

IOM UK's Reintegration Assistance to Returnees under VARRP's New Approach (2007-2009)



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IOM International Organization for Migration

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IOM Reintegration Assistance Provision under the New Approach, 2007-2009

1. Introduction

At the end of October 2007, the Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) 'New Approach' was introduced for asylum seekers considering returning voluntarily to their countries of origin. The new programme focused on the individual needs of migrants and offered financial assistance to:

- cover reintegration needs
- fund a reintegration activity

The new financial allowances designed to cover reintegration needs included:

- a cash relocation grant on departure to meet emergency needs on arrival
- extra luggage allowance
- housing costs in country of origin
- child care

On top of the above, VARRP applicants were also entitled for financial assistance in order to fund one of the following reintegration activities:

- a small business activity (including business training)
- educational courses or school fees
- a vocational training (including a short monthly subsistence allowance)
- a job placement (coupled with a short monthly subsistence allowance)

2. Objective

This information sheet aims to give a brief overview of the VARRP Reintegration Assistance programme under the New Approach from the end of October 2007 to the end of December 2009.

The information given in this document is split into two parts.

Part 1 gives an analysis of reintegration cases assisted worldwide during the above period and looks at the reintegration activities and returnees' profiles.

Part 2 is a more in-depth analysis of Reintegration Assistance based on a sample of 100 monitoring forms collected at random from the following 5 main Countries of Return: Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

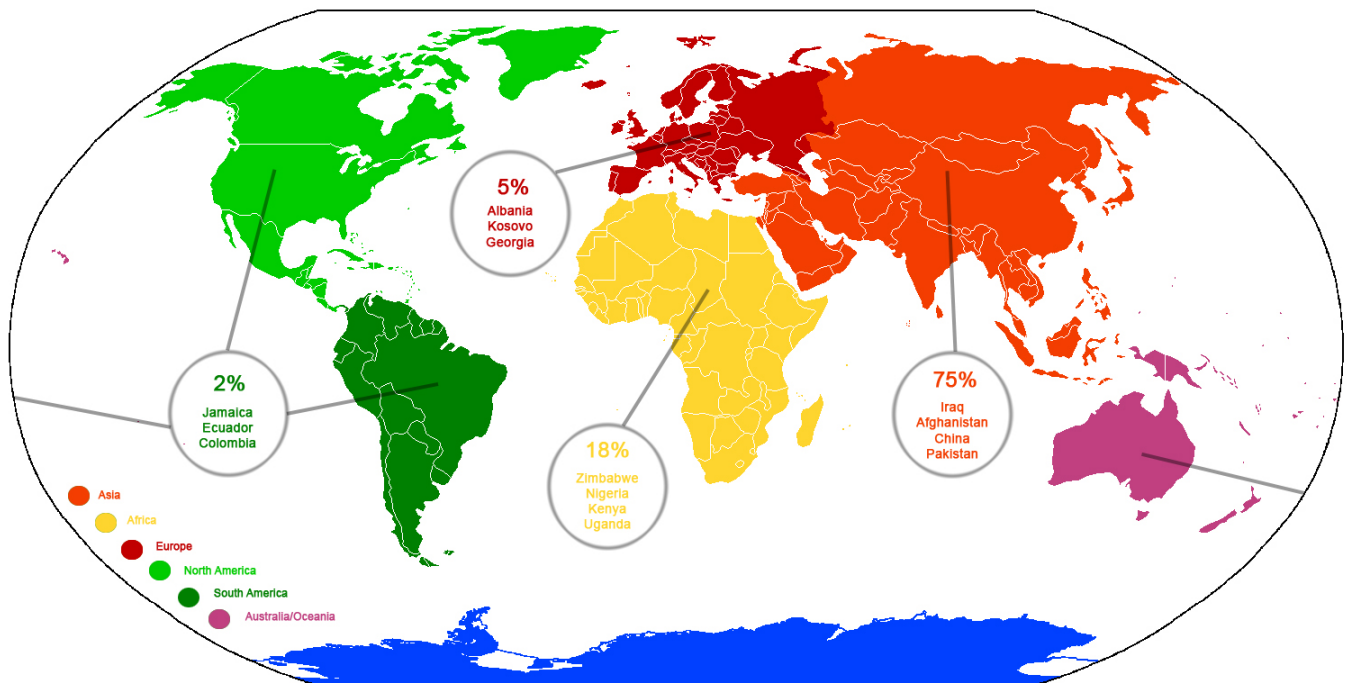
3. Part 1 ⇒ IOM-UK's Assistance to Returnees Worldwide

