

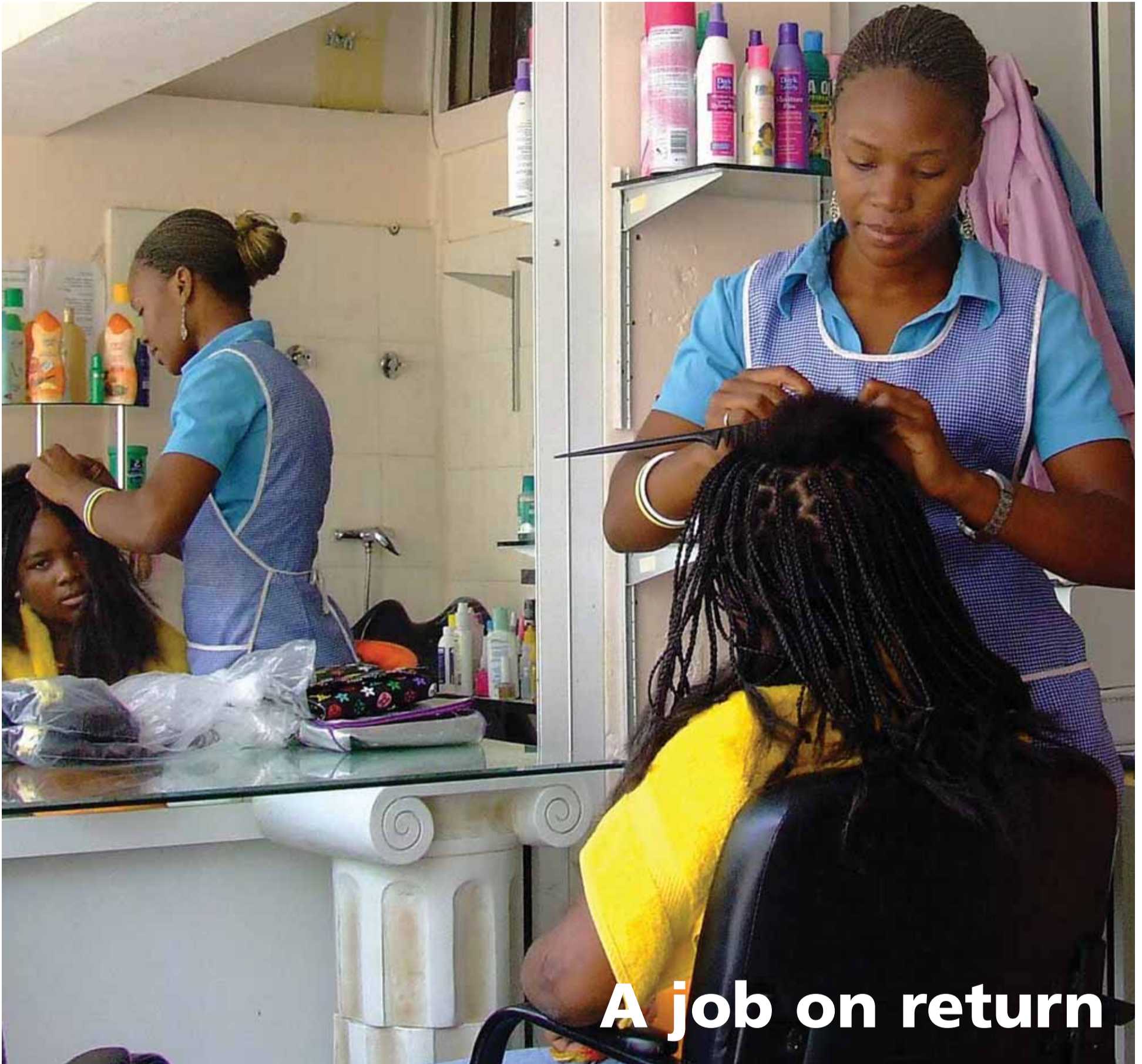
# the Migrant

September 2007

Special edition

www.hitfoundation.eu

INNOVATING MIGRATION PRACTICES



## A job on return

Most asylum-seekers in Europe are labour migrants. Pushed by a lack of opportunities and pulled by the promising prospects that wealthy continents seem to offer, they decide to try their luck abroad. However, the majority never receive legal permission to settle down in the countries they flee to. This newspaper describes new ways of supporting labour migrants to build a new future back home.



### 'Triple Win'

A positive attitude towards migrants combined with sound migration policies can provide benefits to migrants, to countries of origin and to host countries. Ruud Lubbers thinks it is time to start experimenting with circular migration.

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### Gains & pains

Migration not only causes problems, but also provides opportunities. What does the world have to gain from - well-regulated - international migration and what obstacles and problems need to be tackled to achieve this?

---> pages 6-7



### Opening the mindset

The mindset of an asylum-seeker is like a rollercoaster: from fear to hope via despair to renewed faith. Case and chain management is designed to support asylum-seekers in their journey towards a new future.

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### A new future

Every asylum-seeker has their own story. They come for different reasons and encounter personal obstacles while preparing for return. Five returnees share their stories on how they are shaping their future back home.

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# Walk the Talk!

Proving the benefits of labour migration

Ruud Lubbers



"International migration should be viewed not as a threat, but as an opportunity." These were the words of Kofi Annan at the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in September 2006. A positive attitude towards migrants and migration, combined with sound migration policies, can result in a 'triple win' situation, with benefits for all parties involved: the country of origin, the country of destination and the migrants concerned. I couldn't agree with him more. Now it's time to act.

Migration is a centuries-old phenomenon, which contributed to worldwide economic and cultural development. But today, the Western world seems to have rolled down its shutters and locked up the gates. With the exception of a few highly skilled intellectual workers, the attitude towards migrants is primarily defensive. The main concern seems to be how to deal with those who are here and how to prevent others from coming. As a result, there is a fear-based attitude towards migration. We have to recognise this fear and help transform it into action that facilitates social cohesion, connection and participation in society.

I believe that participation is key, both locally and on a world scale. Immigrants - in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world - should participate actively in all functional circles of society. Participation starts with emphasising strengths and seeking common ground. These principles should be applied on an international scale as well. We have to find ways to allow developing countries and their inhabitants to participate in the global community. Given the opportunity, migrants could be important contributors to this process. We should discourage any perception of them as victims, and rather take advantage of their unique qualities by recognising their drive to achieve and addressing their talents.

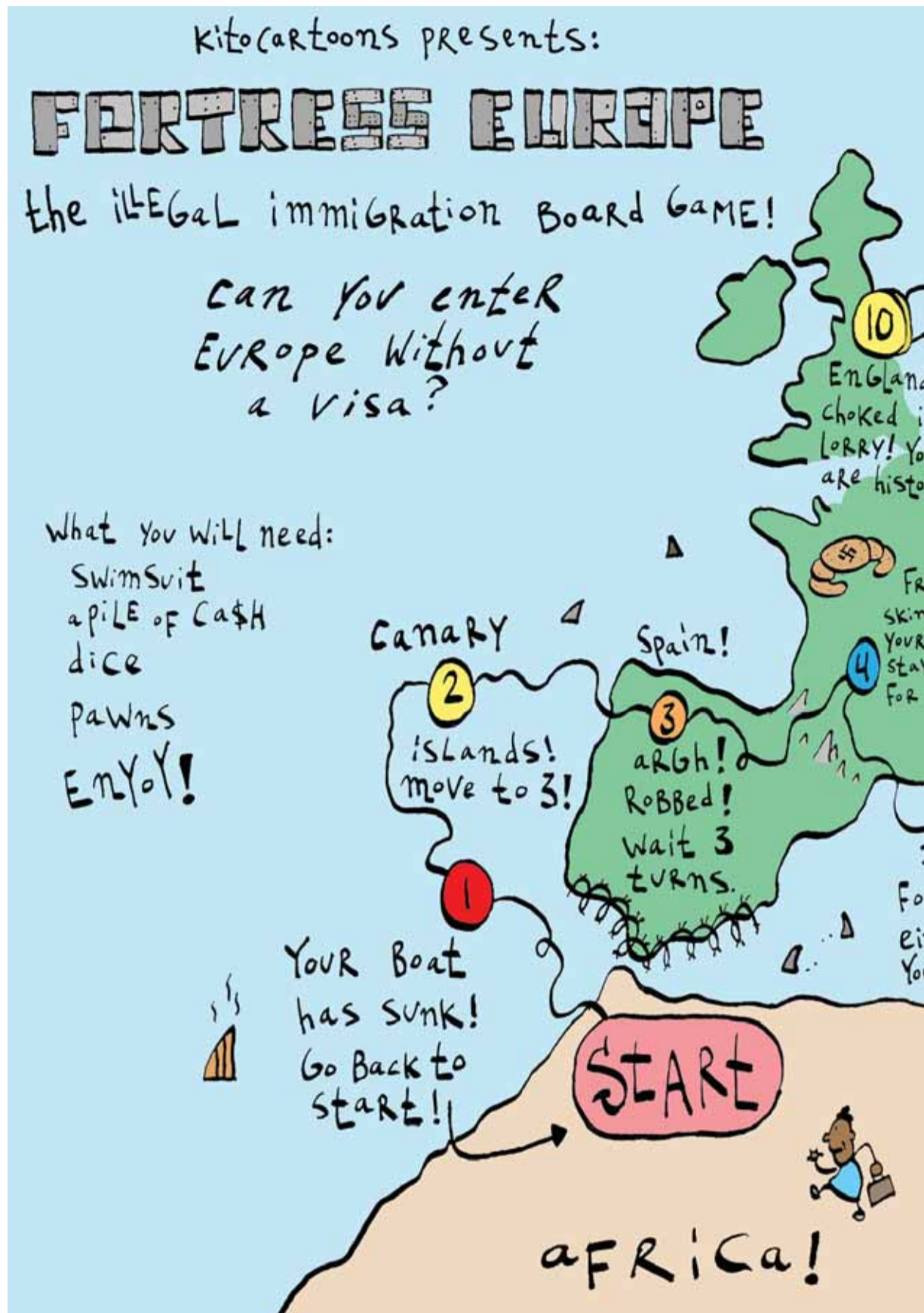
Migrants are by nature entrepreneurs and survivors. With their unique skills, perseverance and experience in at least two different worlds, they can have a positive influence on the societies to which they migrate. They could also be important contributors to their countries of origin. Currently, remittances - the money migrants send back to their families - are a way out of poverty for millions of people in developing countries. Social, cultural and intellectual 'remittances' could be even more powerful. It is about time that we started using this power and developed migration policies that are positive for developing countries as well.

To achieve this, a fundamental change in (international) migration law is required: circular migration should be allowed and even promoted. Migrants in Europe should be able to go back home temporarily to transmit acquired knowledge and skills, without losing their residency rights in Europe. In this regard, the administrative burden of temporary return should be reduced. At the same time, Europe should develop a coherent policy for labour migrants from abroad, based on a clear balance between what Europe needs in terms of skills and professional qualities, and what returning migrants can subsequently take back home. Both high and low skilled workers should be able to participate in this newly regulated migration market. In this way labour migration can become a solution, rather than a problem.

Economists agree that even a minor liberalisation of the global labour market could lead to great progress in the world economy. Both multinational companies and small and medium-sized enterprises can take advantage of migrant employees to adapt their businesses to the global market place. Innovation and tapping into all available talent worldwide are crucial in this respect. By the same token, developing nations are in great need of skilled and experienced labour which understands the rules of global business.

