



Return assistance: a change of perspective

Return assistance - in practice

Colombia, Bogota



Mr. L. returned to Cali, Colombia in June 2019.

In view of his age and reduced mobility, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) approved the reintegration support for his return. During the discussions with the return counsellor, it became clear, that Mr. L.'s greatest concern was the fact that he had no place to stay upon his return. Therefore, it was decided that the reintegration support he would receive would be linked to housing and additional care and assistance, as required.

Upon his arrival, Mr. L. was supported by IOM Cali and within a few weeks, he was able to move into a flat, thus allowing him to settle in and rebuild his life in Cali.

In October 2021, IOM Bogota had a phone call with Mr. L. to follow up on his current situation. He indicated that he was doing very well and stressed, that the support and guidance he received from the first moment and throughout the different stages of the return process made him feel more confident about his return.

“IOM made me feel so confident through its continued support and its constant willingness to help me.”, said Mr. L. He also stated that the reintegration assistance provided to him was very helpful since he was able to cover the costs for medicine, rent, furniture as well as the possibility to cover his immediate needs upon his return. Mr. L. expressed his full satisfaction with the support and the way he was treated.

He is thankful for the possibility to be reunited with his family and to restart his life in Cali. He expects to continue his life peacefully, enjoying the interaction with his friends and relatives.

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.

SEM/IOM, November 2021

