



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

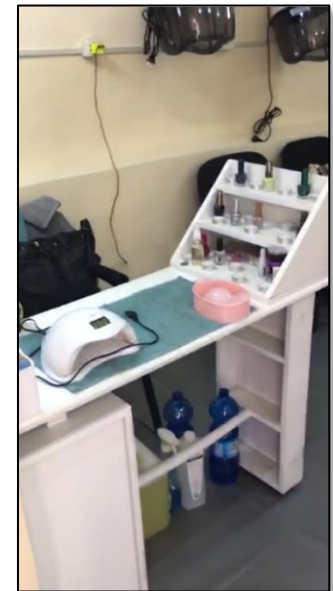
Ethiopia, Addis Ababa



During mid-2020, after more than six years abroad, Ms. M. decided to voluntarily return to Ethiopia. She planned to open a beauty salon in Addis Ababa, as she already had several years of experience in this field. The State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) approved financial support for this.

Ms. M. returned to Addis Ababa in September 2020. After her arrival, she contacted IOM Ethiopia to discuss the implementation of her beauty salon. Before opening her salon, she completed several courses in a beauty training institute, including hairdressing, make-up as well as manicure and pedicure. After successfully completing the training, which was financed by SEM, she opened her own beauty salon in Addis Ababa. With the reintegration grant, Ms. M. bought all the necessary equipment such as hairdryers, scissors, chairs, mirrors, make-up and a manicure and pedicure set. She was also able to pay the salon rent for 18 months in advance.

Almost a year later, IOM Ethiopia contacted her by phone. At that time, her beauty salon was not doing well because she had not enough clients due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, Ms. M. hired employee for a short time, but ended up having to dismiss her again because the beauty salon was not generating enough income. The earnings were not enough for her flat's rent and other general daily expenses. As a result, Ms. M. described her situation as rather bad at the time of the telephone conversation. Nevertheless, she would like to continue living in Ethiopia and run her beauty salon in the future. Despite the situation, Ms. M. is satisfied with the services provided by IOM and the reintegration assistance. She said that her general situation has not improved compared to before, but the reintegration assistance has helped her to restart her live in Ethiopia after her long absence.



As a humanitarian and, at the same time, reasonably-priced solution, the concept of Return Assistance has proved itself and gained acceptance in many European countries. The object of Return Assistance is to harmonize the justified interests of migrants with those of Switzerland and the countries of origin. Return Assistance makes a valuable contribution to a sustainable and successful return. It is conceived so as to rule out undesired pull factors in the direction of Switzerland.