Annan's triple win has been discussed for some time now and there seems to be a high level of consensus on the potential gains. Now is the time to act. I realise that both the European Union and national governments have to find their way and that new policies are not adopted overnight. But instead of dwelling on the threats, it is time to start experimenting with circular migration on a small scale. In that way the potential pitfalls can be controlled and we can learn as we go along. Change can only be brought about through action in daily practice. Real life experiences are invaluable for shaping effective migration strategies for the future. Migration will not disappear; let us prove its numerous benefits through the triple win.

*Ruud Lubbers is the former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He was prime minister of the Netherlands from 1982-1994, he is one of the initiators of the Dutch Roundtable of Worldconnectors and an active member of the Earth Charter Council.*



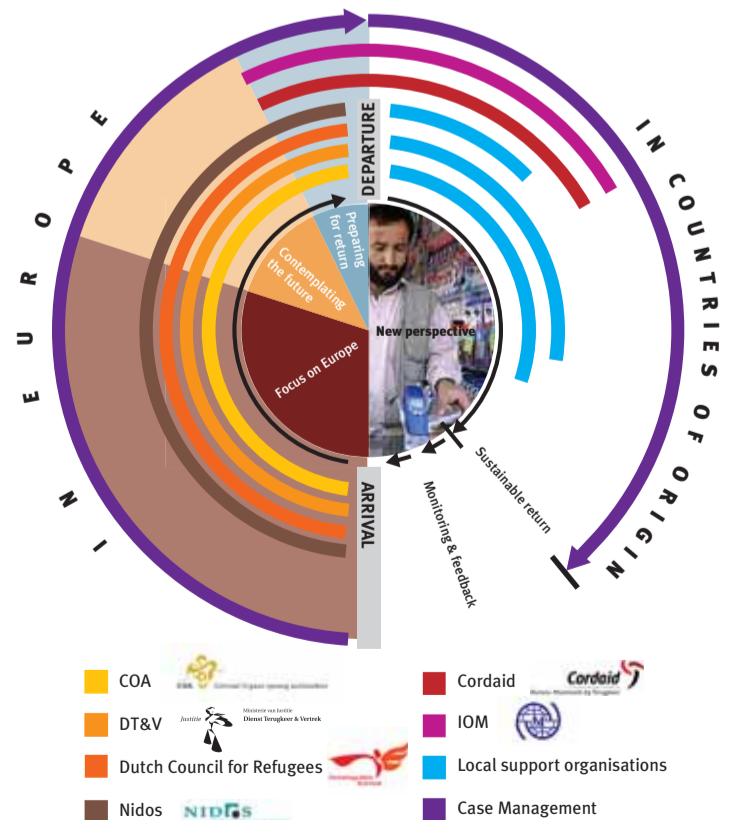
## Dutch players

The **Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)** of the Ministry of Justice provides asylum-seekers and refugees with temporary housing during their residence in the Netherlands. COA case managers give support and advice to individual asylum-seekers throughout their legal stay in the country and initiate contacts with other organisations both here and in the countries of origin. [www.coa.nl](http://www.coa.nl)

The goal of the **Migration Return and Departure Services (DT&V)** of the Ministry of Justice is to facilitate the departure from the Netherlands of rejected asylum-seekers who have exhausted all legal remedies. DT&V orchestrates the actual departure in close cooperation with other asylum organisations. [www.dienstterugkeerenvertrek.nl](http://www.dienstterugkeerenvertrek.nl)

The **Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland)** is an independent organisation that defends the interests of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Netherlands. Its support ranges from giving practical guidance during the asylum application procedure to help with integration into Dutch society. The Council also advises

## Vision on re-integration





asylum-seekers who have been refused a permit to stay. VluchtelingenWerk has regional offices throughout the Netherlands. [www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl](http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl)

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** is an intergovernmental organisation committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. IOM in the Netherlands facilitates asylum-seekers and irregular as well as vulnerable migrants who wish to return to their country of origin or who want to resettle in a third country. IOM makes all the arrangements (pre-departure, logistics and reintegration worldwide) and also provides support in the countries of origin. IOM has regional offices in Netherlands and about 300 support offices in over 100 countries worldwide. [www.iom-nederland.nl](http://www.iom-nederland.nl)

**Maatwerk bij Terugkeer** is a project set up on the initiative of development organisation **Cordaid**. Through its worldwide partner network, Cordaid provides tailor-made support to asylum-seekers returning to their countries of origin. Preparations start in the Netherlands and continue local-

ly. Local support depends on the competences of the local partner organisation and may include arrival assistance, finding accommodation, helping resolve medical problems, social services, mediation in finding work or setting up a business, referral to credit providers and tracing lost family members. [www.cordaid.nl](http://www.cordaid.nl)

The **NIDOS Foundation** is the Dutch national organisation for guardianship of unaccompanied minor migrants. All asylum-seekers under the age of 18 who arrive in the Netherlands on their own are assigned a guardian. Among other things, the guardian helps the youngsters explore the options for the future and draw up a plan of action with the goal of achieving independence - in the Netherlands or elsewhere - as soon as they reach the age of 18. [www.nidos.nl](http://www.nidos.nl)

The **HIT Foundation** develops new methods for the economic and social participation of migrants in society, both in the Netherlands and in their countries of origin. HIT is an independent project organisation which acts as facilitator in the return project. [www.hitfoundation.eu](http://www.hitfoundation.eu)

#### Goals

The main goals of the project:

- To support 320 persons in preparing for return - 25% of whom actually go back during the project period (2005-2007) - and realise adequate return conditions in three countries;
- To develop tools to support case- and chain management, including a database to collect and exchange knowledge on return issues and a profile describing the competencies required of a case manager;
- To increase chain cooperation and set up a network of operational and strategic key players in the Netherlands, other European member states and countries of origin;
- To collaborate with local initiatives in the countries of origin, in particular to create new opportunities on the local labour markets;
- To develop a shared vision and method for return including moral, practical and financial measures to assist individual asylum-seekers in their return process and to enhance their chances of success back home.

# About the Migrant

The majority of migrants seeking asylum in Europe do not receive a permit to stay. Those who don't are basically left with two alternatives: **staying on illegally or returning to their country of origin.** In 2005 various organisations in the asylum chain in the Netherlands decided to join forces and explore the possibilities for innovative return.

This newspaper presents the shared vision and the case and chain management methodology developed by the partnership. It describes the experiences and stories of migrants who decided to rebuild their future back home. It gives an insight into the tools to support returnees and it explores the potential development gains of labour migration.

The outcome presented here is not an end in itself, but a work-in-progress. The aim of this publication is to share and disseminate best and worst practices for the benefit of individual migrants all over the world.

## Innovating asylum practice

Partnership for sustainable reintegration

Since the start of the project, approximately 60 asylum-seekers have returned to their country of origin. Another 20 are making serious preparations for a future back home. In total over 150 persons took part in the project.

Based on the original project goals, fewer people took part than was anticipated, but of those who did a much higher percentage actually returned. Many of them reported back that building a new life at home was not necessarily easy, but in the end they were glad they took the decision. Now they can look forward once again.

#### Policy change

At the end of 2003 the Dutch government adopted a new asylum policy, which put a much stronger emphasis on return. 'Not admitted means returning home' was the main message and several measures were announced to promote return. This proved easier said than done. Asylum-seekers who have gone through a lot of trouble to get here are not easily persuaded to return. Confronted with the practical side of this new policy, a number of Dutch asylum organisations decided to join forces in early 2004. Their goal was to introduce innovations to return practices, in order to achieve truly successful return. 'Successful' meaning: well prepared, with tangible opportunities on the local labour market and social reintegration in the country of origin. Solving practical bottlenecks for individuals in the return chain proved the key issue to be tackled.

#### From push to pull

"Parties involved felt there weren't sufficient support facilities to adequately help asylum-seekers in their return process," says Frans Bastiaens of the HIT Foundation. HIT is an independent organisation that supports the partners in executing the project. The partnership agreed on certain core values for their collaboration. One was not to reinvent the wheel, but to use and streamline proven practices in host and home countries. Bastiaens: "None of us knew

exactly what the others had to offer and although we had similar goals, there was no shared vision on return." With the political agenda focused on managing outflow, the focus thus far had been primarily on departure [push]. The common challenge was to work towards sustainable reintegration by creating reasons to go back [pull-factors].

#### Strong emotions

"Halfway through the project period, we concluded that there was probably no other target group within ESF-equal as challenging as this one," Bastiaens explains. "Return evokes strong emotions; it can mean losing face, going back to poor economic prospects and a confrontation with all kinds of emotional and practical obstacles. Fear of jeopardising the asylum procedure keeps many from even thinking about return, let alone discussing it openly with a counsellor or with peers. Consequently most asylum-seekers wait until after the final decision before they start exploring alternative options. But future options should be explored as soon as possible after the first negative juridical indications. Only then can real support be provided to prepare for a future back home."

#### Financiers

More than half of the project budget is financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), which promotes equal opportunities in the labour market. COA and the municipalities of Heerlen, Maastricht and Venlo also provided a large share of the funding. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Directorate-General for Development Cooperation) granted a specific subsidy to cover investments made by individual migrants on return to their country of origin.

# On the move

Migration has existed as long as mankind itself. Some 80,000 years ago, modern man *homo sapiens*, started migrating from Africa. These early migrants traversed Europe, Asia and the Americas and settled in new locations. From this historical point in time until today, this process has never stopped. Large numbers of people continue to move around in search of a better place to live and work. For Mexicans and other Latinos the USA is the place to go. For many Africans the European continent represents their dream of a better future.

Pushed by a lack of opportunities, by persecution, war or environmental crisis in their home countries, and pulled by the promising prospects that wealthy continents seem to offer - as shown in Western television series broadcast around the world - people decide to try their luck abroad. Of course, the arrival of newcomers in an existing society has never been and never will be without its tension and conflicts. However, after a period of time - normally lasting some generations - most migrants grow accustomed to their new country and its culture. And those who receive them grow accustomed to them, too.

**Myth**  
'Migration has never occurred on such a large scale as today'

## Fact

In absolute terms, the worldwide number of migrants has increased rapidly in past decades. In 1970, there were 'only' 81 million migrants; by 2005 that number had increased to 190 million. However, relatively speaking, over the last 50 years the percentage of migrants has not changed very much, varying between 2 and 3 percent of the total world population.

## Migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers; what's the difference?

Not all migrants are refugees. Not all refugees seek asylum. Some definitions:

- **Migrants** are all people who leave their home country to settle elsewhere. Total number in 2005: 190 million.
- **Refugees** are people who flee their country for fear of being persecuted on account of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political ideas. Total number in 2006: 8.4 million. People who flee their homes for these same reasons, but who stay within the borders of their own country, are called 'internally displaced people' (IDPs). Formally they are not migrants. Total number in 2006: 23.7 million.
- **Asylum-seekers** are migrants who apply for asylum in another country. Total number in 2006: 770,000.

Sources: IOM and UNHCR

## Where do migrants come from?

	In millions of people.
China	35
India	20
Philippines	7

Source: IOM, 2005

## Where do refugees come from?

About 5% of the world's migrants have the status of refugee.

