



Coming Home

10 Years of the Office for Repatriation Assistance



Project Report

1 November 2005 to 31 October 2006

and photographic documentation of the work of
the Office for Repatriation Assistance
from 1996 to 2006



European
Refugee Fund

Bavarian State Ministry of Labour
and Social Welfare, Family Affairs and Women

Office for
Repatriation Assistance



Coming Home – Project Report, 1 November 2005 to 31 October 2006

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Our thanks also go out to all the hardworking members of the City Council, particularly Siegfried Benker, for their interest and their solidarity; the former director of the Refugee Department, Wolfgang Kurreck, upon whose initiative the Office for Repatriation Assistance was founded and who cleared the way for our work with as little bureaucracy as possible; the administrative staff, who organised the collection of donations and the storage of donated goods, and last but not least, thanks to the companies of Munich and all the people of the city who donated money, goods or their time to help us.

We would also particularly like to thank the organisations with whom we have worked and continue to work in a spirit of trustful and successful cooperation: IOM, AGEF, HEIMATGARTEN, SOLWODI, the Munich Foreigners' Advisory Council, the refugee boards, initiatives, migrants' associations, welfare associations and the International Assistance of the Bavarian Red Cross.

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1. Foreword

„Merci à *Coming Home*! J'ai retrouvé le gout de la vie," writes a man from Burkina Faso, a few months after returning home. „... I've rediscovered my taste for life." His enthusiastic remark shows just what the encouragement of voluntary and dignified repatriation can do. Whatever reasons people have for returning home, it takes a lot of courage, strength and support to make a new start. In such situations, advice and assistance are much more helpful than the threat of forced removal.

For the past ten years, the Social Services Department has been implementing what Munich City Council in 1996 unanimously agreed as a goal for the return of refugees, namely „Safe repatriation rather than expulsion into the unknown". More than 11,000 people from some 60 nations have since benefited from the services of the Office for Repatriation Assistance. The *Coming Home* project is funded by the European Union and the Bavarian State Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Family Affairs and Women. The project was the pioneer and the model for what is now a network of repatriation advice centres across the state of Bavaria.

Besides assisting people wishing to return home, the Office for Repatriation Assistance has always made a point of supporting the regions to which the refugees are returning. The generosity of the people of Munich has been great. More than a hundred large-scale consignments from schools and nurseries, hospitals, administrative organisations, companies and private individuals have helped to rebuild the battered infrastructure in Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo and recently also in Afghanistan.

Some of the returnees have started up their own humanitarian projects at home, which are now receiving support from *Coming Home*.

Within the European Union, there is a growing push to develop a standardised and effective system for supporting the return and reintegration of refugees. Local players, too, can help shape this process by participating in EU programmes such as the Refugee Fund or the Return Fund. The following two aspects are important to the Munich Social Services Department in this context: promoting the voluntary return of refugees should take priority over forcing them to return, and the assistance available to returnees in their home country must be enhanced. The Office for Repatriation Assistance will therefore continue to contribute to the debate over the best and most humane means of promoting the return of refugees and will continue to share its extensive experience on a national and European level.

This report documents the work of the Office for Repatriation Assistance over the past year. It also presents photographic documentation of the Office's activities from 1996 to the present day, based on the exhibition „Out of exile - 10 years of repatriation assistance for refugees", which was on display at Munich's Gasteig cultural centre in August 2006.



A stylized handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke.

F. Graffe
Director of Social Services



2. Refugees and asylum-seekers in Munich

The number of new asylum-seekers coming to Munich has fallen continuously over the past three years. An average of 100 people a month are admitted to Bavaria's primary reception centre and are subsequently accommodated in one of the state-run refugee homes located in and around Munich. Many of the attempts to gain asylum are unsuccessful; less than 2% of asylum claims are accepted.

Despite the drop in the number of incomers, there are still some 12,000 refugees and asylum-seekers living in Munich without residency status. 7,800 of these have a temporary residence permit issued on human-rights, humanitarian or political grounds. This can be revoked once the situation in the respective home country stabilises. 1,273 people are still awaiting a decision on their asylum application. 2,752 people have been granted exceptional leave to remain in Germany. They must leave the country as soon as the issues preventing them from travelling (such as illness or a lack of travel documents) are resolved. On top of this there are 2,300 people with the right of asylum (as of 12/2006).

The majority of refugees and asylum-seekers come from the following countries:

In Europe: Kosovo, Serbia, Ukraine, Turkey and Russia;

In Africa: Togo, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Democratic Republic of Congo;

In Asia: Iraq, Afghanistan, People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Syria.

Many refugees who have been living in Germany for a long time hope to be given the chance of

permanent integration through the Right of Abode Regulation passed by national government in November 2006. Persons who have been living here for at least eight years (six years in the case of families with children of school age) and who are well integrated in the workforce and social sphere will be granted the right of abode. They must provide proof of their integration in the workforce by the end of September 2007.

Munich's Aliens Department estimates that around 700 people living in the city having been granted exceptional leave to remain could benefit from the new regulation. However, unemployment affects this group of people more than most, since the rules make it difficult for them to access the labour market. The Social Services Department is taking measures to support the integration of these people by getting them into vocationally orientated German courses, assisting them in arranging accommodation and helping them to find a job.

However, the government decree also stipulates that consistent action must be taken to make those who have no prospect of obtaining a right of abode leave the country. In the interests of avoiding social hardship and coercive measures as far as possible, the Office for Repatriation Assistance will communicate even more intensely the assistance it can provide. In cooperation with the authorities, the social services and the lawyers the refugees turn to, we will endeavour to make sure that every refugee and asylum-seeker knows what the *Coming Home* project can do for them.



Waiting in hope at the Aliens Department



3. The *Coming Home* project

Objectives, overview, results

Objectives

Coming Home is a project run by Munich's Social Services Department. It receives funding from the European Refugee Fund and the Bavarian State Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Family Affairs and Women. The goal of *Coming Home* is to achieve the humane repatriation and permanent reintegration of refugees and asylum-seekers in their home country. The project pays particular attention to groups of people in greater need of protection and assistance – members of ethnic minorities, single mothers, those who came here as unaccompanied minors, traumatised persons and elderly, ill or disabled people. The Office for Repatriation Assistance also supports humanitarian projects in the countries of origin of the people it assists, wherever possible involving the returnees themselves.



Repatriation counselling - Ms T. is returning to Ethiopia

Overview

Coming Home offers assistance on an individual basis, with each person or family receiving a level of support appropriate to their needs and potential. *Coming Home* helps people to help themselves, creating future prospects not for but with the refugees concerned. The project enables them to return home voluntarily with a sense of dignity.

Coming Home also advises and supports other German cities and communities in establishing their own repatriation advice centres and gets involved in the expansion of existing national and international networking structures.

The *Coming Home* project discussed here lasted 12 months, from 1 November 2005 to 31 October 2006. Seven employees with responsibility for different tasks and countries worked on the project. Two native-speaker counsellors organised as-



Loading up an aid transport bound for Afghanistan

sistance for refugees from south-east Europe, principally Kosovo and Serbia. A German counsellor was on hand for refugees from Asia, and another for refugees from Africa. One employee organised qualification-based courses and looked after the students. The office director and the project coordinator were responsible for managing hardship cases, supporting aid projects and handling public relations as well as the general organisational aspects.

