

PROJECT TYPE	GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE	DONOR	PROJECT PERIOD
Return and Reintegration Assistance for Migrants and Governments (RR)	Global	Sweden	Dec 2022-Nov 2023

PROJECT OVERVIEW

From Policy to Practice: Operationalizing a Rights-Based Approach to Return and Reintegration (RR P2P) is a one-year project funded by the Swedish Government, implemented, and managed by the Return and Reintegration Unit at IOM Headquarters in Geneva. The overall objective of the RR P2P project is to mainstream a rights-based approach to return migration by putting into practice the principles and strategic objectives introduced in IOMs Return Readmission and Reintegration Policy, and consequently support governments and partners to assist migrants in their safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration. In line with Outcome 1 of the RR P2P project, the Virtual Counselling Project is implemented by IOM Germany as a pilot initiative contributing to Output 1.2 of the RR P2P project: “Processes and guidelines on safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration are piloted in key countries and regions” and aims to support stakeholders working in return migration to establish due diligence processes in respect to migrants’ rights to protection.

Project Objective

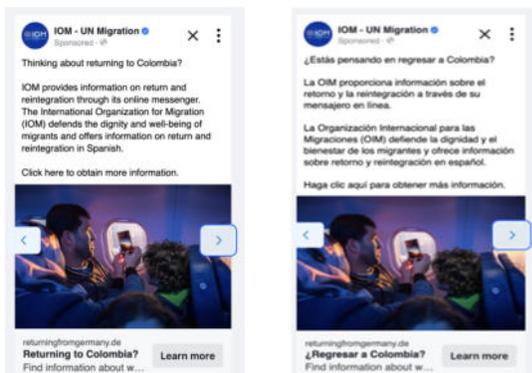
Expansion of the German Virtual Counselling structure to other IOM missions in Europe and beyond.

A significant proportion of the migrant community are not reached through the traditional counselling structure in host countries in EU and beyond: Language, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility may pose difficulties. The project aims at providing an easily accessible, culturally sensitive, and unbiased counselling service to migrant communities seeking information on return and reintegration options. Upon arrival, a continuous contact contributes to sustainable reintegration in the country of origins.

Through the Virtual Counselling project, IOM staff in the countries of origin provide return and reintegration counselling via smartphone in the native language of the migrant communities. Counselling can include, for example, information on financial assistance, support for a business start-up, housing, medical needs, psychosocial counselling or job counselling. Messengers such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Viber and Skype are used. The counselling is unbiased, free of charge and anonymous.

How Does it Work?

1. In collaboration with IOM Germany, the participating IOM missions set up a counselling structure.



Facebook ads for migrants returning to Colombia in English and Spanish, IOM 2023.



IOM Georgia colleague Natia with Polad who benefited from Global VC prior to his return from Finland to Georgia in October, IOM 2023.

2. IOM Germany raises awareness of the project through social media. IOM missions reach out to local counselling centres, NGOs, migrant associations, diaspora, and community leaders to promote the VC service.

3. Interested migrants contact local IOM staff in the countries of origin directly. They can do so at any point of the return and reintegration process.

Summary of key activities and progress made during the reporting period

Briefing and Trainings: All participating countries were trained by IOM Germany on the general idea and the added value of VC. IOM Germany coordinated the training sessions between IOM staff members of host countries and CoO (Countries of Origin). Moreover, trainings on the usage of the CRM (Community Response Map), the monitoring and evaluation tool, were offered.

Info Material: Digital and physical flyers were developed for a variety of different country combinations. For certain host countries special SOPs were developed and distributed to colleagues in the respective CoO.

Outreach campaigns: As Facebook ads have proven to be an effective tool to reach migrant communities, 19 Facebook ads were boosted, reaching more than 1.4 million people.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The CRM was constantly adjusted. Therefore, return counsellors were easily accessible to access the CRM and enter general information and anonymous data about the counselling sessions conducted. A dashboard was developed with an interactive map that provides a good overview of the available counselling structures, the participating countries as well as the counsellors’ contact details and flyers.

Main outcomes:

- 27 IOM country offices participated
- 288 Virtual Counselling sessions took place
- 459 migrants benefited from the Global VC
- Migrants returning to Sierra Leone, Brazil, Colombia, Nigeria, and Georgia accounted for the highest number of counselling sessions.