During the period under consideration, over 4000 migrants were assisted with Reintegration Assistance in 94 countries all over the world (outside the EU). The top five countries of assistance were Iraq, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Iran. These five countries accounted for 60% of the total number of migrants assisted under VARRP in different parts of the world. Iraq was first with 18% followed by Afghanistan with 16%, China and Pakistan with 9% each and Iran with 8%.

If we look at the distribution by continent we find that 75% were assisted in Asia, 18% in Africa and 5% in Europe. The remaining 2% were assisted mainly in America but we also found one returnee assisted in Australia/Oceania.



The map below shows the distribution of IOM UK's Reintegration Assistance by continent



This shows IOM's ability to deliver its services to almost any part of the world. In Asia, reintegration assistance was delivered in countries across the whole continent, from the Middle East, through Central Asia to the Far East. The main countries where assistance was delivered in this region were Iraq, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh. In the Americas the top country was Jamaica, in the Caribbean Region, followed by Ecuador and Colombia in South America. In Europe the main countries where returnees benefited from reintegration assistance were in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Albania, Kosovo and Georgia came on top followed by Russia (European side) and Ukraine.

3.1 Reintegration Assistance

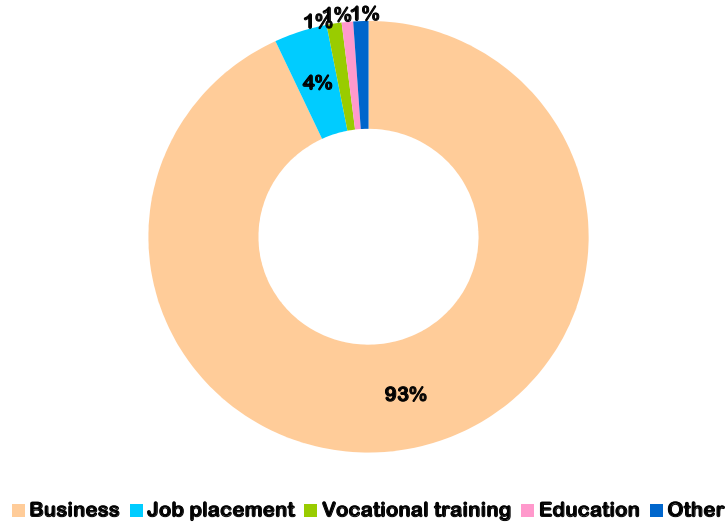
Out of the four main reintegration activities listed above, opening a small business was the most popular choice with returnees. Over 90% chose to open a small business while 4% chose to take up the job placement option. Job placement as a reintegration activity was by far the most popular option in Iraq (Northern provinces). Iraq was also the first country of return in terms of Reintegration Assistance. Job opportunities were plentiful in the Northern provinces, presumably because of social and political stability.

Around 1% of returnees chose education or vocational training. The educational option mainly paid for the schooling of children of returning families.

Opening a business was the preferred option because of the importance for the returnee to earn an income back home to sustain her/his return. Even where some migrants might have considered doing an educational course, they eventually had to start a small business in order to survive.

Generally, IOM aims to promote a larger take up of education or vocational training or job placement. However, in some countries this was not feasible due to a combination of prevailing conditions and personal factors. For example, getting returnees (back) into employment is ideal for long term reintegration but it depends on existing opportunities in the country of origin where unemployment can be high. The skills/ experience of migrants is another factor and finding financial support while studying is a challenge.

Reintegration Activity



3.2 Reintegration Needs

One of the aims of the New Approach was both to help migrants start a reintegration activity and tackle pressing reintegration needs. We know from the monitoring that the cash relocation grant and housing assistance also contributed to the settling down of returnees.