Coming Home works with other national and international aid organisations. Its main partners are the IOM (International Organisation for Migration), the AGEF (Association of Experts in the fields of Migration and Development Cooperation), SOLWODI (Solidarity with Women in Distress), HEIMATGARTEN (the repatriation aid programme run by Bremerhaven Workers' Welfare), the ZIRF (Centre for Information Exchange at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) and the Bavarian repatriation advice centres in Augsburg, Nuremberg and Würzburg.

Summary of results

A total of 460 people from 42 different countries received personal counselling and individual attention as part of the *Coming Home* project. 957 advice meetings took place over the duration of the project. We gave advice over the telephone in 4,004 cases. 231 cases received assistance in the form of travel subsidies from IOM, the International Organisation for Migration. 118 project participants received financial support from the Bavarian Ministry of Social Welfare and the European Refugee Fund. 35 refugees took courses leading to qualifications, and 14 received business set up support. 24 people required particularly intensive support and counselling due to their difficult situations. 28 families (40 peo-



ple) who left the country in the course of this or the previous project received follow-up care and assistance.

Five aid projects in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso and Kosovo received financial and material aid from the project.

The charts and statistics in this report do not include migrants with no refugee background who have received support from the City of Munich outside the scope of the EU *Coming Home* project. 28 people received such support during the period covered by this report. They returned to the following regions: 1 to Africa, 8 to Asia, 6 to South America, 13 to South-east Europe. Nationals of EU member states received no financial assistance.

Public relations work was particularly intense in 2006 in view of the 10th anniversary of the Office for Repatriation Assistance. Besides the photographic exhibition entitled „Out of exile – 10 years of repatriation assistance for refugees“ at the Gasteig cultural centre, the work of *Coming Home* was presented at numerous information events and congresses. Special information events were held in conjunction with AGEF for refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Munich's refugee and social-welfare advice centres were sent quarterly newsletters containing the latest information on the subject of repatriation and detailing the assistance offered by the Social Services Department. The support available from *Coming Home* was publicised on posters and flyers displayed at refugee homes, advice centres and at the Aliens Department.



The pain of leaving is mixed with the excitement of returning home



Greetings from home

Hussein family, northern Iraq

In February 2001, Mr Hussein claimed political asylum in Germany for himself and his family of five. His application for asylum was successful; the family's application is still being considered.

Mrs Hussein was very homesick and insisted on returning to her home town of Zakho with the four youngest children.

Mr Hussein and his eldest son will stay in Munich for the time being. They both have good jobs and can support the family from here. For the youngest son Aydel, returning home was a journey into the unknown. He was born in Munich.

3.1 People with special needs

24 returnees, 16 women and 8 men, required particularly intensive counselling and assistance due to the individual problems they suffered, which were mostly of a medical nature. The countries they returned to were Afghanistan (4), Angola, Bosnia (2), Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iraq (5), Iran, Mongolia (3) and Nigeria (4).

For almost all of them, their main reason for returning home was that they missed their family and friends. Some of them also cited a lack of job prospects in Germany as a reason.

With the support of AGEF and SOLWODI, even the difficult cases achieved reintegration in the workforce after their return, through financial start-up assistance, a subsidy for starting a business or help in finding a job. Two Afghani women decided to return home after they had taken an orientation trip to Kabul financed by *Coming Home*. Having personally informed themselves about the actual situation at

home, the women were able to organise their eventual repatriation independently and with meticulous preparation.

Obtaining assurances of sufficient medical care in their home country is particularly important for older people and for the chronically ill or disabled if they are to dispel their fears about the future. In accordance with the recommendations of the treating doctor, the clients concerned are given enough drugs to take with them to last them for three to six months. Where required, outpatient treatment or social services support is organised locally. In three cases, returnees were accompanied by representatives of the medical or social services. Several returnees, some of whom were suffering from severe mental health problems, reported a substantial improvement in their condition some months after their return.

Denise Bekombo, 2 children, Congo

Ms Bekombo, heavily pregnant at the time, claimed political asylum in Munich for herself and her two-year-old son, Mechak, in the autumn of 2003. A few days later her daughter Anastasia was born. Ms Bekombo had witnessed and herself experienced traumatic events in her home town.

Despite everything, she wants to go home. She feels unwanted in Germany. The living conditions at the home for asylum-seekers and the lack of prospects make her feel depressed. The day before their departure, the children have a leaving party at the nursery school, but they both want to stay here.

The political situation prevents the family from returning to their home region. Ms Bekombo tries to build a future for herself and her children in Kinshasa. This new start in the unfamiliar and chaotic capital city is difficult for her. Coming Home, the women's aid organisation SOLWODI and a local aid organisation are supporting her.



Off into an uncertain future



Photos from home



3.2 Qualifications and business set up

Fewer qualification-based courses were offered this year due to the reduced budget. 12 women and 12 men took part in computer courses for beginners and those with advanced skills. Two women and

eight men successfully completed a business set up course run by AGEF. One man received funding to qualify as a bicycle mechanic.

Sulaimon Aroyewun, Nigeria

Mr Aroyewun fled to Germany at the age of 28 to escape the chaotic and hopeless conditions in his homeland. He even managed to realise his dream of being better able to support his two children from here. He took on all the low-paid jobs he could find to enable him to send money home. But the uncertainty about his residency status and the fact that he missed his two daughters led him to return home.

He used the time leading up to his departure to collect useful information and build up business contacts.

With business set up support from Coming Home and the generous assistance of a German friend, he was able to realise his ambitious plan to open a fish farming business. His qualifications and experience as an air-conditioning mechanic mean that his company has realistic prospects of success in the long term.

When he first returned home, Mr Aroyewun was shocked at the conditions in his country. He found it more difficult than expected to make a new start and he suffered a number of setbacks. Despite all this, he does not regret his decision. At home, with his family around him, he is happy.



Saying goodbye to Munich



Happy reunion with the children



Bao Kim Nguyen, Vietnam

Mr Nguyen came to Bavaria in the autumn of 1998. He worked in a Vietnamese restaurant for a few years, but then his visa expired and he no longer had permission to work. In Vietnam he had previously worked as a lorry driver and car mechanic.

Coming Home helped him set up his own vehicle repair shop. He made enthusiastic preparations and even bought some of the tools he would need here in Germany. He set to work immediately upon his return. His father helped him to put his plans into practice at home.



