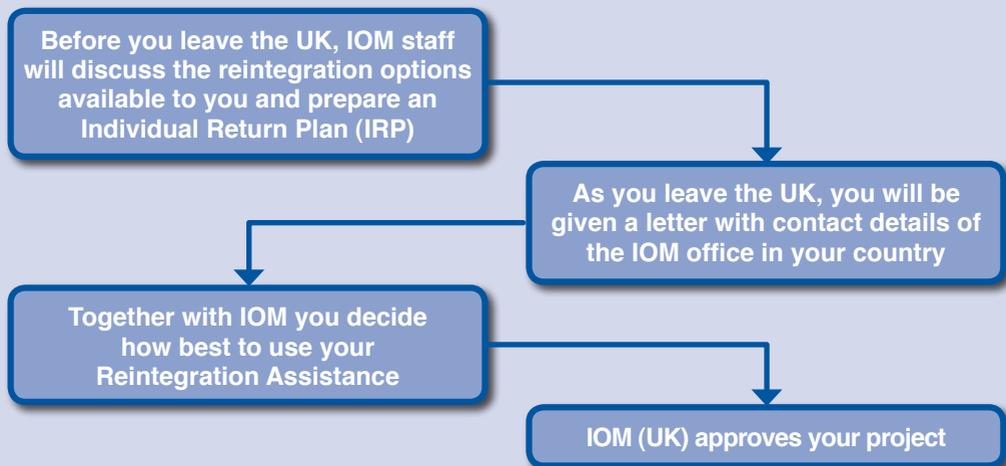
IOM is the world's leading independent migration agency. Since it was founded in 1951 it has helped over 13 million migrants, in the belief that migration – if dignified, orderly and voluntary – is of benefit to the individuals concerned and society as a whole.

Since 1999 IOM UK has assisted more than 27,000 people to return to some 130 countries.

IOM UK runs two voluntary return programmes: one is for anyone who has been in the asylum system at any stage - applying, appealing, refused – (VARRP); another for irregular migrants – who have overstayed their visas or have been smuggled or trafficked into the country (AVRIM). Under both programmes we arrange flights and onward transportation to the home doorstep but under the scheme for asylum seekers we also provide Reintegration Assistance in the country of return. This is delivered not in cash but in the form of targeted payments to pay for education, vocational training, job placements or, in 80% of cases, to help buy equipment and supplies to set up a small business.

This leaflet features just a handful of the many stories from people who have returned home after living in the UK. Circumstances vary from country to country, from individual to individual, but this brief snapshot shows how Reintegration Assistance can make a contribution to a more sustainable return home.

The Reintegration Assistance process



Bolivia, Santa Cruz Veterinary services

Mr. A returned to Bolivia in May 2006. The decision to return was difficult to make but he realised that there were not many opportunities for him in the UK. Before he left for the UK, he used to work as a vet. Upon his return, he decided to resume his former part time job in a veterinary surgery in Santa Cruz. He also runs his own business providing veterinary services to local farmers. Easy transportation is essential to his work because of the big distances

between the farms. With the help of IOM, he was able to purchase a car, which is making a huge difference, allowing him to cover a much wider area. Every week, he drives to Argentina to buy the medicines he cannot find in Bolivia.

This enables him to get more contracts from farmers and his business is now more prosperous than before he left for the UK. He rents his own flat and is happy to be home.



Colombia, Cundinamarca District Taxi

Mr. M's family returned to the Cundinamarca District, an hour from Bogotá, to live with relatives whilst their reintegration project was being organised. The family put their entire IOM Reintegration Assistance together and acquired a taxi. However, he soon realised that the city had changed while they were in the UK and it was hard for him to find his way around. He hired a driver who is now working full time and helps to maintain a regular income for the family. Mr. M is currently trying to find a full time job. The family hopes to save enough money to buy a house by the end of this year. The children are going to school and although it was particularly difficult for them to return because they had lived in the UK since they were young, the family is pleased to be back.



Colombia, Armenia
Roast chicken fast-food

Mr. V is 60 years old and started a new life in Colombia ten months ago. He worked very hard in restaurants, food halls and butcheries. *“I became a chef and I knew how to prepare dishes from all over the world.”* He applied for asylum in the UK, but when this was rejected he decided to return to Colombia with IOM. When he arrived back in his home city of Armenia he used his Reintegration Assistance to open a restaurant where he could use the skills he acquired in London. Despite his age, Mr. V put all his energy into running his new restaurant. Unfortunately, the business did not provide the expected results. He eventually had to sell it on, but invested in another fast food establishment that he is still running today.