We also know from the monitoring of applicants that the majority of them used their relocation grant (cash) to cover housing needs or living costs on arrival. From the sample of 100 interviews, the majority said that it was very useful to meet initial living costs.

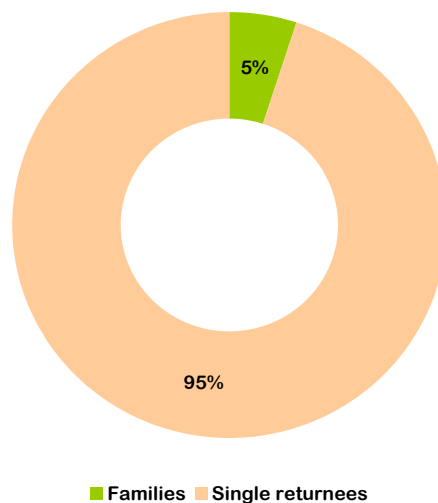
3.3 Profile of Returnees

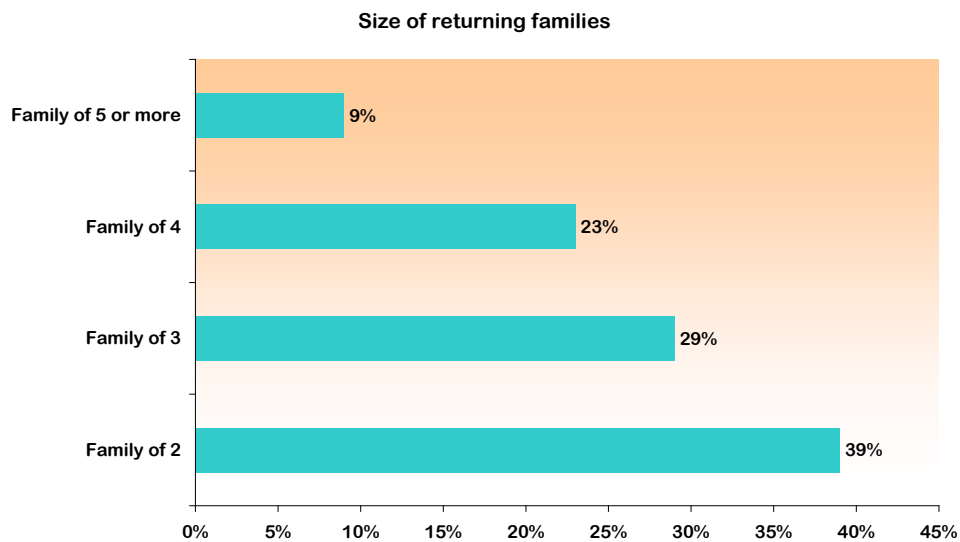
3.3.1 Families/Single Returnees

95% of returnees travelled alone and only 5% went back with their families.

The fact that they returned alone does not necessarily mean that they have no family to support back in their country of origin. Many migrants leave their families behind in their country of origin when they migrate.