In the refugee home's communal kitchen



At home as a successful businessman

14 people received business set up support:

Country of origin, age, sex	Business project	Date of departure
Afghanistan, 32 female	Production of orthopaedic aids	May 2006
Armenia, 37 male	Animal breeding	May 2006
Nigeria, 19 male	Taxi firm	December 2005
Nigeria, 19 male	Internet café	April 2006
Nigeria, 26 male	Taxi firm	December 2005
Nigeria, 26 male	Tool shop	July 2006
Nigeria, 30 male	Car parts shop	April 2006
Nigeria, 31 male	Fish farming	November 2005
Nigeria, 37 male	Pig farming	July 2006
Nigeria, 38 male	Taxi firm	November 2005
Nigeria, 38 male	Taxi firm	January 2006
Russia, 30 male	Shoe workshop	August 2005
Russia, 42 male	Production of shoe soles	September 2005
Vietnam, 32 male	Car repair shop	December 2005



3.3 Assistance and departure figures

Project period 1 November 2005 to 31 October 2006

	Project participants		Personal counselling	Financial assistance	Qualifications	IOM REAG/GARP	Departures	
	People	House-holds		People	People	People	People	House-holds
South-east Europe	162	98	273	21	1	114	118	72
Africa	95	89	269	28	21	32	33	29
Asia	198	147	402	69	13	83	93	72
South Amerika	5	5	13	0	0	2	2	2
Total *	460	339	957	118	35	231	246	175

* The tables also include 40 people who left the country before the start of this project period but who were still receiving follow-up care and assistance. Four people left Germany but did not return to their home countries, emigrating instead to Canada, Australia and the USA. The tables do not include people with no refugee background who were given support outside the scope of the EU Coming Home project.

South-east Europe								
	Project participants		Personal counselling	Financial assistance	Qualifications	IOM REAG/GARP	Departures	
	People	House-holds		People	People	People	People	House-holds
Bosnia	9	7	15	2	0	4	6	4
Bulgaria	65	39	98	1	0	62	62	36
Chechnya ¹⁾	4	1	10	0	0	4	4	1
Kosovo ¹⁾	43	28	91	11	1	26	28	19
Russia	20	9	20	5	0	4	4	2
Serbia	17	10	30	1	0	11	11	7
Turkey	1	1	6	0	0	1	1	1
Ukraine	3	3	3	1	0	2	2	2
Total	162	98	273	21	1	114	118	72

¹⁾ Not independent states, recorded separately for statistical purposes.



Africa								
	Project participants		Personal counselling	Financial assistance	Qualifications	IOM REAG/GARP	Departures	
	People	House-holds		People	People	People	People	House-holds
Algeria	2	2	5	1	0	1	1	1
Angola	6	4	15	5	2	4	4	2
Benin	1	1	5	0	1	0	0	0
Burkina Faso	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Democratic Republic of Congo	8	6	15	3	2	3	3	1
Egypt	1	1	10	0	0	0	0	0
Eritrea	2	2	14	1	2	1	1	1
Ethiopia	13	13	32	4	5	4	4	4
Ghana	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Guinea	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
Ivory Coast	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	32	32	121	13	4	17	17	17
Senegal	3	3	4	1	1	1	1	1
Sierra Leone	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	0
Somalia	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Sudan	2	2	6	0	0	1	2	2
Tanzania	2	2	2	0	2	0	0	0
Togo	6	4	17	0	0	0	0	0
Uganda	5	5	9	0	1	0	0	0
Total	95	89	269	28	21	32	33	29

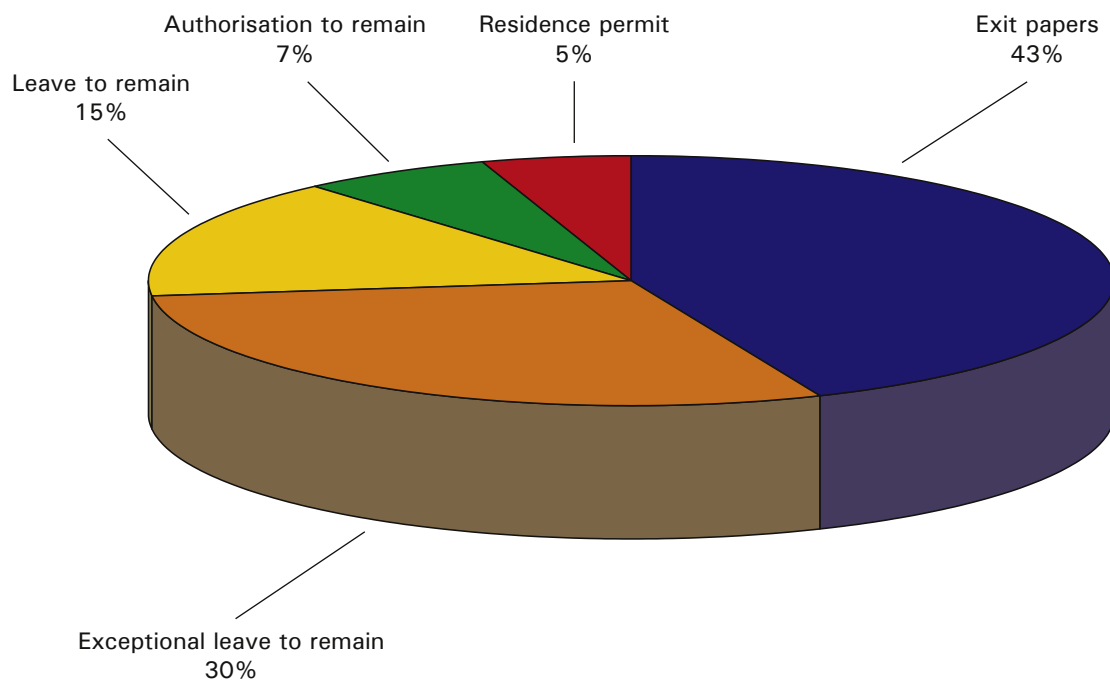


Asia								
	Project participants		Personal counselling	Financial assistance	Qualifications	IOM REAG/GARP	Departures	
	People	House-holds		People	People	People	People	House-holds
Afghanistan	43	31	92	8	6	9	12	12
Armenia	8	6	20	1	0	5	6	4
China	5	5	18	3	0	3	3	3
Georgia	1	1	7	1	0	1	1	1
India	2	2	3	0	1	0	0	0
Iran	7	5	25	4	2	4	4	3
Iraq	90	67	187	38	4	46	49	37
Israel	13	7	15	3	0	11	11	5
Jordan	1	1	3	0	0	1	1	1
Mongolia	7	3	0	7	0	0	0	0
Syria	4	4	5	1	0	0	1	1
Vietnam	17	15	27	3	0	3	5	5
Total	198	147	402	69	13	83	93	72