Afghanistan	1,900,000
Sudan	690,000
Burundi	440,000
DR Congo	430,000
Somalia	390,000
Vietnam	360,000
Palestine	350,000
Iraq	260,000
Azerbaijan	230,000
Liberia	230,000

Source: www.unhcr.org

## Where do migrants live?

	In millions of people in 2005.
Africa	17
Asia	53
Europe	64
Latin America	7
North America	45
Oceania	5
Total	190

Source: www.iom.int

## To where are remittances sent?

	In billions of dollars.
East Asia & Pacific	\$ 43
Latin America & Caribbean	\$ 42
South Asia	\$ 32
Middle East & North Africa	\$ 21
Central Asia	\$ 20
Sub-Saharan Africa	\$ 8
Total	\$ 167

Source: World Bank, 2006

## Where do migrants in Europe come from?

Oceania	1%
Asia	12%
North America	3%
South America & Caribbean	7%
European Union	29%
Rest of Europe & former USSR	18%
Middle East & North Africa	22%
Sub-Saharan Africa	8%
Total	100%

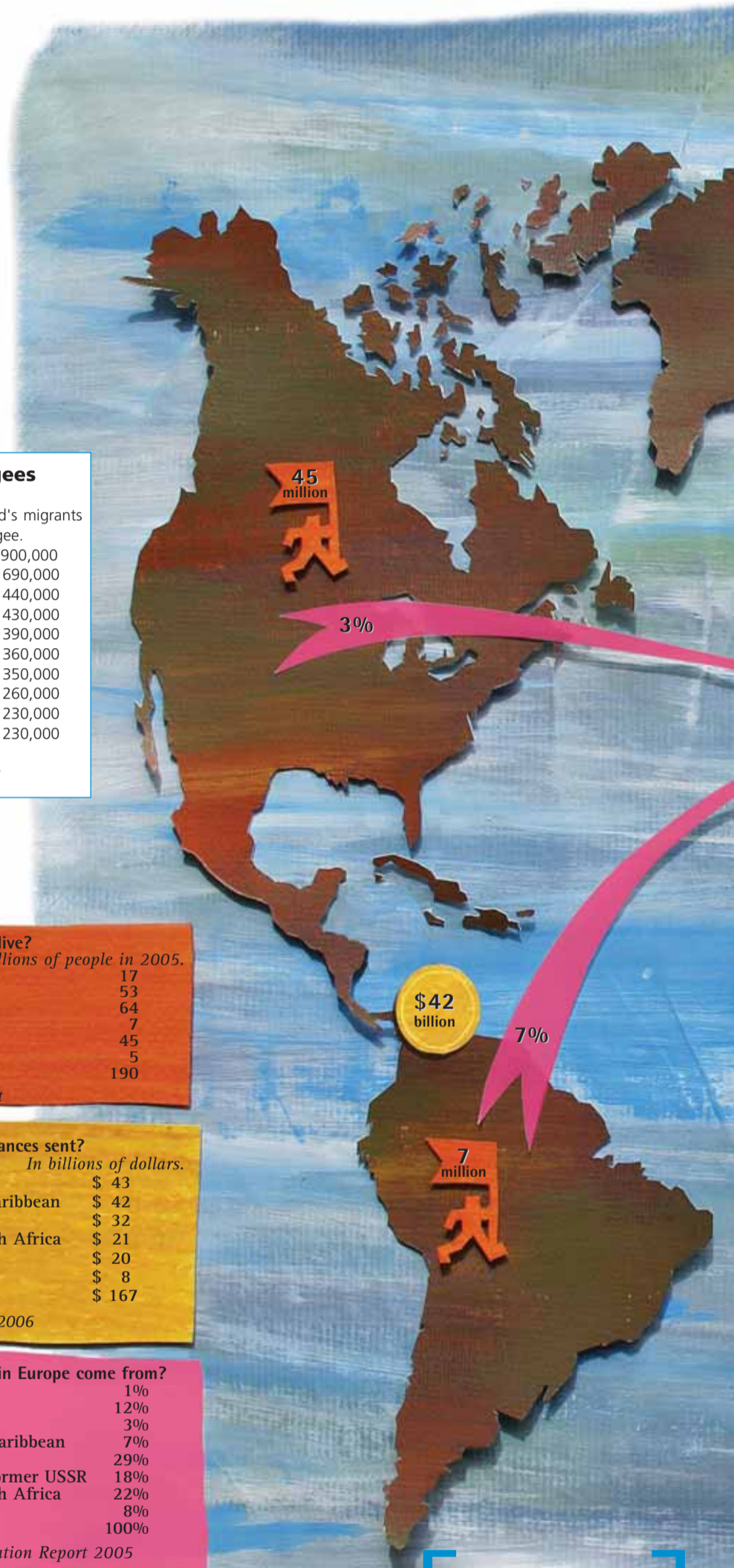
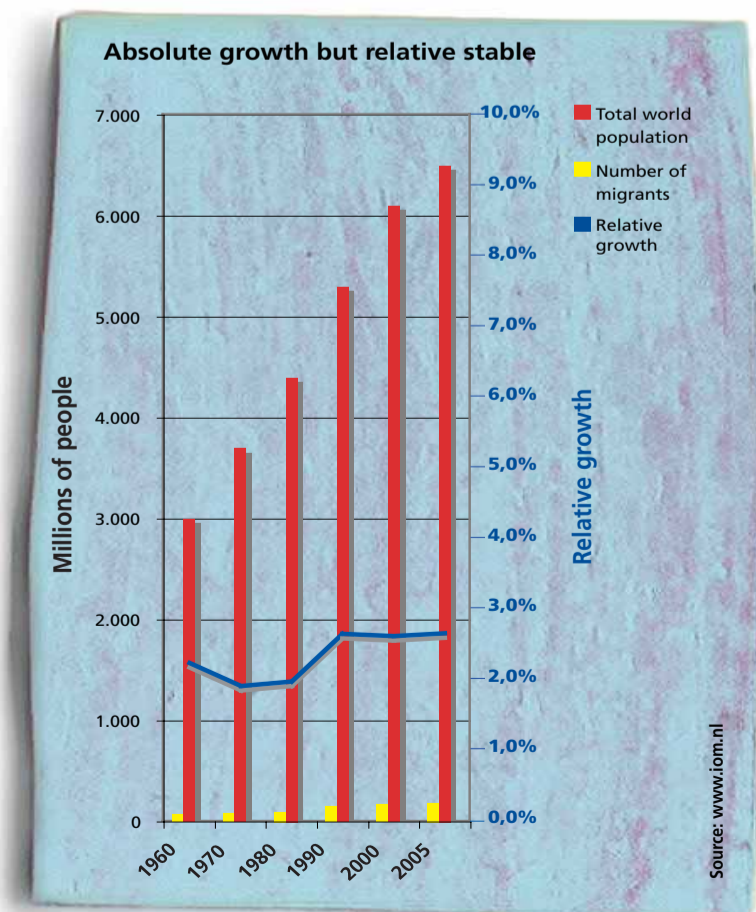
Source: World Migration Report 2005

## Countries of origin of 'European migrants'

Migrants arriving in Western European countries mainly come from Eastern Europe, Northern Africa and other Western European countries.

Poland	324,000
Romania	202,000
Morocco	128,000
Bulgaria	82,000
Germany	77,000
Ukraine	70,000
Turkey	66,000
United Kingdom	65,000
Russia	54,000
France	49,000

Source: International Migration Outlook 2007, OECD



**Myth**  
'It is mostly the poorest people who are forced to migrate'

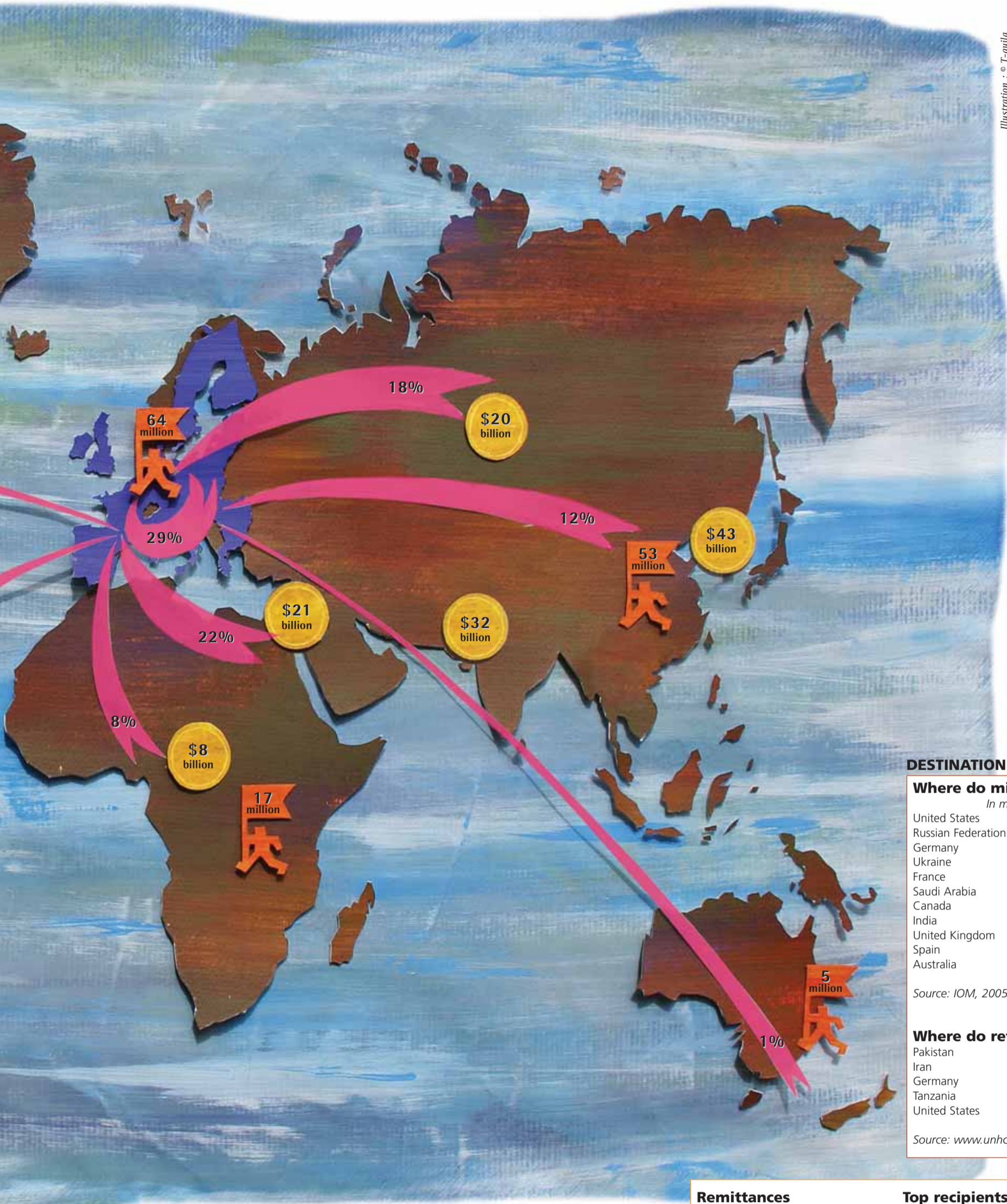
## Fact

## Push and pull factors

Migration is triggered by both push and pull factors. Some important push factors are war, population pressure, drought and other environmental crises, and a lack of jobs and opportunities. Pull factors are more or less the opposite: people migrate to live in safety, because of better job opportunities, better education for their children, and even for climatological reasons.

Most migrants do not belong to the poorest social classes. This is because migration -legal and illegal- is a costly business. Migrants often pay thousands of euros for a risky passage to Europe or North America. Usually the whole family chips in to enable one family member to migrate. Migration also requires an extensive social network in the country of destination.

Illustration : © T-quila



**THE COSTS OF MIGRATION**

**Payments to smugglers**

Migrant smugglers and human traffickers make an estimated profit of \$10 billion each year. How much does it cost to migrate?

By sea	Africa to Canary Islands	: € 1,000 - 1,500
	North Morocco to Spain	: € 1,000
	Libya to Italy	: € 1,500 - 2,000
By land	Sub-Sahara to Morocco	: € 1,000 - 2,000
	Through Mali	: € 1,000
By air/land/sea	Across the Sahara	: € 1,700 - 3,400
	South Asia to Africa to Europe	: € 9,000 - 16,000

Source: UN

**Boat people**

In 2006, 22,000 Africans reached Italy by fishing boat. Another 31,000 reached the Spanish Canary Islands. But in recent years thousands of others have died while trying to reach Europe by boat. In June of this year, 24 Africans drowned after a dinghy capsized south of Malta.