Colombia, Bogotá
Pharmacy

Mr. M returned to Colombia with IOM. Upon his return, he set up an internet café with his Reintegration Assistance, following advice from a relative who had advised him that it would be a profitable business. Unfortunately Mr. M did not have any experience in this area and after a year he had to sell the business, took a bank loan to increase his capital

and invested the money in a pharmacy. He took a short medical course with the Red Cross. The pharmacy was not profitable at first since he did not have the money to buy enough initial stock. Needing a stable income, he got a full time job as a sales assistant in a medical equipment company. But he kept the pharmacy as an additional income source and now employs a full time member of staff to run it for him. Although it has been challenging, he is happy to be back in Colombia.



Colombia, Bogotá
University course, farming and cosmetic sales

Mrs. R returned to Bogotá in July 2004 with her husband and two children. They requested that IOM’s Reintegration Assistance be used to pay university fees for their daughter - studying psychology - and for their son - studying veterinary science



- for an entire year. It has been financially difficult ever since, but they both managed to obtain small student loans to cover the university fees and are able to continue their courses.

Mr. R could not find a job and he finally decided to work on his farm whilst the rest of the family stayed in Bogotá with Mrs. R’s parents, although this is only a viable option in the short term. The agro-market in Colombia is not going well so Mr. R had to change the crops that he cultivates and it is an ongoing struggle to make a living out of this activity. Mrs. R took a job as a salesperson for an international company manufacturing beauty products. The family does not yet have a stable income. They hope that their current circumstances will improve soon so that they can stay in Colombia in the long term



Ecuador, Machachi
Truck transportation and restaurant

Mr. and Mrs. C returned to Ecuador with their son in 2004. Mr. C decided to start his life back in Ecuador by selling pneumatic tyres in Machachi. However, after a lot of effort, the business did not succeed as planned. The family decided to opt for a bank loan and use some of the money from the tyre sales to buy a truck for goods transportation. The income generated by this new activity helped them set up a restaurant. The couple is currently managing these two businesses. According

to them, the only way to succeed is to work hard and to invest the money in different activities. *“If one business doesn’t work properly, another will.”*



Ecuador, Latacunga Food store

Mr. E decided to return to Ecuador in October 2004 after five years in the UK so that he could be reunited with his family. He invested his IOM Reintegration Assistance in improving the family's food store which he had set up in Latacunga several years before he left Ecuador. Even though it is difficult to increase their income as the family does not own the shop premises, Mr. E works hard with his wife and daughter in order to pay the rent and cover their daily needs.



Ecuador, Quito Internet centre

After more than six years in the UK, Mr. C decided to return to Ecuador through the VARRP in March 2006. His brother returned in 2004 and set up an internet service centre with IOM's Reintegration Assistance. After consulting with his family, Mr. C decided that working in the family business was the only way to find a job at 63. To expand the existing business, he bought some additional IT equipment and followed a training course provided by his brother on how to run the computer



centre. Currently the two brothers are thinking about increasing the activities at the internet centre by offering video filming and long-distance calls among other services. *"I'm very grateful to IOM because they provide an assistance that no other institution does."*



Ecuador, Riobamba Fastfood

Mr. C returned to Ecuador in May 2005. He decided that a mobile fast food cart was a good idea for a reintegration activity in Riobamba. Unfortunately, just after Mr. C bought his cart with his Reintegration Assistance in 2005, the Municipality prohibited this type of business in the streets of the city. However, this big obstacle did not affect the courage of Mr. C's family and with the necessary legal authorisation they started to operate the business from the garage of a relative's home. This is their sole income and even though their economic situation is difficult, Mr. C does not consider leaving his family again *"I am very grateful for this assistance that lets us subsist. We are conscious that we will not earn a fortune but at least we can have an income."*



Jamaica, Kingston Clothing business



After spending nearly five years in England with no real means of supporting herself or her children, Ms. G was ready for a change. She had left Jamaica due to the level of violence in her community and though she feared returning would be too

much for her to handle, she decided to give Jamaica a second chance after speaking with staff from IOM London. Although she has returned to the same community she fled in 2001, she is now able to see a way out. Through assistance from IOM, Ms. G travels to various markets in Jamaica where she sells different items of clothing. She also provides taxi services in St. Catherine and is positive that these two income-generating ventures will provide her with the means to move to a more stable community where she will be comfortable raising her children. *"IOM has made my dreams possible"*, says Ms. G.



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