Families and Single Returnees

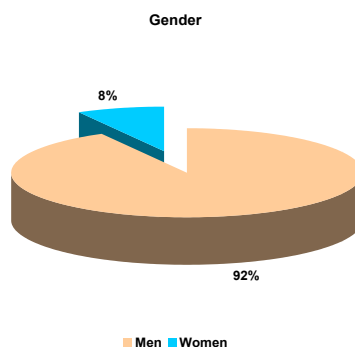




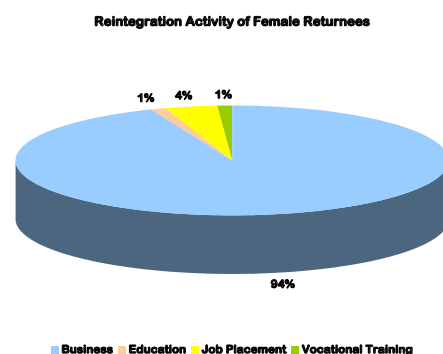
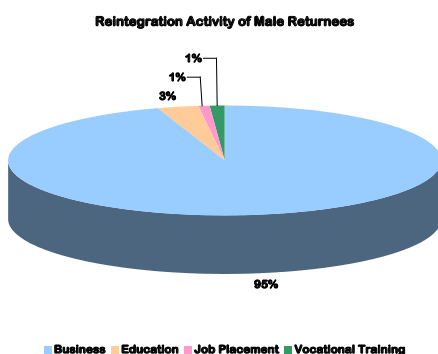
Out of the 5% of returning families, 39% of them consisted of couples (husband and wife). There were also single parents with a child and in some cases, these families were formed in the UK, ie the children were born in the UK.

3.3.2 Gender

Out of the 95% who travelled alone, 92% were men and only 8% were women. In both cases the majority decided to start a small business.



The take up of the business option was identical among men and women returnees. However, education was the second activity of choice for women while men put job placement and training before education.



Out of the 3% of female returnees who chose education, we found an unaccompanied minor (UAM) aged 15, a teenager of 18 years of age and the rest fell into the 25-35 age group. These young persons were in their formative years and had the support of the family, which also explained why they were able to continue their studies back home. Thus, age and family support were significant factors when opting for an education activity.

The results were similar among male returnees where we also found that those who chose education fell under the same age group. Thus, we found a teenager of 19 years of age, a few returnees within the 20-25 as well as 25-35 age bands. They could also afford to study because of the family support they received. We found one man over 50 taking up education.

4. Part 2 ⇨ Monitoring & Evaluation in the Countries of Return

4.1 Methodology

The VARRP programme incorporates a monitoring exercise of returnees. IOM Missions in countries of origin are instructed by IOM London to contact and interview VARRP returnees. Monitoring questionnaires are used and sent to London for analysis. This process usually takes place 6 months after a returnee is back in her/his country of origin.

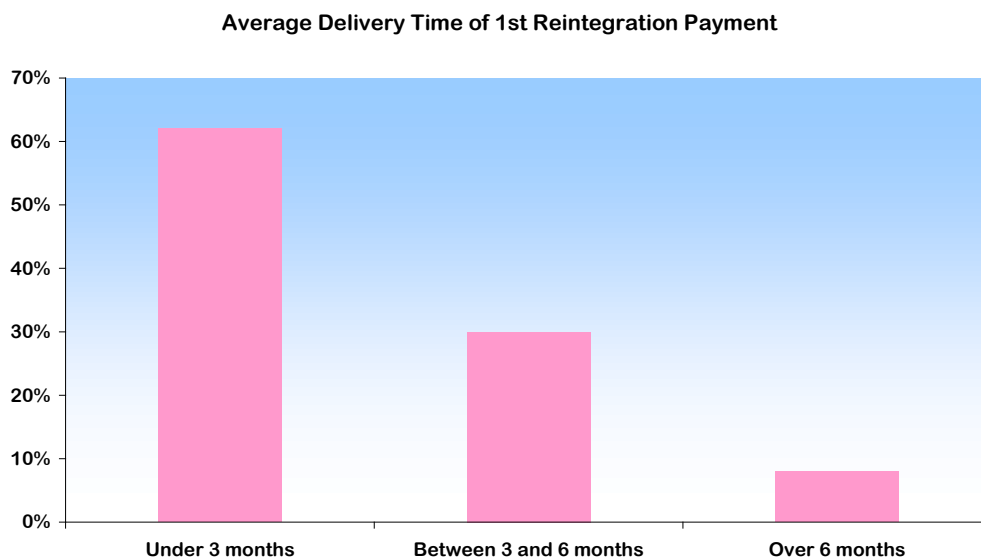
The following results are based on a random sample of 100 monitoring forms received from the top countries of return where there is an with IOM mission. These countries are Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka. IOM staff in these countries interviewed the beneficiaries of Reintegration Assistance and compiled the information.

Returnees who departed between the start of the 'New Approach' (at the end of October 2007) and the end of June 2009 were interviewed in this sample.