**DESTINATION**

**Where do migrants go?**

*In millions of people.*

United States	38
Russian Federation	12
Germany	10
Ukraine	7
France	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Canada	6
India	6
United Kingdom	5
Spain	5
Australia	4

Source: IOM, 2005

**Where do refugees go?**

Pakistan	1,985,000
Iran	716,000
Germany	700,000
Tanzania	549,000
United States	380,000

Source: www.unhcr.org

**Remittances**

Most migrants - especially from developing countries - regularly send money (remittances) back home. In 2005, developing countries received 167 billion dollars through official channels from their migrant population abroad. The true volume of remittances is thought to be much higher, with estimates of up to 300 billion dollars. Remittances have become one of the most important sources of income for many poor countries. And its volume grows at a much faster pace than official development assistance, which was just over 100 billion dollars in 2005.

Source: Global Economic Prospects, World Bank, 2006

**Top recipients**

*In billions of dollars.*

India	\$ 22
China	\$ 21
Mexico	\$ 18
Philippines	\$ 12
Morocco	\$ 4
Serbia	\$ 4
Pakistan	\$ 4
Brazil	\$ 4
Bangladesh	\$ 3
Egypt	\$ 3
Vietnam	\$ 3
Colombia	\$ 3
Nigeria	\$ 3

Source: Global Economic Prospects, World Bank, 2006

# Migration gains & pains

In contrast to the impressions and beliefs of many people, migration not only causes problems but also provides opportunities. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan introduced the term 'Triple Wins of Migration', meaning that a free, but well-regulated international migration regime can have benefits for countries of origin, for destination countries and for individual migrants.

This is the theory. In practice many 'developed' countries fear the influx of migrants and keep their borders closed, thus forcing migrants into illegality. In some places the arrival of large numbers of people from different cultural backgrounds leads to tension and conflicts. Locals fear that migrants will take over their jobs because the latter will agree to lower wages and labour standards.

Little by little developed countries are starting to realise that they may need migrants. Low birth rates and the ageing of the population are causing serious labour shortages in sectors like construction, health care and agriculture. Moreover, highly skilled specialists from developing countries - in sectors like ICT, life science and medicine - are essential to maintain innovation and competition in the global economy. The current tendency in Europe is to facilitate certain forms of migration, especially high skilled, but also low skilled.

There is a strong nexus between migration and development. The money migrants send home is important in the fight against poverty. Many believe that development will have a mitigating effect on migration. Others predict that, especially in the short term, development will lead to more migration. Migration, in short, is a process of gains and pains for all involved. The challenge is to regulate this process in such a way that risks and obstacles can be avoided and potential gains are maximised.

'Circular migration' - in which the migrant frequently travels back and forth between his own country and (one or more) destination countries - may go a long way towards achieving the 'Triple Win'. If circular migration becomes legally well organised, migrants could work in countries that need them without putting a strain on host societies, while at the same time staying in touch with their roots.

## CALL FOR ACTION

### Labour migration experiment

Several European asylum organisations are exploring the possibilities of setting a labour migration experiment.

Do you want to contribute?

Go to [www.migrationinpractice.eu](http://www.migrationinpractice.eu)

### Brain gain

When a migrant returns home he or she brings along all the experiences, knowledge and expertise acquired during his or her stay abroad. This is called 'brain gain'. Migrants constitute a bridge between two countries. For developing countries an active and mobile diaspora means access to 'First World' knowledge, markets, trade opportunities etc. There are a number of ongoing projects that facilitate (temporary) return of migrants and thus stimulate the process of brain gain. Afghan refugees use their skills to help their home country back on its feet. Ghanaian health workers in countries like the Netherlands and Great Britain temporarily return to Ghana to train local staff.

### Remittances

Most migrants send part of the money they make to their families back home. These official *remittances* have grown dramatically over the years: from 31 billion dollars in 1990 to 167 billion dollars in 2005. Including the money sent through unregistered channels, the total amount may well be as high as 300 billion dollars. Remittances play an important role in the fight against poverty. According to the World Bank, thanks to remittances the number of people living in poverty in Uganda has been reduced by 11%, in Bangladesh by 6%, and in Ghana by 5%. Especially if investment opportunities in poor countries are enhanced, remittances can play an important role in development.

## Potential

### Quality of life

Migrants can dramatically improve their quality of life. In destination countries they can earn a decent income and invest in a better future. Migration is often a family decision: the whole family contributes so that one member can pay the costs of travel and look for opportunities elsewhere. In turn, the whole family will benefit from the remittances they receive. For the migrants, migration means enhanced status in the family and the home community. Once they return to their own communities they are often looked upon with respect. In their host country they have gained knowledge and experience, and often they have invested money in their home country, which may guarantee future prosperity.

For countries of origin

For individual

### Brain drain

Today there are more Malawian health workers in the city of Manchester alone than in the whole of Malawi. This reflects, in a nutshell, the problem of brain drain. Through migration, countries lose the human capital invested in their population. Developed countries are engaged in a 'battle for brains': they compete for the most talented people in developing countries to come and work with them.

### Illegality

With the possibilities for legal migration almost non-existent and due to a lack of opportunities back home, many people opt for illegal migration. In the Netherlands alone there are between 75,000 and 185,000 illegal immigrants who face many dangers. Each year thousands of migrants die on their journey towards some 'promised land': they drown in the sea, suffocate in unventilated trucks or are intentionally shot. For their perilous journey, migrants often pay thousands of euros to unscrupulous smugglers. Once they have arrived in their destination country, they run the risk of falling into the hands of fraudulent employers, slum landlords, unqualified medical workers, etc. Illegal residents have no access to social security, no benefits. They are underpaid and perform the most dangerous, dirty and servile work.

## Obstacles

# Gains

## Transnational identities

Instead of focussing on the integration or assimilation of migrants in their host country, some experts point at the *transnational identities* of migrants. Migrants belong to more than just one community and culture. Many have learned to move physically, mentally and socially between their country of origin and (sometimes several) destination countries - and to do so with ease. They travel and know the language, culture, economy and particularities of each country. Living in several cultures simultaneously, migrants often make interesting crossovers that lead to new music, literature, art forms and cultural codes. They therefore create a new transnational identity, making them the true global citizens.

## Economic growth

Economists agree that the liberalisation of labour movement will have a positive impact on the world economy. If supply and demand in the global labour market are better balanced this will stimulate production. Even a small opening in the labour markets - for example through the allotment of temporary work permits to workers from poorer nations - can lead to billions of euros of increased profit. The economy of Spain, for instance, grew by an average of 2.6 % in the last decade. Without the contribution of migrants, it would have contracted by 0.6 % annually during the same period.

## Ageing

Europe is ageing and this increases the need for migrants who can work in health care, domestic and other services. However, it is a misconception to think that migration alone can stop the ageing of the population. In order to keep the share of the senior population at the present level, net immigration into the Netherlands would have to increase on average by 300,000 persons per year up to 2050. This, of course, is impossible. By filling in the gaps in the labour market, (circular) migration can nevertheless ease the effects of ageing on the economy.

## Labour needs

Countries in the European Union desperately need extra labour. According to the European Union, the European working population will have dropped by 20 million in 2020. The corresponding fall in competition and productivity will cause a decline in the standard of living in the EU. In certain sectors - construction, agriculture, services - labour shortages are already evident. In the short term, access to labour can be found in the 'new' EU member states. In the longer term, Europe will need to look further afield to fulfil its labour needs.

## Diversity

The arrival of people from other cultures can enrich the recipient society. Migrants 'fertilise' the local culture with new insights, new expressions and new dynamics. They 'link up' their host country with their countries of origin, providing new opportunities to invest, trade, negotiate and maintain profitable international relations. Migrants can connect their host country to new challenges in the world economy. They can form a bridge between cultures and economies that is of great value to both sides.

## For host countries

## Brain waste

Many migrants are forced to work in jobs that are below their level of education. Their qualifications are not recognised, and their skills and knowledge are not appreciated or do not match the demand of the host country's labour market. Language barriers and cultural barriers too prevent migrants from working at the level they are qualified for. Their brains are, in a way, wasted.

## Social consequences

Migration can have serious effects on social relations and mental wellbeing. Families are often broken up for long periods of time. Children grow up without knowing one or both parents. Thousands of mothers in the Philippines, for instance, are forced to leave their kids with grandparents while they go off to earn money abroad. The social structure in home communities can be affected when families with migrants overseas suddenly have more money to spend and invest, thus creating a new divide between rich and poor. And many migrants can no longer feel at home in their country of origin, while their new 'home country' does not replace that feeling of belonging.

## Illegality

Illegality also poses difficulties for host countries. Besides the fact that illegal work does not generate taxes, the presence of large numbers of illegal immigrants gives birth to an illegal - and sometimes criminal - network of service providers, fraudulent labour subcontractors, money transferring businesses, etc. Large groups of illegal migrants also tend to move in together in the cheapest - i.e. worst - parts of the big cities, thus creating ghettos, which in some cases become unlivable for local lower class citizens.

## Ethnic tension

As the riots in the French *banlieux* and the crisis in the Dutch 'multicultural society' have shown, ethnic tensions are right under the surface in many Western societies. Rightly or wrongly, migrants and their children feel discriminated and locals feel threatened in their way of life. Migrants and lower class locals compete for the same low skilled jobs, for the same cheap housing and for social facilities. It is therefore not surprising that anti-migration parties get their support mainly from the lower classes.

## Welfare state under pressure

As illustrated by the 'guest worker program' of the nineteen sixties and seventies in the Netherlands, migration places enormous pressure on Western welfare states. Migrants and their children make more than average use of social benefits such as welfare and disability funds. The arrival of large numbers of workers from developing countries also exerts pressure on existing labour standards. Migrants are willing to work for lower wages and in worse conditions than locals, thus exerting a downward pressure on the achievements of the labour movement.

# & problems

# The migration circle

Cutting off  
the sharp  
edges

The mind of an asylum-seeker is like a roller-coaster. A turbulent and often dangerous journey is followed by hope for a new life in Europe. But after a while, despair about losing yet another appeal takes over, followed by uncertainty about the options left.

The asylum procedure has sharp edges for individual migrants. It is a period full of uncertainty. The project partners therefore developed a methodology to help prepare asylum-seekers for a new future.