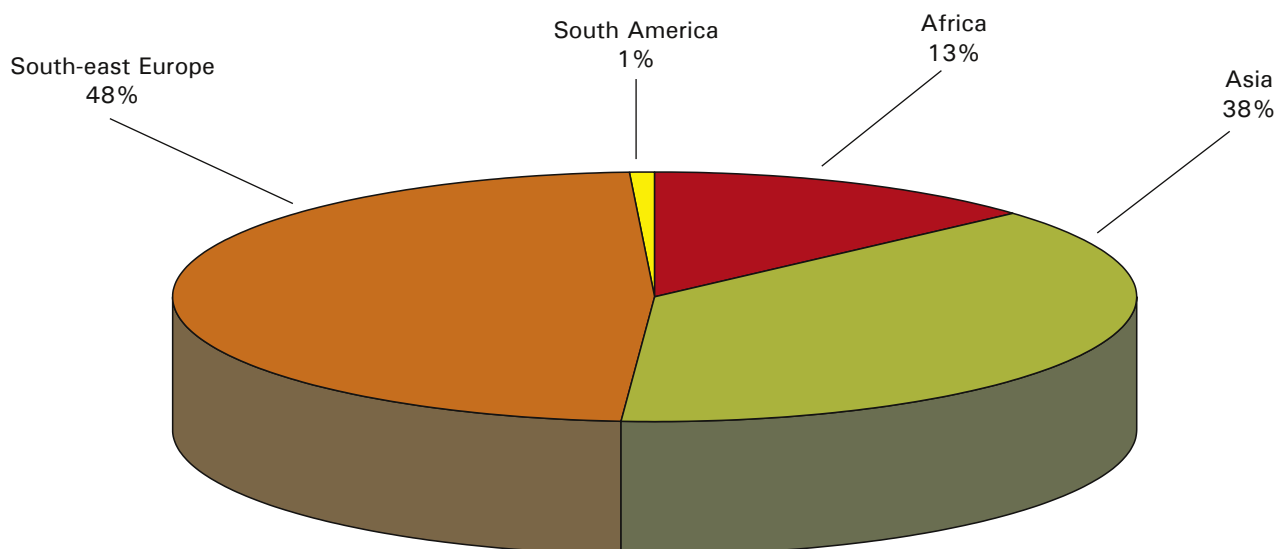
South America								
	Project participants		Personal counselling	Financial assistance	Qualifications	IOM REAG/GARP	Departures	
	People	House-holds		People	People	People	People	House-holds
Columbia	4	4	9	0	0	1	1	1
Haiti	1	1	4	0	0	1	1	1
Gesamt	5	5	13	0	0	2	2	2



Residence status of repatriated persons



Share of repatriated persons by region of origin





„Out of exile“

10-year anniversary of the Office for Repatriation Assistance

The Office for Repatriation Assistance celebrated its tenth anniversary at the Gasteig cultural centre on 27 July 2006.



City Councillor Siegfried Benker gives a speech



Wolfgang Kurreck, photographer and former director of the Refugee Department



Traditional music from Afghanistan to welcome delegates



Keen interest in the opening of the „Out of exile“ photographic exhibition



The „Out of exile“ exhibition documents returnees' stories



Office director Marion Lich (centre) – cooperation partners congratulate her on the tenth anniversary



The celebrations were framed by an exhibition entitled „Out of exile“ displaying photographs taken by Wolfgang Kurreck and documenting returnees' stories on wall boards to illustrate „10 years of repatriation assistance for refugees“.



At the reception



Wall boards document the work of the Office for Repatriation Assistance



The former director of the Refugee Department being interviewed for Bavarian Radio



Hermann Memmel, member of the Bavarian parliament – to mark his birthday celebrations, his guests donated DM 65,000 to the repatriation assistance fund



Martin Köhler from the Centre for Information Exchange at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees



Gabi Doliwa from Bremerhaven Workers' Welfare



The Office for Repatriation Assistance

Objectives

- To support the voluntary and humane repatriation of refugees
- To improve the assistance available to returnees, in Germany and in their home countries
- To fund social projects in the countries to which the refugees return

History

May 1996	Office for Repatriation Assistance for Bosnian refugees opened
January 1997	Warehouse to store donated goods established
March 1997	City Council resolution: „Formulate a way for Munich to repatriate Bosnian refugees – safe repatriation rather than expulsion into the unknown“
September 1997	Additional assistance for refugees from Kosovo
January 1998 – March 1999	EU „Restructuring Economy“ project – providing 100 Bosnians with business set up support
March 1999 – present	Sponsorship project for the Bosnian community of Vogosca
December 1999	City Council resolution: „Balanced repatriation assistance and counselling from the Refugee Department for all refugees with immediate effect – expanding the offer of advice and assistance to cover all refugees and asylum-seekers in Munich“
January 2000	First EU <i>Coming Home</i> project – funded by the European Refugee Fund
February 2000 – present	Sponsorship of the Serbian town of Subotica
2003	Bavaria introduces a state-wide system of repatriation counselling based on the model of <i>Coming Home</i>
June 2003 – present	<i>Coming Home</i> project receives funding from the Bavarian State Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Family Affairs and Women
2004	Offer of counselling and assistance extended to cover all migrants in Munich, including those here illegally





1996 – Demonstration at Munich's Marienplatz calling for voluntary repatriation



The Coming Home team



EU „Reconstruction Economy“ project – the team of counsellors at the opening of the office in Sarajevo



Munich donates a refuse collection vehicle to Subotica, the town it sponsors



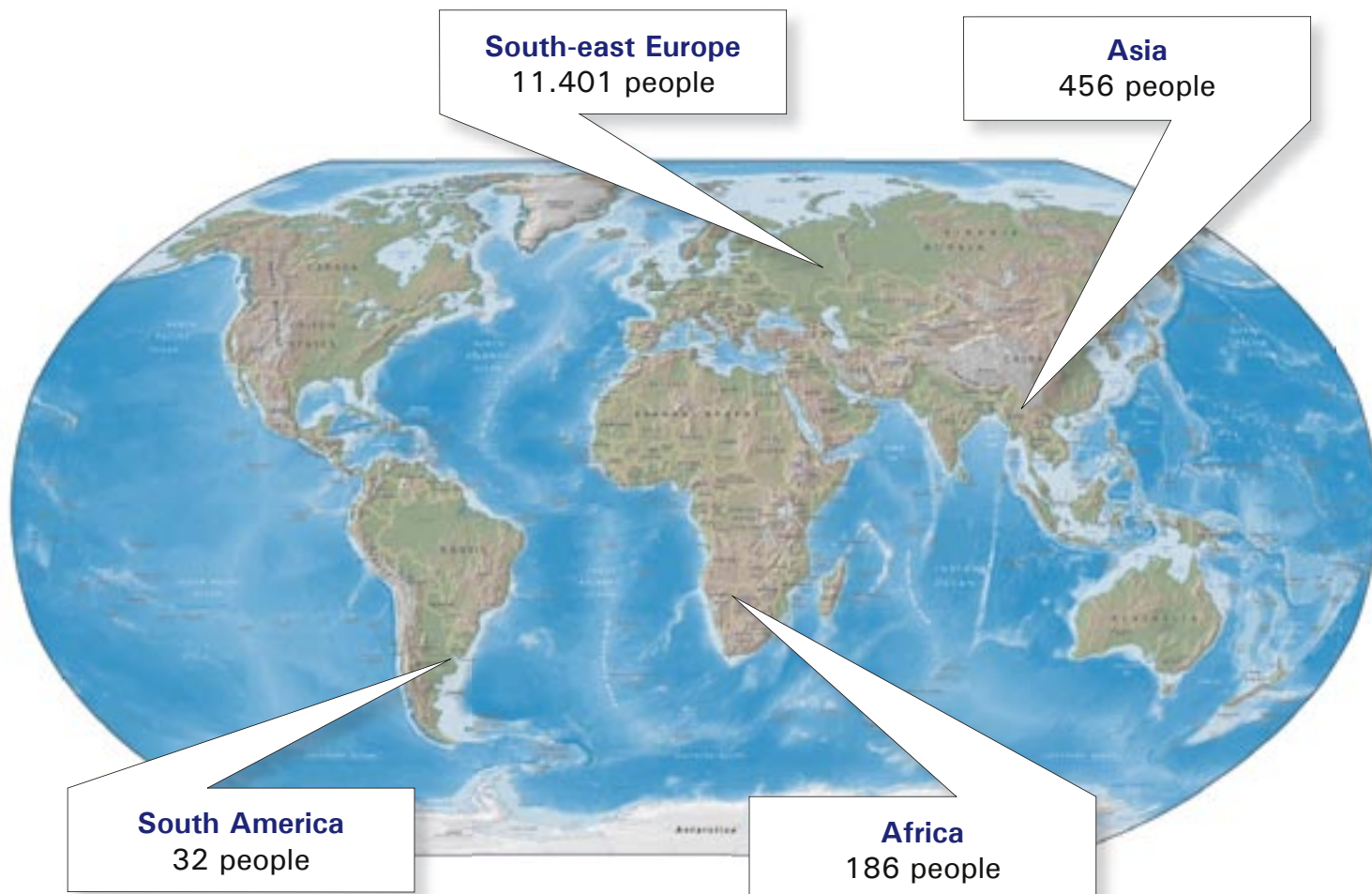
Participants at the workshop on voluntary repatriation and reintegration