4.2 Final Destination

The majority of returnees in these countries went to the main urban centres such as Kabul, Tehran, Erbil, Lahore and Colombo but IOM also assisted beneficiaries in other parts of the countries concerned, as the table below shows.

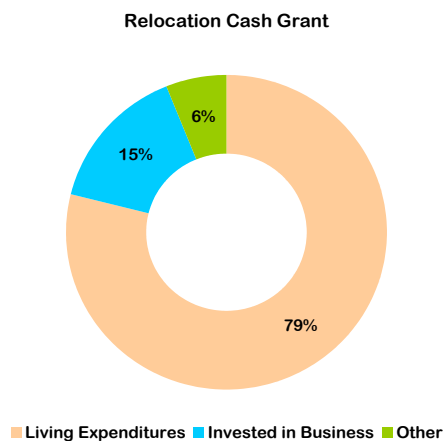
Country	Final Destination
Afghanistan	Kabul, Ghazni, Qandajar, Taluqan city, Harat, Logar or Jalalabad
Iran	Tehran, Shiraz, Karaj, Marivan
Iraq	Erbil, Sulaimaniyah, Chamchamal
Pakistan	Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar
Sri Lanka	Colombo, Jaffna, Batticaloa



The time frame to assist migrants with the first payment in kind (excluding housing) varied from country to country. The delivery of payments did not depend solely on IOM; other factors such as local bureaucracy, local suppliers, the type of activity and the migrant’s motivation and reliability were also important. Overall, the average time to assist migrants with the first payment in kind was under three months from the day of arrival. The majority were assisted within the second and third month but we also noted a few migrants who were assisted within the first month of return.

In terms of those who were assisted over the six months period, local bureaucracy, obtaining quotes, personal reasons such as family problems and misunderstandings about how the programme operates were the main causes of the delay. Also, one migrant expressed that it took him long because local prices of products were very high so he had to spend more time sourcing the items and thinking what to buy with the existing budget.

4.3 Relocation Cash Grant

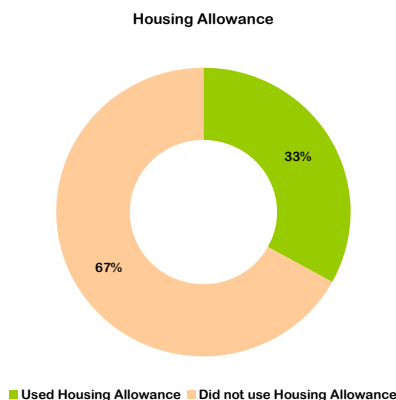


The majority of migrants considered the relocation cash grant as very valuable. It helped them cover initial living costs on arrival. Without it, they said that the first few months after return would have been much harder.

We also found that 79% used it to pay for rent, utility bills or food; another 15% invested it in their chosen business activity. The remaining 6% used it to settle debts, buy house furniture, or gifts for the family. In one case, it was used to cover school fees.

How relocation grant was used depended on the specific needs of the individual returnee, but having family support or personal savings did affect the way it was spent. For example, in Pakistan we saw that more people invested it in their businesses, rather than in living costs, as they had family support and did not need to cover rent or household bills. In any case, the large majority used it towards their reintegration process, mainly to cover emergency needs on arrival or investing it in their reintegration activity.

4.4 Housing

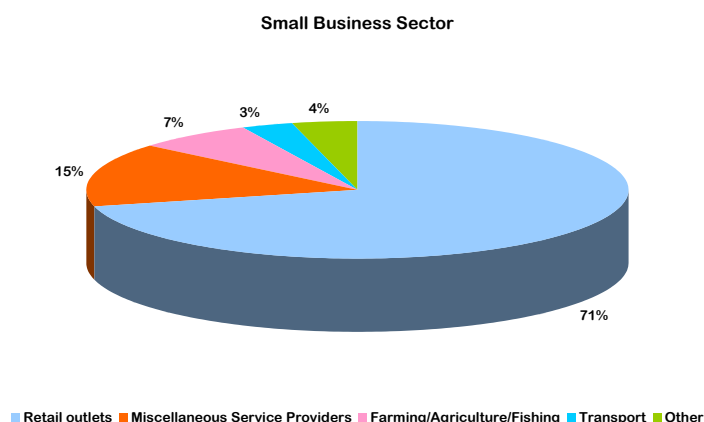


Out of the 100 interviews 33% had used the housing allowance. Those who used it found it very helpful as rent is one of the most expensive living costs faced by returnees. It is particularly beneficial for families and it must be highlighted that many of the single migrants who returned home have a family to support. Not everyone used this allowance as it depended on the individual needs of each person and many migrants returned to families who owned their houses and did not need to pay rent.