## Case & chain management

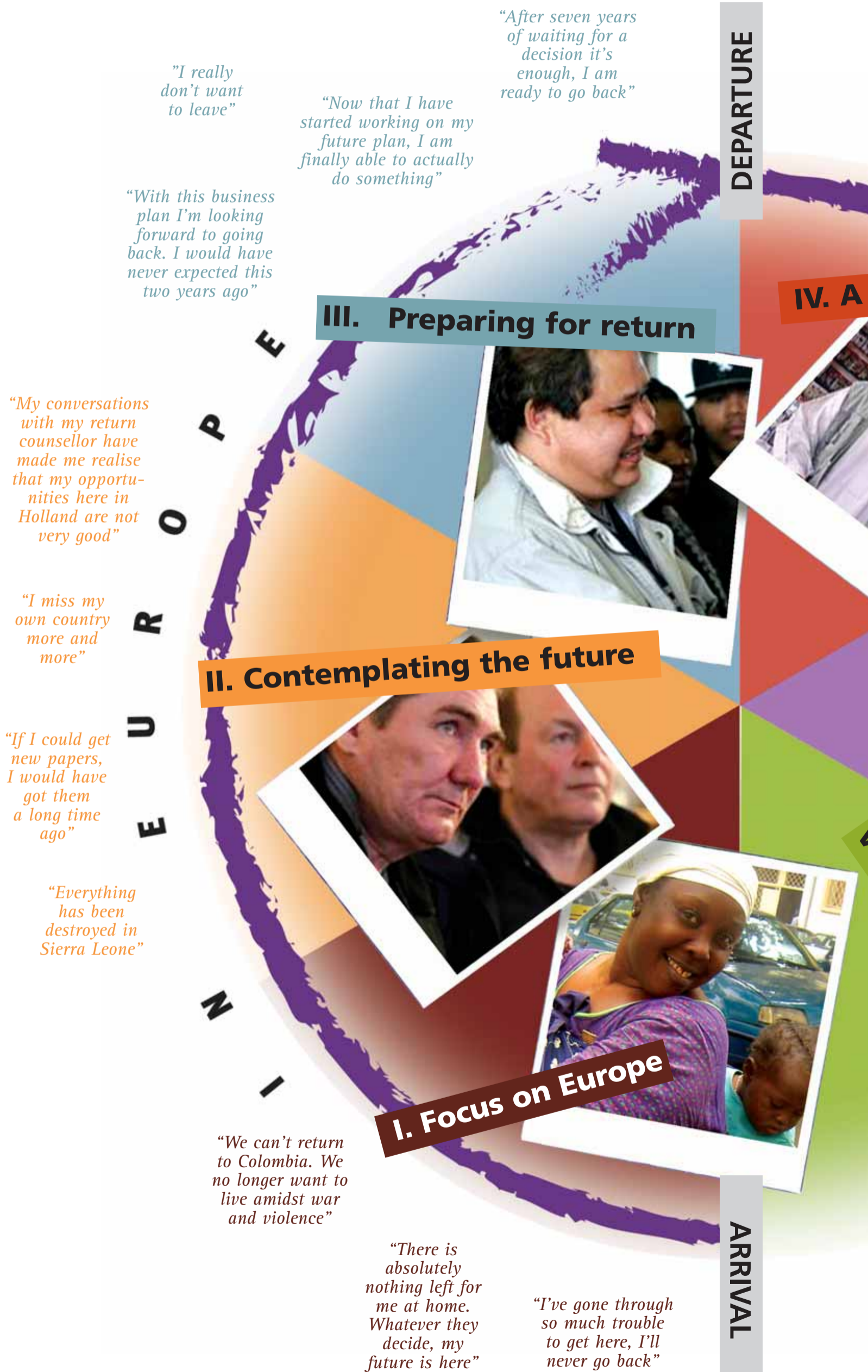
The basic principle underpinning this methodology is personal responsibility. However difficult a situation may be, every individual should be held accountable for the decisions he or she makes and the consequences. Case and chain management (CCM) is intended to support asylum-seekers in this process, to provide them with the knowledge required to make informative decisions and to motivate them to take charge of their own future again.

Because every case is different, each asylum-seeker deserves an individual approach. The essence of the method is to remove psychological and practical obstacles to a new future. Case managers and asylum-seekers work side by side to form a realistic image of the current situation and to explore future options and opportunities.

## Not everyone can stay

According to international law, only people who flee out of a well-founded fear of persecution have the right to refugee status. Many people, however, come to Europe to improve their socio-economic perspectives. Because there is no legal alternative, they apply for asylum. Although their desire to improve their well-being and that of their children is only human, this does not make them eligible for asylum. This methodology is based on the assumption that the asylum procedure makes a careful and accurate distinction between refugees and economic migrants.

The migration circle describes the case and chain management methodology.





# Opening the mindset

The steps in the migration circle

*“My family has high expectations of me”*

*“I am lucky to have finished my education in Holland. There is an enormous need for educated people in Angola”*

*“People expect me to be rich.”*

**new start back home**



**V. A sustainable future**

**VI. Monitoring and feedback**

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*“My Internet café is getting more clients every week, I am about to break even”*

*“The reality is much harder than had expected, I really don't know how to survive”*

*“I'm glad I have been brave enough to go back. I am so happy to be with my family again.”*

## I. Focus on Europe

In the first period after arrival, an asylum-seeker's mind is set on a long-term stay in Europe. Even an initial rejection of his asylum application does not change this focus, as there still seem to be ample opportunities for appeal. Although statistics show that only one in eight are eventually granted permission to stay, most individual asylum-seekers will focus on a future in Europe.

CCM: During this period the case manager invests in establishing a relationship with his client. Interest in his personal circumstances, competences and skills is the key. 'Without contact no contract' is the leading principle during this first phase. The activities offered focus on personal development and are based on a professional individual assessment. Access to education and/or work experience should be provided to enhance this. Definite choices about the future are not yet made. It is essential to keep people active and build a rapport.

*Tools: Individual counselling assessment and education (see pages 10/11).*

## II. Contemplating the future

The asylum-seeker starts to realise that he may not be granted refugee status after all. Although the focus remains on obtaining a residence permit, little by little he becomes more open to alternatives. Many people think that expressing even a remote interest in return during this phase could work against them in the asylum procedure, so most prefer not to talk about it.

CCM: Fostering a realistic image of chances of receiving asylum while simultaneously initiating growth opportunities for the future. Keeping all the options open is more important than emphasising return to the country of origin. Case managers may start sharing stories of asylum-seekers who rebuilt their lives back home. An analysis of individual competencies, potential obstacles for return and opportunities both here and back home are used to form a realistic picture of the future. The overall aim is to help the individual clarify his or her mind and obtain new insights into the future.

*Tools: X-plore information campaign, training for case managers, online database on return issues ADEONA, education and internships (see pages 10/11).*

## III. Preparing for return

The asylum-seeker actually starts preparing for a potential return. He works on a personal and detailed future plan, addressing personal obstacles and exploring new opportunities. The planning process helps him make his final decision: escape into illegality or go back home and start anew.

CCM: The case manager mobilises all organisations in the asylum chain that can help the asylum-seeker draw up his future plan. The plan helps to identify concrete obstacles and opportunities that need to be addressed to work towards sustainable return. This may include short-term training to improve professional skills, acquiring equipment to start a business or researching the

availability of medication back home. Making actual arrangements to obtain identification papers and travel documents is also part of this phase. If the asylum-seeker comes forward with a realistic plan, funding can be made available both here and in the country of origin.

*Tools: ADEONA + future plan + funding (examples on pages 12/13).*

## IV. A new start back home

The actual return causes all kinds of logistical and mental stress: finding a place to live, looking for a job, starting up a business or finding a school for the kids. The returnee has to face family and friends he left behind and he may wonder how to explain that coming back really was the better option. Moreover, returnees are confronted with differences in comfort and culture between Europe and their home countries.

CCM: Experienced case managers and local experts, including ex-asylum-seekers, offer tailor-made support in the countries of origin. This may include job counselling, assistance in starting up a small business, access to education, psychological counselling and financial guidance. A local support office can also provide access to a professional network within the business community and to other support organisations. On his own an individual asylum-seeker would need years to build up such a rich network, which is constantly renewed and expanded.

*Tools: Local case management + Funding (Angola pilot on page 13)*

## V. A sustainable future

Once a returnee has settled, he is able to look forward once again. Reintegrated in his home society he can now make longer-term plans. The European experience may have contributed to his personal and professional development. Not everybody makes it, however. Some returnees fall back into the situation that they escaped from and may wonder whether illegality would have been a better choice or contemplate a second escape.

CCM: In this phase case management should be slowly faded out and replaced by the informal network of ex-asylum-seekers, employers, self-starters, NGOs, government officials and others. A dynamic network enables the individual to fully reintegrate into society both from a social and economic perspective and to achieve a sustainable future.

## VI. Monitoring and feedback

The final phase of the migration circle is monitoring and feedback. Individual returnees provide information on what worked and what did not; the cooperation partners in the chain will do the same. The leading questions are: Do ex-asylum-seekers really succeed in building up a new future back home? And does the shared vision indeed lead to sustainable return, in terms of numbers and in examples? The lessons learned need to be widely disseminated to provide input for policy-makers and asylum organisations and for the benefit of migrants and case managers all over the world.

# Improving case management

Every asylum-seeker living in the housing facilities provided by the Dutch government is assigned a case manager. Case managers in the departure centres have the challenging task of preparing asylum-seekers for their possible return.

Because of the sensitivity of the return issue the project partners looked for ways to support case managers in this task. Jacqueline van Lopik of training bureau Pro-Innovatief designed the training.

## What was your role?

We were asked to professionalise case management, with the ultimate aim of increasing the number of returnees. In 2003 Dutch asylum policy changed. The new return policy required different competences of the case managers. They had to relate the coaching of their clients to the status of their asylum procedures and think in terms of results. In the past they focused on supervision and support to their clients, with a high level of personal commitment. Today, the emphasis is on steering the process of return and on the personal responsibility of the asy-

lum-seeker. And case managers have to learn to keep more distance.

During our training, case managers came forward with questions about their interaction with asylum seekers. 'How do I handle aggression during conversations?' 'How far should my involvement with each individual case go?' 'How do I motivate my clients to take the necessary action?'

## What teaching methods did you use?

Our method is very businesslike, with strict rules and a strong focus on achieving results. It is designed for consultation between colleagues, but it can also be applied in conversations with asylum-seekers. It is called 'collegial consultation' and focuses on improving your knowledge of your own role and position. With

*How do I handle aggression in conversations?*

the right self-knowledge, you can optimise your performance and be more successful in achieving your goals.

We start by asking everybody to describe three of their competences as well as their personal pitfalls. For instance, someone's strength may be his or her empathy with the asylum-seeker, but if the same person tends to get too emotionally involved, he or she may overshoot the mark.

The consultation follows a ten-step method with two rounds of questioning, problem definition, specific and targeted advice, and techniques for effective questioning. In the beginning this proved quite hard, because people tend to be judgemental in their questioning. They ask 'Didn't you consult the partners?' instead of 'Who did you speak to?' They also used a lot of closed questions or asked several questions without leaving room for an answer. Listening became much more important and we worked on distinguishing between facts and emotion and recognising escape mechanisms.

*How far should my involvement with each case go?*

*How do I motivate my clients to take action?*

## What were the results?

The case managers benefited very much from being trained in effective questioning; it made them get to the core of the problem much quicker. Now they feel better equipped for their contact with the asylum-seekers and they benefit from the peer support system that was set up. Given that this was the main goal of the training, I would certainly call it a success. There were no measurable quantitative results; the number of returnees did not increase significantly. But there are so many factors determining this, such as political developments like the 'General Pardon', that this isn't surprising.

## Any advice for the future?

For collegial consultation to work well trust in the team is essential. That is why I would be in favour of complementing this training with efforts at teambuilding: to ensure trust, to reduce miscommunication and to clarify the position of the (team) managers. Then this method can be applied optimally and take everybody to a higher professional level.

## X-ploring the options

Opening the mindset of asylum-seekers is one of the most challenging tasks of a case manager. The X-plore awareness campaign was developed to encourage asylum-seekers to investigate their options and take charge of their own future again.

**What about your future?**

**X-plore your options!**

- in the Netherlands
- illegality
- back home

Visit [www.hitfoundation.eu/x-plore](http://www.hitfoundation.eu/x-plore) or talk to your counsellor at COA, VluchtelingenWerk or Nidos.

A poster and flyers in six languages trigger asylum-seekers - and their counsellors - to visit [www.hitfoundation.eu](http://www.hitfoundation.eu) / X-plore. There they find factsheets on topics such as living in the Netherlands, illegality, financing, education and health. The sheets can be read on-line or printed to read in the anonymity of their own rooms.

## Education from the start

### Key to personal development and independence

If we want asylum-seekers to return home with better prospects, education should be offered throughout the asylum procedure. To cater for individual needs and opportunities, it needs to be short term and tailor-made.