Information event on repatriation assistance – welcome speech by ministerial councillor B. Lischke, Bavarian Ministry for Social Welfare



Number of returnees receiving assistance by continent



Overview of assistance received by returnees

Year	Personal Counseling	Information by phone, e-mail, post	Financial assistance from EU, Bavaria, Munich	Persons in receipt of donated goods	Qualification-based courses	IOM-assistance*	Departures	
							Refugees**	Other Migrants***
1996	180	350	-	5	-	-	-	-
1997	1.300	3.500	-	260	-	2.642	3.100	-
1998	4.080	3.296	-	415	-	2.521	2.900	-
1999	4.007	3.627	-	423	126	2.137	2.300	-
2000	2.962	3.137	610	239	285	1.336	1.500	-
2001	734	1.966	139	25	75	314	463	-
2002	1.297	4.436	232	2	115	301	477	-
2003	995	3.572	228	2	104	231	278	35
2004	1.182	4.277	176	0	131	367	395	48
2005	1.602	4.420	191	10	116	218	251	54
2006	982	4.004	118	0	35	245	246	28
Total	19.321	36.585	1.694	1.381	987	10.312	11.910	165

* International Organisation for Migration. This organisation grants statutory repatriation assistance from the REAG (Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany) and GARP (Government Assisted Repatriation Programme) programmes. REAG funding (travel costs plus travel allowance) can be claimed by returnees from any country as long as they have no money or are in receipt of social security benefits. GARP funding is a form of start-up assistance and can be paid to returnees from various countries (the list of countries is redefined each year) who have no money.

** According to the guidelines from the European Refugee Fund, this group of people incorporates refugees, asylum-seekers, those with exceptional leave to remain, those whose asylum claims have been accepted and quota refugees.

*** Other migrants are given assistance to return home if they have no money and do not come from an EU member state.



Assistance available

- **Advice for refugees**, given individually and in speeches and presentations
- **Information** for refugees and advice centres on the situation in refugees' home countries, on human-rights and aid organisations and on reintegration opportunities
- **Help with the preparations for returning home**, such as protecting pension rights, paying for vaccinations, covering travel and transportation costs, buying drugs
- **Support for reintegration** and protecting people's livelihoods through individually configured assistance, such as financial/material aid, courses leading to qualifications, helping people build up contacts
- Support for **business set up**
- **Individual care in problem cases** – members of ethnic minorities, single mothers, unaccompanied minors, elderly, ill and disabled persons
- **Follow-up support** and assistance after repatriation where required on a case-by-case basis
- Activities to **improve the assistance on offer** for returnees on a national and international level
- Funding **aid projects** in the countries to which refugees return





All family members are included in the counselling sessions wherever possible



Coming Home information stand



There is a lot to plan and organise before the return home



Ms K. opens a grocery store in Mongolia with funds from the business set up support programme



Visiting Ms T. in Bosnia. Her disability meant that she received intensive support



Donation from the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul in Trudering. The proceeds of a Christmas fundraising event went to help children in Bosnia



Counselling and assistance

The Office for Repatriation Assistance offers assistance and support on a case-by-case basis to provide each returnee with the best possible help for his or her situation. Personal capabilities, family situation and the conditions in the home region are all considered during the preparation and organisation of repatriation. In the counselling sessions, each client is given an overview of the support and financial aid that is available to enable them to make an informed decision. In order to ensure successful and permanent reintegration, it is important that the returnees themselves are committed to the idea. In this way, repatriation assistance is a means of helping people to help themselves.

Particular care is taken when planning and organising the repatriation of people with special needs. These are primarily ill, disabled and traumatised persons, single mothers and unaccompanied minors. The preparations may include making contact with family members to ascertain the living conditions and care situation for the returnees, arranging further treatment or medication with doctors or finding someone to accompany the returnees on the journey home. In many cases we need to ensure the provision of the right social and medical care for one to two years following repatriation. *Coming Home* often works with partner organisations such as SOLWODI and HEIMATGARTEN.





An elderly man and his disabled son were accompanied on their return to Bosnia



Mr S., Iraq, sends a photo from home by way of thanks for the medical assistance he received



Ms B., a widowed mother of two, received support with her vocational training following repatriation. She is now a practicing doctor in Kosovo.



Mr E. is returning to northern Iraq



Ms M. is returning to Georgia and requires medical care



Ms P. is returning to Russia

Qualifications and employment

The ability to build up a sustainable future is an important element of all refugees' reintegration in their home countries to enable them to provide for themselves and their families. Qualification-based courses and craft-based apprenticeships increase refugees' employment prospects. Some of the training courses are taken following repatriation.

987 people have taken courses leading to qualifications since the start of 2000:

- Computer courses (beginners and advanced) in German, English and Albanian
- Sewing courses
- Hairdressing courses
- German courses
- English courses
- Course in bicycle mechanics
- Course in gas welding
- Course in solar technology
- Course to qualify as an auxiliary nurse
- Further training to qualify as a childminder
- Apprenticeships in the hotel and restaurant trade, hairdressing, electrical installation and orthopaedic technology
- Business set up seminars





Business set up seminar for returnees



Computer courses are offered in German and English



Sewing course for women from Kosovo



Multi-cultural hairdressing course – participants demonstrate their acquired skills on F. Graffe, Director of Social Services



German aid organisation AGEF offers craft-based training in Afghanistan



Craft-based training for women in Afghanistan

Business set up

The opportunity to make a living by running their own small business in their home country is a promising prospect for some returnees. If clients present a realistic business project, have the necessary qualifications to make it work or have prior experience in business and shows the required level of commitment, we help them to draw up a business plan.