4.5 Small Businesses in the Home Country

The majority of migrants decided to open a business due to the need to generate an income to support themselves and/or their families. From the sample analysed, all the migrants had opted for the business option.

The majority of businesses set-up by returnees were small local businesses in the retail, services or transport industries. The majority opened small shops but some went into farming or fishing and others opened more complex and different types of business in real estate (Iran) or manufacturing goods, or in sports, such as a Cricket Academy in Pakistan.

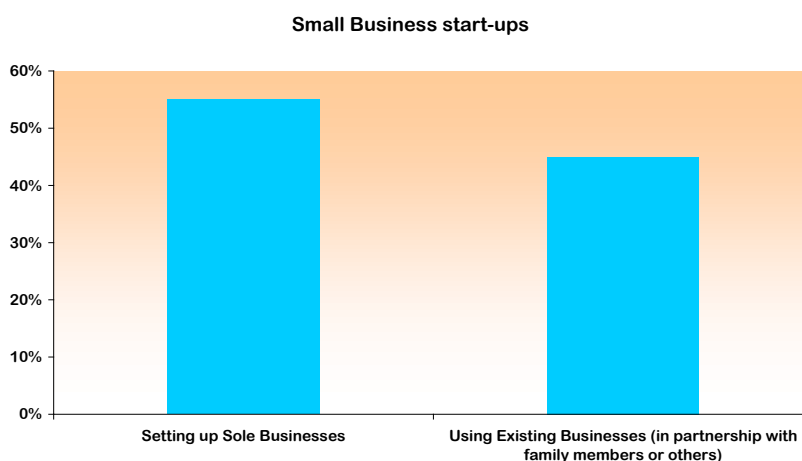


The overwhelming majority opened a local shop to sell products or to provide a service. The most popular were grocery shops (selling soft drinks), clothes, carpets, auto spare parts or tyres, or beauty products.

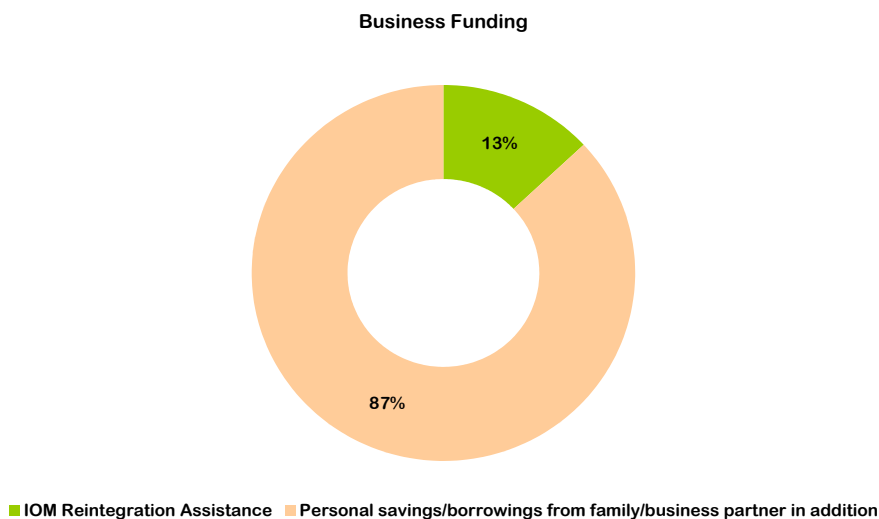
In terms of services, we found businesses related to plumbing, car repair, tailoring, goldsmith, carpentry or pharmacy. Some of these businesses were offering services to the community.