Packing equipment to ship back home

The education offered during the asylum period should be tailored to the development needs of the individual and be based on previous education, language skills and work experience. In addition, future employment prospects should be taken into account, including the labour needs in countries of return. Asylum-seekers who do not yet know where

they will end up can still spend their time usefully while waiting for the outcome of their appeal, because many industries and professions - such as construction, catering, administration - are found all over the world.

## Skills & tools

Within the scope of the project, several asylum-seekers followed

short-term practical courses in metal- and woodworking, sewing and computer literacy at the WereldWijd Foundation in Eckelrade. Through a special project called WereldTools some prepared to start up their own companies back home. They received guidance in drawing up a business plan and they collected and repaired tools to be shipped back home in a one-cubic-metre wooden box. For less common professions one-on-one in-company training was arranged, for example at a professional film studio. Dutch speaking asylum-seekers have more educational opportunities, for example at professional training institutes that also cater to Dutch students (see pages 12-13 for examples).

## Local education

Those who have little time left before departure are encouraged to explore educational opportunities in their home country. Local education often better meets the requirements of the national labour market and language is not such an obstacle. Part of the costs may be financed with a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.





Case manager Sonja Meijs (right) talking to one of her clients outside in the open air.

# Working with asylum-seekers

Sonja Meijs (30) has worked as a case manager since 2000. She counsels asylum-seekers who have received a first negative decision on their asylum request - and who remain in the procedure until the final decision on their appeal. Sonja has a 'caseload' of about 100 clients. Her goal is to offer them a new perspective for their future.

## What part of your job is most satisfying?

It makes me feel good when I can motivate people; to make them take charge of their own lives again. I'm currently in contact with a woman from Guinea. She is ill and for a long time return was no option for her. But lately she has been thinking of writing a letter to her brother-in-law back home. She's not ready for return yet, but this might be a first step. She is broadening her horizons.

## How do you tackle the issue of return?

I think asylum-seekers often feel pressurised to return. I try to be as unbiased as possible. My conversations with them are usually rather informal. I achieve the best results in a relaxed environment, like in their own room or outside in the open air. I try to offer people a new perspective for looking

at the future. I trigger them to use their talents and grasp the support we can offer: go to school, prepare for a job.

## What is the most difficult part of your job?

Offering my services to people who didn't ask for it; they often don't appreciate my help. Most of them tolerate my interference, but I always have to take the initiative. This can be tiring. People rarely come and talk to me spontaneously. If they do, those conversations are usually the most fruitful.

## What personal dilemma did you bring up in the training?

My greatest dilemma was time pressure. I often felt that the official procedures left me with too little time to work with my clients. One young woman from Angola, for instance, wanted to go back with her child, but needed time to

prepare. However, because of her legal situation her allowances were completely cut off. After that I couldn't do much more than just keep in touch by calling her every now and then. I wish I could have done more but I felt limited by the strict procedures.

## What advice did you get?

My colleagues taught me that sometimes you can bend the rules a little; that I could explore the boundaries of the procedures more than I had done. I became more confident and realised that I could get things done together with the other chain partners and that talking to them would make a difference. Initially I felt guilty and wondered if I could have done more for the young Angolan mother. But my colleagues advised me also to see every case as an opportunity to learn.

## ADEONA A FUTURE-BACK HOME

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE

**Asylum-seekers and case managers encounter numerous obstacles when preparing for return. The online knowledge bank ADEONA collects and exchanges information on return issues - from work to family matters and from financing to health.**

The system is open to anyone to ask questions and/or share his or her own knowledge. A year since its launch, ADEONA has collected over 300 questions and answers. COA case managers and counsellors from the Dutch Council for Refugees are its most frequent users. A selection of questions (Q) and abbreviated answers (A) gives an impression of the support ADEONA provides.

*The Roman goddess Adeona was called when after a long journey someone wanted to go back home. Adeona ensured their safe return.*

#### Afghanistan - School in Kabul

**Q:** What possibilities do girls have to attend primary school in Kabul, considering they may be living in a refugee camp?

**A:** Local partner AGEF sent a list of schools for girls. The Ministry for Reintegration and Refugees in Afghanistan offers a place to stay for the first 14 days after return. Based on a personal future plan - indicating how the client intends to become economically self-supporting - part of the cost for temporary housing as well as school tuition for the kids may be covered.

#### Armenia - Medication

**Q:** What are the possibilities of treatment for diabetics in Armenia in combination with high blood pressure and depression? How about availability and costs of medication?

**A:** The latest report from the World Health Organisation - which gives a very clear insight into the current state of the medical system in Armenia - can be downloaded here. To research the availability and costs of the required medication please send us their generic names.

#### Burundi - Shelter home

**Q:** A single mother is afraid of returning to Burundi because she has no social support system left there. Does the capital of Burundi offer safe housing, such as a shelter home for women?

**A:** Caritas Burundi reported that there are only shelter homes for women who have been sexually abused or are HIV-positive. The Dutch Embassy in Bujumbura can provide contact information for a single mother from the Netherlands who reintegrated some time ago.

#### China - Identification

**Q:** My client has no identification papers, because she left China when

she was a minor. What can she do to get the identification needed to obtain a travel document from the Chinese authorities?

**A:** Through a reliable contact with an extensive network in China it is possible to trace identification documents and obtain a Hukou, the official Chinese family registration booklet. The Chinese Embassy will only provide a laissez-passer. If you return to China voluntarily, you can enter free of charge. In case of forced repatriation you pay a fine when entering the country.

#### Guinea - Circumcision

**Q:** My client has a baby girl whom she does not want to be circumcised. What are the current legal regulations and social practices regarding circumcision? Where can she find support after repatriation in case of social pressure?

**A:** Although female genital mutilation is forbidden by law, there does not seem to be any restrictive or controlling system. Extended research in 1999 showed that female circumcision in Guinea is actually quite common and widely practised. The complete research report can be downloaded here.

#### Iraq - Employment

**Q:** My client is preparing to return to Iraq. He needs support with housing and medical issues; but most of all with finding a job to become economically self-sufficient.

**A:** Our local partner organisation AGEF can be contacted to provide support on the housing issue. If medical details are provided, we can find out which medical treatments are accessible and affordable. Concerning his possibilities on the labour market, please send us a CV with details about educational level, work experience and skills. Together we can assess his chances of finding a job and if necessary look for and finance specific training.

#### Nigeria - HIV Aids

**Q:** My client is HIV positive. Is there medical treatment available in Nigeria and where can she find support after returning to Nigeria?

**A:** UNAIDS provides accurate and detailed information on this issue. About 3 million people in Nigeria are infected with the HIV virus. Nigeria is the only country in Africa that is far ahead in terms of producing and treating HIV patients with ARV. This has also brought the costs down from approximately \$5,000 to \$500 a year. The Dutch section of Médecins sans Frontières runs an HIV clinic in Lagos general hospital. There is no medical insurance system in Lagos; people need to pay for the treatments themselves.

#### Pakistan - Reintegration of a deaf boy

**Q:** My clients are two young brothers, one of whom is deaf. What are the possibilities for guidance and treatment in Pakistan?

**A:** There are several deaf institutes in Karachi as well as in the north. The Family Care Foundation offers subsidised education and a job project for deaf people in cooperation with Kentucky Fried Chicken. Currently there are 27 deaf people working in the KFC restaurant in Karachi.

Would you like to read the full answers to these questions (Dutch only) or do you want to pose a question yourself?

Go to [www.hitfoundation.eu / Adeona](http://www.hitfoundation.eu/Adeona)

# Developing Africa

## Creating chances for young people

"I didn't come to Holland to stay here forever," says Joseph Akbah from Togo, "I'm determined to go back and help develop Africa."

Name : Joseph Akpah (35)  
Country of birth : Togo  
In the Netherlands : From 2005 - August 2007  
Future plan : To open an educational centre in Benin

Joseph came to Europe two years ago and ended up in the Netherlands by accident. Joseph: "The reason for many young Africans to come to Europe is the fact that there are no prospects for them in Africa. There aren't enough possibilities to learn and work and the African social policies are not strong enough to support them."

When Joseph realised he would not get a residence permit, he started to work on his dream: an education centre to help develop Africa. Because of instability in Togo, he decided to aim for neighbouring Benin instead. Joseph: "I want to set up an educational cen-

tre in Benin, called Peaceland. I want to focus on the young generation, because they are the ones for whom we need to create chances. My dream is to work with different professionals, teaching a variety of skills, from photography and computers to carpentry and sewing. At Peaceland people should be able to take courses but also sell their products and services." In the Netherlands Joseph took classes at the WereldWijd Foundation in Eckelrade. He learned how to edit film material, worked on his business skills and collected and repaired 18 computers, to be shipped to Benin.

When we talk to him prior to his departure in August, he is ambitious and enthusiastic and uses every opportunity to seek support for his plans. "I can still use business partners and sponsoring. And even if the reality turns out to be different from my dream, I will continue with my plan," he states resolutely.

After a period of unrest and political deadlock, the government and opposition parties in Togo signed an agreement on August 20, 2006, to organise free, democratic and transparent elections. Even though the mid-2007 deadline was not met, elections are still scheduled to take place this year. The political and economic situation has improved significantly since the signing of the peace agreement in 2006.

(Source: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs)



Learning the tricks of film editing at a professional studio in the Netherlands.

## Job hunting from overseas



Job opportunities at a large Angolan catering firm

Fernanda planned things carefully. Once she made the mind shift towards return, she started preparing for a new future for her and her baby in Angola. Supported by case managers on both continents she made a quick start on return.

Name : Fernanda\* (22)  
Country of birth : Angola  
Future plan : To raise her child in Angola

22-year-old Fernanda arrived in the Netherlands in 2003, with the intention never to return to Angola. In the spring of 2007 she realised that she had exhausted all legal appeal procedures to obtain a permit. Some three months prior to departure she started seriously working on her return. Together with her case manager she developed a plan for her future to tackle the obstacles.

Finding a job and day-care for her six-month old baby were Fernanda's primary concerns. The pilot office in Luanda found a day-care facility in the neighbourhood where she planned to live. In the

Netherlands she underwent a professional assessment that determined the skills and qualities that she could use for her job hunt in Angola. And she worked on a curriculum vitae suited to the Angolan situation.

Meanwhile the Luanda office started looking for a job within the network of international and Angolan businesses. Fernanda: "I want an administrative job to take care of my child and to pay for education."

*I want to work to raise my child and study*

When she returned, two job interviews were scheduled for her. Two hours later Fernanda accepted a job as a financial administrator at Novagest,

the largest catering firm in Angola. She made optimal use of her time left in the Netherlands to enhance her chances back in Angola. Now that she has an assured income she can start planning for the future again.

## Taking charge

Working on the future helps people lift themselves, says Razina, a middle-age lady from East Africa. She explains why preparing for a new future back home is so important to her.

Name : Razina\* (51)  
Region of origin : East Africa  
In the Netherlands since : 2004  
Future plan : Open a Bed & Breakfast

Razina is a tall woman who moves calmly, weighing her words carefully while sharing her story. "I'm 51 years old and have gone through some rough times. Before I came to Holland, I was in prison in America. Here in the asylum centre I just eat, drink, sleep, take my medication and that's it. It sometimes feels as if I'm still imprisoned."

Razina suffers from serious health problems and sometimes feels very ill. Razina: "But lately, since I started working on my future plan, my hope has been coming back. I want to take charge of my own life again. Working on my future not only makes me feel better mentally, but

also physically. The doctors were surprised that my blood sugar level had improved so much."