In cooperation with AGEF (the Association of Experts in the fields of Migration and Development Cooperation), we have held three business set up seminars for returnees in Munich to date. We have helped to set up a total of 176 businesses since 1998.

The business ideas have been many and varied:

- Scrap metal collection
- Employment agency
- Car repair shop
- Bar/café
- Construction company
- Bakery
- Boutique
- Office service
- Computer sales
- Print shop
- Photo studio
- Photo lab
- Photo reporter
- Fish farming
- Hairdresser's salon
- Grain trading
- Flour mill
- Greenhouse building
- Goldsmith/wrought-iron work
- Hardware store
- Timber trading
- Snack bar
- Internet café
- Legal assistant
- Cacao plantation
- Nursery school
- Clothes/shoe sales
- Photocopying/stationery shop
- Cosmetics salon
- Grocery store
- Market stall
- Medical practice
- Metalworking
- Butcher's
- Furniture workshop
- Dairy factory
- Music supplies store
- Private tuition studio
- Optician's workshop
- Orthopaedics workshop
- Plastics production
- Quartz quarry
- Travel guide
- Restaurant
- Plumbing and electrical supplies
- Pest control
- Locksmith
- Tailor's workshop
- Carpenter's workshop
- Shoe workshop
- School bus company
- Ice-cream production
- Drapery shop
- Taxi firm
- Animal/plant breeding
- Transport company
- Laundry
- Tool making/machine building





Tailor's workshop in Bosnia



Bakery in Serbia



Shoemaker's workshop in Russia



Delicatessen production in Afghanistan



Electrician in Afghanistan



Bar & café in Togo



Trips to refugees' home countries

South-east Europe, Asia, Africa

Visiting refugees' home countries can be useful in many respects:

- Counsellors get an idea of what it's like to live in the countries concerned.
- Clients have more confidence in the quality of the counsellors' advice if they know they have seen the local situation at first hand.
- Counsellors can build up contacts with aid organisations and national embassies; cooperation can be intensified.
- Visiting returnees can help counsellors see how effective their assistance has been.

Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, several trips between 1996 and 2006

Representatives of churches and welfare associations, government authorities and aid organisations, as well as politicians and journalists went on these information trips. The shared experiences and impressions helped to build a foundation for their commitment to supporting the repatriation of refugees and the reconstruction of their home regions in the most appropriate way.

Bosnia



1997 – City representatives, members of the Bavarian parliament, representatives of welfare associations and journalists get a first-hand picture of the situation on the ground



1998 – Meeting at the German Embassy in Sarajevo



1998 – A view of Mostar - The Bavarian parliament's Petition Committee collects information on the security situation for ethnic minorities



2004 – Visit to an old people's home established under the Bremerhaven Workers' Welfare „HEIMATGARTEN“ project in Sanski Most



Serbia



November 2003 – Culture director Lydia Hartl visits cultural facilities in Subotica



2004 – Meeting with the chairman of the Roma cultural centre in Subotica

Kosovo



June 2005 – Visit to the German Embassy's liaison office in Pristina



June 2005 – Many of the houses in Kosovo are still in a state of destruction



Repatriated from Munich – Mr T. in his bakery



Mr and Mrs F. decided to return home – A counsellor visits them one year on



Vietnam, July 2002 – Information visit with Caritas Austria

Paying home visits to returnees shows just how difficult it is to become reintegrated into life at home after what was, in some cases, a very long absence. Returnees' problems with reintegration arise because the political, economic and social situation has changed since they went away, because family members often have very high expectations of them, and because their own personality has changed during their time in exile.



Welcome to Vietnam – But the situation is often very difficult for returnees



NGO centre in Hanoi – Project trips enable counsellors to establish contacts with international aid organisations



Meeting with the director of the education centre in Hanoi (second right)



Training to become a seamstress at a vocational college in Hanoi



Returning from Munich – Although making a new start was a difficult process, Mr L. is happy to be back home



Rice growing in northern Vietnam



Afghanistan, March 2004 - Information trip with refugee counsellors and representatives of government authorities

On this ten-day trip, the counsellors and officials from Germany, Austria and the Netherlands were able to get an idea of the actual situation on the ground. This gave them a better foundation for advising Afghani men and women who were willing to return home.



March 2004 – Repatriation counsellors and officials from Germany, Austria and the Netherlands in Kabul



Clinic run by German aid organisation „Kinderberg“ – The women often have to walk for three hours to obtain medical care



Meeting up in Kabul – Mr H. (centre) returned from Munich in April 2002. AGEF helped him to find a job



Visiting a returnee at home



Education and training for women enjoys particularly high levels of funding



International organisations are involved in the reconstruction and are creating jobs



Ethiopia, July 2003 – Information trip with Accord Austria

By talking to representatives of aid organisations, delegates learned a lot about the difficulties returning refugees are faced with. Visiting people repatriated from Munich, they also saw that how well the reintegration process went was largely down to each returnee's individual situation and capabilities.



With support from SOLWODI, Ms N. opened a children's nursery in a new residential area in Addis Ababa



Visiting Ms N. and her family



December 2003 – Information meetings with international organisations about the current situation and opportunities for cooperation



A seriously ill woman is accompanied back to Ethiopia. She wants to live out the rest of her days at home.



Meeting with some of the returnees supported by Coming Home



Mr A.'s draper's shop in Addis Ababa



Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana, November 2004 – Information trip with the Central Repatriation Advice Centre, Nuremberg

The economic and social conditions in these countries are overshadowed by a sense of hopelessness. However, visits to returnees showed that people can reintegrate if, for example, they are given business set up support and have the support of their families.



Meeting with the German Ambassador in Burkina Faso



The „sewing workshop“ training project in Burkina Faso



Training to become a car mechanic in Togo



Internet café and photocopying shop run by a returnee in Togo



Ghana – Interview with a returnee



A new business set up in Ghana

Messages from home

Information about how people are living, any unforeseen difficulties they may be experiencing, and also the successes they have had are helpful in assessing the effectiveness of the assistance provided by the project, so that we can make adjustments where necessary. Returnees are asked to contact us by post, phone or e-mail once they have been home a few weeks. Keeping up contact is also in the interests of the returnees themselves, as the support does not always end when they leave Germany. The counsellors can still be contacted and can arrange additional assistance if necessary.

Excerpts from postcards, letters, e-mails and phone calls



Mr D. from Guinea



The T. family from Mongolia



It felt good to read from you. Sorry for the long silence.

We are doing just fine. Nora is now in 2nd grade and Eddy in pre-one. Nora has been tops in her class from pre-one to 1st grade. She is currently doing her first term in 2nd grade and is also promising to keep up her first position in class. Eddy is also doing fine in school, though not as sharp as his sister. He has been taking the third place in his class.

I enjoy the work I do, and at the end of my training period, was taken in by the organization. I now act as the programme administrator, and love every minute of the job.

Thanks a lot for your assistance.

It is okay by me if you use the pictures I sent you.

Nochmal, vielen dank.

