

Return to Angola

Evaluation Angola Conexcao innovation pilot

Between 2005 and 2007 the HIT Foundation carried out the TOP innovation return project. As part of the project a local support centre was set up in Angola. This paper presents the three most important lessons learned from the pilot and recommendations for the future.

- Aim** To develop new methods for return support.
- Assumption** Economic independence contributes to the sustainable reintegration and personal development of returnees.
- Core** The future prospects of asylumseekers can improve if return coaches provide tailor-made support using the case and chain management method. Cooperation between partners in the asylum chain - in the Netherlands and in the country of origin - is a precondition.

Angola Conexcao

Cooperation with partners in the country of origin proved difficult in practice, because in many cases an appropriate local support structure was lacking. Because the largest group of participants in the return project were Angolan, a local support centre was set up in Luanda. The centre coached returnees and monitored their plans for the future.

The support centre was a temporary initiative that, if successful, could be completely taken over by a local partner. Successful components of the formula would be adapted and copied in other return countries. The centre answered questions and arranged all aspects of return, from starting a company and going to school to finding accommodation and the availability of medicines. Specific attention was given to finding employment.

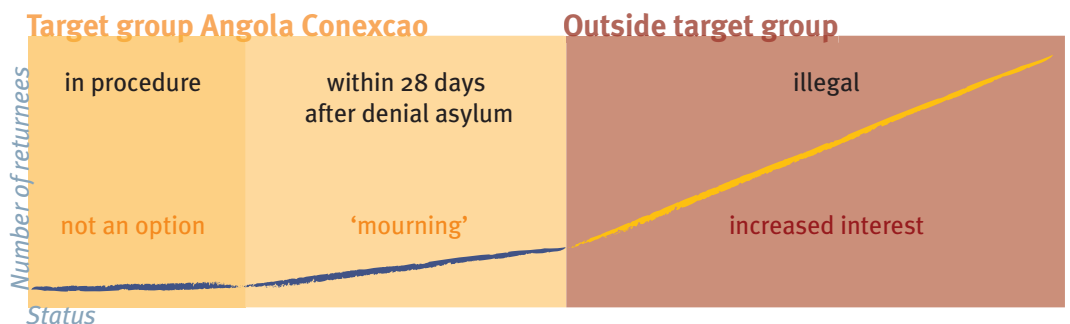
LESSONS

“I'm still hoping for something... though I don't know what”

Rejected Angolan asylum seeker in Amsterdam, January 2008

Practice shows that, during their asylum procedure, asylumseekers have little or no interest in return. While they have papers, return is not regarded as an option. Once their applications have been formally rejected, they undergo a period of 'mourning.' They do not take active steps towards return at once, but first explore other options. Should they stay in the country illegally, move on to another country, or hope for an amnesty?

Under the current regulations, by the time they are starting to accept that return is perhaps the preferable option, it is often too late to take advantage of return support schemes. The schemes are primarily aimed at asylum seekers whose cases are still under consideration and who are often not yet mentally prepared to return. While asylum seekers whose applications have been rejected and have therefore become illegal show the most interest in return, they are generally no longer eligible for support.



LESSON 1: Disqualifying failed asylum seekers from receiving return support is a missed chance for a successful return policy and for the future of individual returnees

“She had no relevant education or experience; we've already got enough of those.”

Employer in Luanda, November 2007

Returnees from the Netherlands do not distinguish themselves significantly from those who stayed behind in the country of origin in terms of professional skills, knowledge and attitude. On the rapidly-growing African labour market, the motto is 'business is business' and companies want the best candidates. Most returnees are poorly educated, lack work experience and - in the worst cases - have a passive and lethargic work ethic. Not because they are lazy, but because the Dutch asylum system, in which they have spent years waiting, has made them that way.

LESSON 2: Limiting access to education and work during the asylum procedure reduces the economic prospects, and the number, of returnees.

“You don't know what is needed here until you return.”

Returnee in Luanda, August 2007

The tailor-made method is attractive if returnees and their coaches in the Netherlands are fully up-to-date on the situation and opportunities in the country of origin. However, at a distance, they usually do not have a realistic idea of the situation and highly detailed plans for return drawn up in the Netherlands often prove to be inflexible and of little relevance once returned. Returnees need transparent and flexible support. With no clear frameworks or budgets, expectations are created which cannot always be fulfilled.

LESSON 3: Individual supervision, planning and budget management are more effective and efficient if they are conducted in the country of origin.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When	During the asylum procedure	After rejection of the application	On return
What	Empower asylum seekers aimed at personal development	Support ex-asylum seekers with practical aspects on return	Empower ex-asylum seekers aimed at social and economic re-integration
How	Invest in asylum seekers by offering them access to schooling, work and internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realistic information on the situation, opportunities and support in the country of origin - Primary care on departure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary care on return - Support towards schooling, work and entrepreneurship - Psychosocial care - Flexible budget use
Condition		Central, independent coordination	Cooperation between local and European partners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparent offer - Clear framework regarding available means and support 		

The Foundation for Restored Confidence in the Future (HIT) is an innovation platform at the cutting edge of migration and labour. HIT mediates between organisations in the field and conducts experiments to achieve innovations in policy and practice.

More information: HIT Foundation - PO Box 3600 - 6095 ZG Baexem - T +31(0)475-45 79 70 - info@hitfoundation.eu

w w w . h i t f o u n d a t i o n . e u