Back home Razina used to run a travel agency that organised international trips. Her current plan is to start a Bed & Breakfast in her hometown which she will call 'Mama's House'. Friends running a travel agency in Holland helped her with her business plan. She wants to target agro-tourism, a booming business in East Africa, with a four-bedroom facility in a safe neighbourhood. Her Dutch friends will try to bring in customers too, provided that her facility is up to standard.

Razina needs start-up money for her business and to pay for her food and rent upon return. Her case manager Jetty van Wijlen is exploring the opportunities for funding through the project. Would she go without the money? "It's not the money that is making me go, but how will I be self-supporting with-

### Return counter

Number of people who have returned within the framework of the project. (As per August 28, 2007)

Angola	19
Mongolia	3
Afghanistan	4
Iraq	3
Iran	8
Turkey	5
Sri Lanka	1
China	1
Liberia	1
Guinea	1
Georgia	2
Benin	2
Sudan	1
Azerbaijan	5
Congo	1
Syria	1
Zimbabwe	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>



## European fashion in Mongolia

Some returnees are able to put their European experience to use upon return. Taivan Oyuntsetseg from Mongolia opened up a European clothing store back home.

Name : Taivan Oyuntsetseg (20)  
Country of origin : Mongolia  
Occupation : Owner of a fashion store

Taivan was only fourteen when she came to Europe. She had lost her entire family and wanted to build a new future. In the Netherlands she studied administration, made many friends and really felt at home. But when she turned 18, she could no longer stay here legally. Taivan: *"I wasn't allowed to stay in Holland, so I always felt scared. I realised I couldn't live like that. That's when I contacted the Mongol Saikhan Foundation."*

Through the foundation she learned about the return project. She decided to write a business plan - with help from the foundation - in order to become self-supporting upon return. In her plan she wrote: *"I want to focus on women's wear for girls and young women. Given the composition of the population in Mongolia, there is a large market for this. Women are also more into clothes than men. Because I lived in Europe, I know a lot about European style, which is very popular in Mongolia. For this reason I want*



to call my store the 'European Fashion Corner'."

The return project provided the funding required to make the initial investments in Mongolia. Mirjam Kemp from the project office: *"This was one of the better future plans I have seen. It included a realistic view of local market opportunities and was clearly based on Taivan's personal capacities. Funding in the country of origin is then crucial to really get started."*

*Because I lived in Europe, I know about European style*

Although Taivan regained hope for the future, she was also concerned about having to start all over again. Taivan, speaking from Mongolia: *"Everything here is so different from Holland, I really had to adjust to it again. I missed my friends and I felt homesick for Holland."* In the meantime the European Fashion Corner has opened its doors and after a slow start, business is doing well. Taivan is proud of what she has achieved so far and is optimistic about her future.

## Losing face

Getting through the barriers and obstacles that interfere with return is crucial for success. This requires skill, experience and mutual trust. Social and emotional issues are particularly hard to uncover; and it doesn't always work out.

Name : Salim\* (23)  
Country of birth : Afghanistan  
Future plan : Literacy course and working in his brother's business

Salim came to the Netherlands when he was sixteen. He brought along the entire family capital, which was a 'big pressure' on his shoulders. Living in the asylum centre without being able to go to school or getting a job was challenging for Salim. But the thought of going back to his family without any serious achievement frightened him even more.

Case manager Jacques Pluymaekers counselled Salim: *"Salim and I had over 25 conversations. I told him many times that his prospects in the Netherlands didn't look good. We also talked about Afghanistan and his family back there, whom he told me he missed a lot. I tried to encourage him to take control over his own future and offered him all available support: from getting the right paperwork to access to education in Afghanistan. But his most important issue seemed facing his family upon return."*

AGEF, the local support organisation in Kabul, was contacted to act as guide for Salim upon his return. They provided access to a literacy course to improve his chances of getting a job. And a wage-allowance deal was set up,



Facing his family frightened him even more.

*I can't return empty handed*

enabling Salim to work in his family's carpet business. Pluymaekers: *"When he left for Afghanistan in the Spring Salim looked relieved. He felt so much better now that he didn't have to return empty handed. He had actually achieved something."*

However, all attempts to get in touch with Salim in August failed. AGEF: *"Salim told us that he had some family problems he wanted to solve first. Then he*

*would contact us for the literacy course. I have been waiting for his call, but he never contacted us. We haven't been able to reach him either but we keep trying."* Despite all practical and financial arrangements the social pressure must have been too strong for him to bear. Salim's case illustrates that assessing the real obstacles for the return is key to achieving sustainable results.



Friends at a Dutch travel agency helped with the business plan.

out it? In my country, it's very difficult to get a job at my age; that is why starting my own business seems the best and only option."

*Helping people lift themselves*

When visualising her future back home, Razina fears that several close relatives may not be there anymore. *"AIDS has claimed a lot of victims in every segment of society. I try not to think about it, I just*

*know I have to go. I'm thinking positively, convincing myself my plans will work out."* She is grateful for the support she receives: *"Asylum-seekers sometimes feel rejected. It's a relief to be in contact with people who do not only think in terms of procedures, who help people lift themselves, making use of their own skills and talents and give them hope."*

\*All stories are actual cases. Some names have been changed for reasons of privacy.

# Flowers among the weeds

Wil Houben



Wil Houben (right) together with the Dutch ambassador Jan-Gijs Schouten (left) and José Manuel da Silva from local support organisation Ajarp.

Angola is labouring under great difficulties. 70% of the population lives below the poverty line and unemployment is high. Yet there are flowers growing among the weeds. During the past year, Angola's economy has grown by 27%. Natural resources guarantee high revenues, which the government can utilise to alleviate the most dire needs.

My conclusions after our study trip to Angola in the spring of 2007:

- *Young asylum seekers must be given the opportunity to develop themselves as much as possible during their stay in the Netherlands. They should attend school and gain work experience regardless of whether they will eventually stay here or return.*
- *Returnees must be well prepared for the situation they will be faced with on return.*
- *In the country of origin, limited support must be offered, together with assistance with reintegration, housing and schooling and/or work.*
- *A network organisation should be available in the country of origin, through which returnees can help and support each other.*
- *The specific case of Angola offers plenty of opportunities for Dutch trade and industry. Companies can use the numerous young asylum-seekers who have returned from the Netherlands. Much more than the indigenous population they have become familiar with the European 'way of life' and they speak the Dutch language. They can bridge the gap between new Dutch companies on the one hand and the local population, companies and Angolan structures on the other hand.*

Wil Houben is chairman of the HIT Foundation and General Manager of MKB Limburg, the employer's organisation for small and medium sized enterprises in the Province of Limburg, the Netherlands.

## Angola: from civil war to economic tiger

- **A cruel civil war ravaged Angola for over 30 years.** It forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to neighbouring countries such as Congo and Zambia and as far away as Europe and Russia.
- In 2002, **the rebel forces and the government signed a ceasefire**, ending the Angolan civil war. Since then Angola has been considered safe.
- Five years later, Angola is on its way to becoming an **economic 'tiger' in Africa**. Economic growth is up to 20%, ignited by the exploitation of the new 'wealth' of the country: oil.
- But Angola is only slowly rising from its ashes and only a small minority is benefiting from the economic boom. **Unemployment is high** because many people lack proper schooling.

# Local support makes the difference

## Creating reasons to return

Successful return takes more than a future plan and money to cover expenses. It calls for local case managers in countries of origin that can build a rapport with returnees and help them find a job. In Angola, this approach was tested in practice for the first time.

### Creating pull factors

Simply telling someone to leave will not make him go. In Angola we found that 'pull' factors, in terms of concrete prospects to get a job or start a business, prove much more important. We also learned that case management in the country of origin - like here in Europe - is only successful if the case manager is able to build a personal rapport with the returnee, based on mutual trust.

For the pilot in Angola an expert team was formed, bringing together extensive case management experience and local knowledge. All team members brought along years of experience in interpersonal relations with returnees - some from their own experience as an asylum-seeker. This team set up tailor-made support focused on professional development and mental aspects. Together they built

a local network of potential employers, government officials, educational institutes and ex-asylum-seekers. What has been achieved so far?

### Brain gain

Local and international employers turned out to be very interested in the skills and education that ex-asylum-seekers bring back. For instance Novagest, a fast growing company specialised in catering on oil platforms and in hospitals, offered numerous vacancies. Manager Sam Seyffert: "We are always looking for qualified people. Cooks, bakers and team leaders are very welcome and can start immediately." Other job offers have come from Heerema, Toyota, Daikin, Unitel and Samaritan's Purse.

Through contacts within the Angolan government the pilot office also facilitated access to education in every province of the country. Some returnees need to brush up their native language skills. Others are unable to finish their education in Europe. With financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and action-oriented support of the local case manager, young Angolans are now able to fill these gaps on return.

*This project is unique in the world*

### Trust

Besides professional guidance, emotional support is just as important. Many returnees need to explain to their families why they 'didn't make it' abroad. Also the culture shock after several years in



Jan Vranken and Damiao Serrote Luis, one of the project participants, in Angola

### Why Angola?

There are approximately 2,000 young Angolans in the Netherlands who are unlikely to be granted asylum. Looking for a way out of poverty created by 30 years of civil war they applied for a refugee status in Europe. The minors spend a few years here, going to school, learning Dutch and making friends. But once they turn 18 they have to leave. For many of them it is difficult to imagine a future back home. Angola is a developing country where, despite the booming economy, making a living is a daily struggle for most. The challenge is to explore ways to help returnees become self-supporting and take advantage of the economic growth.

But it works both ways. Returnees from Europe also feel they are in a privileged position, especially compared to their peers who stayed in the region. Deolinda Lindadio (22) for example spent five years in the Netherlands. She went to school and got to know a different world. Deolinda: "Back in Angola it felt like I had to start all over again, but at least I had something to build on. Thanks to my Dutch education I found a job as a receptionist with a Dutch company. The guys at the pilot office helped me with my CV and I was able to enrol in a Portuguese language class!" Another instrument that proved useful was posting job vacancies on the internet. That way Angolans who are still in the Netherlands can start exploring job opportunities from overseas.

Europe needs to be addressed. Having reliable people who you can trust to help sort out your future is crucial. Professional counsellors, including ex-asylum-seekers in the Netherlands themselves, are crucial to help returnees find their way back in to Angolan society.

### Future

The ambassador of the Netherlands in Angola, Jan-Gijs Schouten, is an important promoter of the project and acts as a liaison with new Dutch companies in the area. "This project is unique in the world and has a lot of potential," he says.

More information [www.hitfoundation.eu / Angola](http://www.hitfoundation.eu/Angola)



# Option: illegality?

In the short run illegality may appear an attractive option for those who have been denied asylum. In the long run, however, it causes a lot of insecurity and few prospects for the future. Why do people 'choose' illegality and what is it like to live as an illegal alien in the Netherlands?



Every year thousands of failed asylum-seekers 'choose' not to leave the country but disappear into illegality. According to academic research the number of illegal immigrants residing in the Netherlands between April 2005 and April 2006 was somewhere between 75,000 and 185,000. About ten percent of the non-Europeans in this group had an asylum history.

## Life as illegal alien

What is it like to live outside the social and legal system in the Netherlands?

- Although it is not a criminal offence, you can be detained by the police any time.
- You are denied access to almost

all public services and benefits; no child benefits, no social housing and no insurance.

- You can only work on the black market, which is always poorly paid and the working conditions are often bad to boot.
- You are prone to mala fide landlords or rack renters who rent you a bed at exorbitant prices in pursuit of profit.
- Young adults and women in particular run the risk of falling into the hands of human traffickers. Some are forced into illegal prostitution, donor transplantation or various forms of forced labour.