Ms E. from Nigeria

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,
Ich und meine Familie bedanken uns herzlich für die Hilfe
Es tut uns leid weil das so lang gedauert hat. Die maschine
funktioniert prima und macht fleißig ihren job. Hoffentlich sie
kommen uns bald besuchen
Vielen dank noch mal und Fröhliche Weihnachten,

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Mr S. from Serbia

Guten Tag

Alles was ich Ihnen sagen möchte, ist das ich mich vom ganzen Herzen bedanken will.
Obwohl das Wort "Danke" zuwenig ist, um auszudrücken was Sie alles für mich
getan haben, genauso auch für meine Kinder.
Mir hat diese Geldhilfe sehr viel bedeutet und geholfen.

Vielen, vielen Dank an Herrn Hamid Sijercic und Herrn Latif., und allen anderen
Mitarbeitern, die in dieser Sache mitgewirkt haben.

Danke auch an alle Humanen Seelen.

Hochachtungsvoll

Ms H. from Bosnia



Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,
hiermit bedanke ich mich für ihre Hilfe und für die Möglichkeiten, die ich in
Deutschland hatte, meine Krankheit zu behandeln.

Gott sei mit euch!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Mr R. from Kosovo

Sehr geehrte Frau Tiefengruber,

Dank Ihrer Unterstützung konnte ich problemlos in meine Heimat zurückkehren, es hat
insgesamt gut geklappt, keine Zwischenfälle, kein Ärger.

Heute schreibe ich Ihnen diesen Brief, um Ihnen meinen Dank auszudrücken. Ich bin Ihnen
zutiefst dankbar für sämtliche Hilfe, die Sie mir angedeihen ließen, noch während meines
Aufenthalts in Deutschland. Ihnen wünsche ich alles Gute.

Mr N. from Vietnam

Hallo Frau Glaser !

Vielleicht erinnern Sie Sich an uns . Wir waren in Ihrem Büro. Sie haben uns Informationen
über Rückkehr helfen gegeben. Wir sind bereits seit 15.03.2003 in Burhaniye /Türkei . Uns geht es soweit gut.
Burhaniye ist sehr schön. Wir haben schönes Wetter. Unsere Kinder waren bereits
schwimmen am Meer.
Die Rückkehrhilfe von der ZVA wurde uns erstattet. Ich habe als Verkäuferin in einem Büromöbel
geschäft angefangen. Mein Mann wir in einer Olivenöl Fabrik als Maschinen Mechaniker anfangen. Die Kinder
haben bald Sommerferien , noch 20 Tage . Dann ist mit der Schule für 3 Monate schluss. Wie geht Es
Sollten Sie Urlaub machen wollen . Dann ist unsere Gegend
empfehlenswert.

Viele Grüsse und bleiben Sie gesund und munter
Fam. Şimşek

The S. family from Turkey





Merci à "Coming Home".
 J'ai retrouvé
 le goût de
 la vie.
 Abel Kientegga
 AK

Mr K., Burkina Faso

Wie beurteilen Sie Ihre Zukunft?
 Wegen ist ein Geschäft mit Ihrer und Verwandten
 Hilfe aufmachen kann, sehe ich meine Zukunft positiv.
 Was möchten Sie uns noch mitteilen?
 Sie haben ~~etwas~~ Ihre Einrichtung
 hat mich gefolgt und dafür danke ich euch alle. Besonders
 will ich Herrn Hamid Sijer ~~ic~~ für seine Professionalität, menschliche
 Anstand, und Hilfsbereitschaft danken.
 Puno hvala za Vaše pismo! / Vielen Dank für Ihren Brief!
 Sa najboljim željama za Vas i Vašu porodicu!

Mr Y. from Ethiopia

Hallo Frau Kapraun!

Herzliche Gruesse aus Moskau schickt Ihnen Natalija
 Ich moechte Ihnen nochmals fuer alles danken, was Sie
 fuer mich getan haben. Ich vergesse nie, wie Sie fuer mich gesorgt haben.
 Als ich nach Russland kam, war es mir schlecht zumute.
 Es war lange ganz schwierig, wieder zu sich zu kommen.
 Es ist gut dass ich jetzt arbeite. Die Arbeit bringt mir Freude.

Gruessen Sie bitte von mir die Dolmetscherin Ira

Natalija

Ms N. from Russia



Donations

- More than 3,000 of Munich's citizens donated money to returnees and aid projects.
- 150 firms donated goods, including shop fittings, tools, working materials, food, clothing and sports gear.
- Munich's artists supported the fundraising campaigns with concerts, photographic exhibitions and special events.
- Munich's daily newspapers helped by reporting on our work and publishing requests for donations.
- 25 schools donated furniture and sports equipment. One school collected money for the reconstruction of a school sports hall in Bosnia.
- 50 children's nurseries, kindergartens and children's homes donated furnishings and toys.
- Hospitals, nursing homes, old people's homes, pharmacies and medical supplies stores donated beds, medical aids and drugs.
- Municipal agencies donated office furniture for administrative offices and welfare facilities in Bosnia, Kosovo and Serbia.
- Volunteer workers donated their time, looked after individual families or helped out in the donated goods warehouse.
- The Bavarian Red Cross organised donations and aid transports and arranged fun activities for children from crisis-torn areas.

**The value of money and goods donated
between 1997 and 2006 totals**

1,000,000.- euros





Donated goods warehouse – Equipment for the disabled and those in need of nursing care



Donations from the people of Munich for Bosnian refugees and for transportation to Bosnia



Donation for an education project in Afghanistan



The environment network „München-Ost“ collected glasses to send to Burkina Faso



An ambulance for Subotica, the Serbian town Munich sponsors



Red Cross volunteers donated their time to give children from Serbia a holiday in Munich



How donations were used

- More than 100 humanitarian transports took aid to ten Bosnian communities, one city in Serbia, three communities in Kosovo and also to Afghanistan.
- 500 families were able to get household goods from the donated goods warehouse.
- We organised the transportation of personal household goods back to their home countries for 250 families.
- Some families were able to pay for their homes to be repaired.
- 100 people setting up in business were given used business equipment, machinery and tools, all donated by companies in Munich.
- A Serbian community got a refuse collection vehicle, two ambulances and a car for the mobile social services.
- Elderly, ill and disabled people received financial help from the money donated.
- We funded German courses and orientation courses for refugee children.
- We arranged mine-clearing courses for returnees to Kosovo.
- We organised computer and sewing courses, which improved people's chances of obtaining employment at home.





Beds from Munich hospitals are now a great help in Serbia, Kosovo and Afghanistan



This mine victim was able to get prosthetic limbs made with materials donated from Munich



Financial aid for the reconstruction of a house in Kosovo



Donated TVs and stereos enabled this television repair man to make a new start



Language labs from Munich schools are now in use in Serbia



This school in Burkina Faso was extended and the accommodation subsidised with money donated from Munich

Aid projects

- Water supply for 40 households in a Bosnian village
- Renovation of a school sports hall in Bosnia
- Computers for a grammar school in Kosovo
- Power supply for a school in Kosovo
- Equipping a school library in Kosovo
- Language labs and computer teaching rooms for schools in Serbia
- Holidays for school children from Serbia
- Circus project for traumatised children in Bosnia
- Extension of a school in Burkina Faso and support for the schoolchildren
- Free eye checks for schoolchildren in Burkina Faso
- Setting up a bicycle repair shop as a social project in Kabul
- Establishment of orthopaedics workshops in Afghanistan
- Pilot project for the orderly disposal of waste in Kabul
- Funding of schooling for girls and women in Afghanistan





The Bavarian Red Cross delivers aid to Subotica, the Serbian town Munich sponsors



A Bosnian village gets a supply of running water



A grammar school in Kosovo is equipped with modern computers



Orthopaedics workshop in Afghanistan



A place for bicycle mechanics to train in Kabul



Free eye checks and glasses for schoolchildren in Burkina Faso



Press coverage

The Office for Repatriation Assistance receives a lot of support from the local press. By reporting on our work and publishing requests for donations, Munich's daily newspapers have helped us to raise money and collect goods to support individual returnees and aid projects.