4.6 Effectiveness & Impact of IOM UK's Reintegration Assistance

Reintegration Assistance was effective in helping migrants start a business activity and we found that 45% of businesses were new businesses, compared to 55% of businesses that were opened with a business partner. The business partner was often a family member. We also found that in the cases where migrants opened a new business some chose the business they used to manage before migrating to the UK.



The majority of migrants needed other sources of funding in order to start their business activity. Regardless of whether their businesses were new or a partnership venture, 13% were able to open it with IOM's funding. The vast majority, 87%, needed sources other than the IOM Reintegration Assistance such as personal savings, borrowing from family or a business partner, in order to start the business.



The contribution the returnees made to their businesses varied considerably from £100 up to £5,000 or even £10,000. Opening a business was tied to two main factors: the type of business and availability of capital. The choice of business depended on the amount of capital available/accumulated by a migrant and/or the savings of the family and/or finding a business partner.

Many of those who started a business with a partner wanted to become independent in the future. It seemed as though many entered into a partnership in order to be able to start an activity with a longer term aim of operating their own businesses.

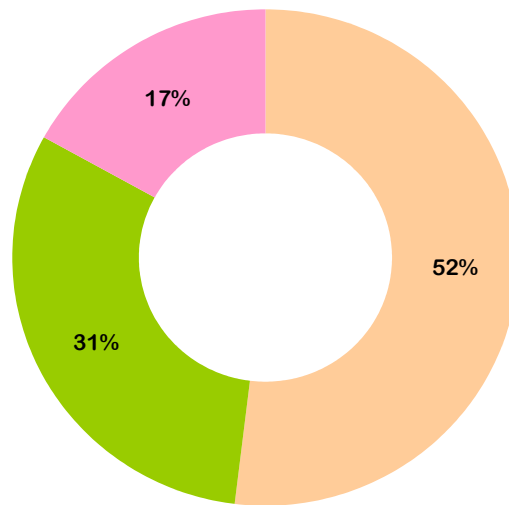
Another interesting factor was that the majority of migrants said the business was profitable to the point of making a living and enough to support the family, but in a few cases migrants had to find another job to top up the income.

Not everyone required staff to operate their businesses, but 34% of those interviewed hired staff locally. The average was 1 to 4 employees; in one case, a Pakistani returnee hired 10 staff for his auto repair garage.

4.7 Second Tranche of Reintegration Payment

The New Approach introduced a second reintegration payment. Thus, migrants could benefit from a second injection once they had gained experience in running their businesses. The second payments were delivered between six and twelve months and before the end of the year of return. Most of the returnees found that they benefited from the second payment to boost their businesses and avoided closure (52%). Others said it helped them consolidate their businesses (31%) and expand them (17%).

Business Funding: Use and Impact of Second Payment



■ Boost Existing Business and Avoid Closure ■ Consolidate Business ■ Expand Business

Migrants found that having another payment in the middle of the reintegration process and after running the business for some months helped them identify how to invest it better.

5. Future Plans

None of those interviewed had any desire to re-migrate to the UK. The experience of migrating had overall been a difficult one and their wish was to live in their country with their families.

Their more immediate plans involved running the existing business, opening a new one or finding future employment.

It was impossible to establish whether migrants would want to re-migrate (to any country) as this depended on personal circumstances and country factors which are difficult to foresee. We know that most returnees expressed that they had no plans to re-migrate given their current circumstances but this could change if faced by varying economic circumstances, economic uncertainty, local unemployment, war, natural disasters or poverty.

IOM UK is indebted to all the returnees who kindly agreed to contribute information on the impact of Reintegration Assistance on their lives in the countries of return. Without their contribution, this report would not have been possible, and IOM UK wishes to thank them here. Any errors or omissions are, of course, the sole responsibility of IOM UK.



IOM International Organization for Migration

International Organization for Migration, 21 Westminster Palace Gardens, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RR
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7233 0001 Fax: +44 (0) 20 7233 3001 Freephone: 0800 783 2332
www.iomuk.org