5. Looking ahead and suggestions for the future

The European Refugee Fund, ERF, has funded numerous projects in the six years since its inception and will continue to be a key player in the formulation of a coordinated asylum policy throughout Europe.

The successful development of the Office for Repatriation Assistance would not have been possible without the European Refugee Fund. The ERF facilitated international contacts, co-operation and the exchange of experience. The EU *Coming Home* project was a pioneer and a model for the development of repatriation assistance in Bavaria and the establishment of repatriation support structures in other German states.

However, the significance and the benefit of European funding in the future is influenced less by the successes and more by the unresolved problems that continue to exist despite years of fruitful cooperation.

From a reintegration perspective, the Office for Repatriation Assistance would like to see greater regard given to the following aspects in future:

The counselling and assistance structures in refugees' home countries need to be expanded. These remain insufficient to date. Refugees who have been away from home for many years need help to find their feet and reintegrate in society in the early weeks and months after repatriation. Reliable places they can go to for individual advice and support without having to travel too far from home helps to make the new start less difficult. This applies especially to people who are not returning to established family structures.

Organisations working in the sphere of repatriation assistance and development cooperation should be compelled to work together, by both the European Union and the member states. Some of the returnees could use the skills they obtained in Europe for the benefit of develop-

ment aid projects locally, and many an aid organisation could provide future prospects for these people by giving them a job.

It would make sense to have greater links between EU projects on similar topics. It is extremely difficult to exchange experience across Europe and no overview of all ERF projects is available. It would be very beneficial to have a complete overview of projects accessible for reference on the ERF website, with the title, a brief description and the contact person, listed by country and topic. As a community action, it would be desirable to have an annual meeting of all ERF project directors, in the style of a trade fair, where delegates could present their projects and get to know each other.

Allowing refugees and asylum-seekers easier access to the employment market would reduce the need for welfare payments and repatriation assistance alike. It would also increase their willingness to return home voluntarily. If people spending a limited period of exile in Europe were given the opportunity to work normally and earn money, they would be less dependent on state assistance upon their return home. They would find it easier to reintegrate, including in the employment market at home, than those who spent years dependent on state handouts, without anything to do or any prospects to look forward to. Employment bans and limitations for refugees are counter-productive to any efforts to promote repatriation.

In its practical work and, wherever possible, through its involvement in the political process, the Office for Repatriation Assistance will continue to work hard to ensure that people who have been taken in for a short time and granted protection in our country receive the support they need to make a new start when they return home.



Repatriation advice centres in Bavaria

Munich Social Services Department

Office for Living and Migration - Office for Repatriation Assistance

Coming Home

(responsible for the city of Munich)

Franziskanerstraße 8

81669 Munich

Tel. +49 (0)89/2 33 - 4 06 36

reintegration@muenchen.de

www.muenchen.de/reintegration

Central Repatriation Advice Service for Refugees

in Northern Bavaria

(responsible for Upper and Middle Franconia and Upper Palatinate)

Beuthener Straße 37

90471 Nuremberg

Tel. +49 (0)911/94 06 - 1 72

zrb@last-n.bayern.de

www.zrb-nordbayern.de

Central Repatriation Advice Service for Refugees

in Southern Bavaria

(responsible for Swabia, Lower Bavaria and Upper Bavaria – with the exception of Munich)

Alte Gasse 17

86152 Augsburg

Tel. +49 (0)821/50 89 - 6 32

info@zrb-suedbayern.de

www.zrb-suedbayern.de

Central Repatriation Advice Service for Refugees

in Western Bavaria

(responsible for Lower Franconia and the city and district of Coburg)

Veitshöchheimer Straße 100

97080 Würzburg

Tel. +49 (0)931/98 02 - 2 90

info@zrb-westbayern.de

www.zrb-westbayern.de



Names, acronyms and useful links

AGEF

The Association of Experts in the fields of Migration and Development Cooperation is a non-profit organisation based in Berlin, which undertakes projects relating to job placement and business set up support in collaboration with the BMZ and the ZAV.
www.agef.de
www.reintegration.net

Federal Office for Foreign Affairs

Information on countries, addresses of consular posts.
www.auswaertigesamt.de

BAMF

Federal Office for Recognition of Foreign Refugees. Department 333 is responsible for managing the German projects supported by the ERF.
Information on migration, integration and right of asylum, overview of EU projects, information on applying for EU funding under the European Refugee Fund.
www.bamf.de

BMZ

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.
www.bmz.de

ERF

European Refugee Fund; EU instrument for the development of a common European asylum system, running from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2007; the ERF supports projects relating to the admission, integration and voluntary repatriation of refugees.
www.europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/project/erf/erf._de.htm

GARP

Government Assisted Repatriation Programme, an IOM repatriation assistance programme.

HEIMATGARTEN

A Bremerhaven workers' welfare project caring for elderly, ill and disabled returnees.
www.heimatgarten.de

Asylum Information Association

Up-to-date information on asylum for counselling practitioners.
www.asyl.net

IOM

International Organisation for Migration.
www.iom.int
www.iom.int/germany

ISOPLAN

Institute for Development Research, Economic and Social Planning; database of information on countries for migrants and counsellors.
www.isoplan.de

JRS

Jesuit Refugee Service.
www.jesuiten-fluechtlingsdienst.de

REAG

Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum Seekers in Germany, an IOM reintegration programme.

Red Cross/Accord

Research service for up-to-date, case-by-case information on countries.
<http://accord.rotekreuz.at>

SOLWODI

Solidarity with Women in Distress; aid organisation providing individual reintegration support to single women and single mothers.
www.solwodi.de



UNHCR

United Nations High Commission for Refugees; situation reports and statements from the office of the UN Commissioner for Refugees.

www.unhcr.de

WUS

The World University Service also offers services to students and skilled workers returning to their home countries.

www.wusgermany.de

ZAV

Central Office for Job Placement.

www.zav-reintegration.de

ZIRF

Centre for Information Exchange at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

www.bamf.de

www.zirf.bamf.de





Thank you, Munich

Many of the people of Munich have made donations in recent years to help refugees make a new start back at home and to enable us to carry out aid projects in the countries the refugees return to. We thank you on behalf of everyone you have helped.

Our work goes on - please lend us your support!

Bank account for donations: Stadtparkasse München
Bank sort code: 701 500 00
Account no.: 17 270 380