## Lack of perspectives

Many asylum-seekers do not want

to return because of lack of development opportunities back home. But if they have to choose between illegality and return, many young Angolans indicate that they would choose the latter, because they are afraid of life as an illegal alien and due to the lack of perspectives in the Netherlands. The decision is usually not made until all legal remedies to stay are exhausted. "I am not in a hurry to leave," says a young man who came alone as a minor and is waiting for extension of his status. "As long as there is hope, I will stay. But I will never go illegal. I don't want to live in fear everyday."

## You can't build a future

"Staying here is not that difficult," says a 20-year old who has been living in the Netherlands without a permit for almost two years. "There are plenty of friends and relatives who are willing to help out. And there is enough support, such as funds from city councils, churches and volunteer networks. The problem is that you can't do anything. Except for hanging out in the discotheque at night and working a bit here and there, you can't build a future!"

According to some case managers one of the problems is that hope is extended for too long. They say that mixed messages from various asylum organisations, local government officials and lawyers create unrealistic hopes. Asylum-seekers themselves indicate that only serious job prospects and/or educational opportunities may provide some incentive to go back. And they look for guarantees for individual support upon return. Right now many of them do not trust the organisations dealing with return and therefore distrust the opportunities they offer.

## Illegality destroyed us

"Illegality destroyed us," says Soma (32) from Iraq. Soma's name has been changed for reasons of privacy. She fled Iraq in the early 1990s, because she is Jewish and lived in fear of the dictatorship. Her family had acquired Israeli nationality, but because her husband is a Muslim, the young couple could not stay in Israel. They left in 1997 and fled to the Netherlands. At first they were granted a temporary permit but in 2001 they were told they would have to leave as soon as

## We were enveloped in fear

their newborn son turned one year old. Soma: "I could not return to Iraq. I'm Jewish, but all my papers say I'm a Muslim. My father and brother are well-known political figures. Iraq is my home, but there's a war going on. Going back was no option at all."

From 2002 onward, Soma, her husband and two children lived an 'illegal life'. This meant no home, no money, and always depending on friends and family. They moved several times and felt insecure and hopeless. "We didn't go outside, we were very afraid. My daughter didn't go to school and she didn't speak for over a year, she was just a scared little thing. It was a terrible time. We were enveloped in fear and suffered from anxiety attacks and hyperventilation." Soma did not even feel secure enough to look for organisations or churches to help them. When they were ill, they never visited a doctor and their little boy never got his vaccinations for newborn babies. Her sister came from Israel to bring them some money.

In 2003, they learned about a special procedure for people from Iraq and their hope returned. They moved into an asylum housing facility run by the

Dutch government and the children started going to school. Earlier this year Soma found out that her family falls under the General Pardon, and they are now waiting for the official approval. Even with their upcoming residency status, the future does not look bright. Soma: "Illegality destroyed us. We couldn't make any plans. 11 years for nothing, only stress and misery. And our past in Iraq does not leave us in peace."

## 11 years wasted

Soma and her husband both went to university before they came to the Netherlands. Soma studied history and her husband is a pharmacist. It all seems a long time ago. Soma: "We're still hoping to get a chance to study in Holland and get a proper job. For now, having a place for ourselves will hopefully bring peace and quiet for the children."

# A migrant's dream



"My name is Azal, I come from West Africa.

About two years ago my wife and I moved from the countryside to the big city. The family farm just didn't provide enough income for all of us. And because the construction work on the new road connecting our village to the city didn't seem to proceed, we decided to try our luck elsewhere.

Life's not been easy in the city. Although we found a place to live rather quickly, it's just one room. With a second child on the way and my sister-in-law moving in, it's getting pretty crowded. Since we have lived here I've gone from job to job. First I worked in the market, building up early in the mornings and running errands left and right. That's when I started doing odd jobs for Umar. He owns the biggest fabric store in town, located next to the market.

You know, back home I used to sew wedding gowns for all the brides in our village. I learned this from my grandmother, who was a great seamstress. She taught me how to draw a pattern and how to select the right fabric. I also learned to work the sewing machine. Decorations were my specialty; every dress had a unique picture. When Umar found out that I could handle needle and thread, he sometimes let me do repair work. But then his cousin needed a job, so there was no room left for me.

Now I am working in a steel factory, producing all kinds of cans. It's very repetitive and poorly paid and it will take years for me to get any kind of responsibility. So while cutting the metal, I imagine it's fabric instead. I envision the most wonderful outfits with Umar's material and my designs. Traditional dresses, but also more modern and in larger quantities, just like the cans. Half of the stuff people wear here is made in China. So if the Chinese can do it, why can't we? The cotton and other fibres grow right here, but we send it overseas to have it processed and pay a premium on top of that.

My wife and I daydream about starting a small factory near my hometown. If we could go to Europe I could get a taste for European fashion and learn about their ways of doing business. In a large textile factory I could learn how to work on industrial machines and deal with large quantities. Solar, my wife could do administrative work and be trained in the financial side of things. She was always very good at maths in secondary school, but then she got pregnant and dropped out. Now there is no time to go to school. If she doesn't work too, we can't make ends meet.

My eldest brother fled to Europe a couple of years ago. He applied for asylum, but never got it. The last I heard is that he is doing odd jobs, just like me, but that he's always afraid of getting arrested and constantly on the move. That's just not an option for us. But if we could go there legally, just for a couple of years, we'd leave immediately. The things we could learn there and the contacts we'd make would give us a jumpstart on return. We could set up a production facility near my hometown and offer the clothes at much lower prices. By then, the new road should be finished, so we can sell to shops in the city or even produce to export. We could really build a better life and even create jobs for the villagers as well.

Would we really move back to Africa? I can't be 100% sure of course, but I do know one thing, I really need my family. I want my children to learn from their grandparents the way I did and I want them to be proud of Africa. We would love to bring our newly learned skills in practice in our own country. So yes, I am pretty certain that we'll come back, to make a difference back home."

This is a fictitious story which could become reality...

# The power of cooperation

## Lessons learned and recommendations

Cooperation between asylum organisations seems the key to successful support for asylum-seekers who want to prepare for their future. The return project has brought together Dutch asylum organisations who have jointly explored innovative ways on how to deal with return. Together they have developed a shared vision on how to confront the issue.

In the Netherlands, various organisations are responsible for executing asylum policy. COA, DT&V and Nidos each execute part of the asylum procedure on request of the Dutch government. Development organisation Cordaid and the inter-governmental organisation IOM, claim this role themselves, as does HIT Foundation who acts as the facilitator of the project. How do these different organisations experience the partnership and what are their recommendations for the future?

### Shared voice

The partners see the shared vision on return they developed together as the main strength of their cooperation. According to Joost van der Aalst (IOM), this vision makes clear that we are all working towards a common goal: "Efficient



Joost van der Aalst,  
Chief of Mission, IOM

procedures and individual counselling geared towards voluntary return and successful reintegration." To Willem Vink (Nidos) this is especially important because return is such an emotionally charged subject. Vink: "Return almost always evokes strong feelings. Confronting it together, based on a shared vision and with each organisation fulfilling its role in a complementary way, increases the chances of achieving a motivated return." Theo Meijboom (DT&V) adds: "The joint approach sends an unambiguous message to the



Willem Vink,  
Manager, Nidos

asylum-seekers. In the past they often got a variety of messages, and of course would cling to the most promising one and keep hoping to get a residence permit."

Cooperation should not be limited to Dutch organisations; local partners are essential to success. "Partners in the South need to be

involved in the reception and counselling of returnees," says Joep van Zijl (Cordaid). Richard Andringa (COA) emphasises: "We must value and make use of the knowledge and experience of our local partners. We should not invent ways of doing things ourselves." Frans Bastiaens (HIT Foundation): "Working together is the best way to collect as many good ideas as possible and to actually achieve innovation in this field."



Joep van Zijl,  
Maatwerk bij Terugkeer,  
Cordaid

### Think big, act small

To try out new instruments and innovative work methods, the scope of the project was limited in terms of time, number of people and geographical scope. Andringa points out the value of experimenting on a limited scale. "Think big, start small. This small-scale experiment has put sustainable return on the agenda. Sustainable, meaning not just putting someone on a plane back home, but providing real support, for example by trying to tackle potential obstacles to return and reintegration. To me, every independent returnee represents a success." But he recognises that rolling out the successes of a small experiment is not easy. Andringa: "We made Adeona [the online knowledge bank on return issues] available to COA employees all over the Netherlands. The right timing seemed crucial, and we had to be patient, but now it's taking off rapidly." Van der Aalst is a little more hesitant at this stage: "Individual success cases should not be presented as the obvious lasting solution. Not unless you can achieve such successes on a much wider scale." In Van der Aalst's view, this remains one of the bottlenecks. According to Bastiaens the next challenge is to translate the vision into daily practice. "Now that we have developed a shared vision, we really need to start working together, crossing organisational and national borders and applying our vision on the work floor."

### Changing the mindset

All organisations recognise that changing the mindset of asylum-seekers requires a professional approach. Van Zijl stresses how hard it is to reveal the real obstacles to return. He explains: "Many people want to go back with a vague story. Getting the real obstacles on the table - which may be

medical or psychological - takes a lot of time and requires professional and high quality counsellors. You really have to dig deep and few people are good at this." And he adds: "On top of that, knowledge of the South is needed; to understand people's expectations and their biases against return."

Another challenge seems to be when and how to address the return issue. Vink: "Too much emphasis on return hampers the process, this is not the way to win over those who have their doubts. For some of them I think it is better to introduce the issue of return more casually in an effort to overcome their doubts." DT&V is of the opinion that the compass should be aimed at return very early on in the asylum process. Meijboom: "85% of asylum requests are rejected. People have to realise this as early as possible. From the start they must be brought into contact with organisations that support return. The legal period of 28 days is a given. If asylum-seekers only start working on their return once all options for appeal are exhausted, there is too little time left to do anything."



Richard Andringa,  
Director, COA

### Recommendations

The partners voice a couple of very clear recommendations for the future. They stress the importance of investing in each individual asylum-seeker, regardless of whether they will eventually stay in the country or not. Andringa: "You have to believe in the power of each individual. Invest in asylum-seekers while they are still in the procedure, through education or work, even volunteer work. Allow people to develop themselves. I'm not so worried that this will cause people never to return. It's all about allowing them to discover their strengths and use them."

According to Bastiaens, innovation in this field is all about successfully connecting the links in the chain. "This is essential here in the Netherlands, but now that we have developed a shared vision we are also inspired to seek European partners to further strengthen this vision and work together." Andringa: "If the Netherlands is active in Angola, we should make sure that the Germans do not initiate a new parallel project there, but work together." Van Zijl: "We need to share all that we learn, in the Netherlands and with European partners, nobody should



Frans Bastiaens,  
Manager, HIT Foundation

keep anything for themselves." Van der Aalst adds: "And on top of that, we should aim for a uniform approach in Europe. Otherwise different push and pull factors come into play. People will start wandering around Europe."

Strengthening local partnerships in the countries of origin should be further exploited also. Besides the need to work together with local support organisations, IOM points at the importance of the local community that people return to. Van der Aalst: "In my experience, the sustainability of return highly depends on the willingness of the

local community to receive people who return. This deserves much more attention."

And finally the partners strongly argue in favour of a shorter asylum procedure. "The procedure still takes too long," says Van der Aalst. "The longer people stay in



Theo Meijboom,  
Manager, DT&V

the Netherlands, the longer their hopes about staying here are up and the more difficult it becomes to talk about return." Van Zijl: "People should know within a year what their status is."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Shorten the asylum procedure
- Invest in every individual; provide access to education and work
- Increase synergy between the project partners, also at the operational level
- Strengthen local partnerships in countries of origin
- Improve European cooperation

## NEXT STEPS



In 2005 the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) published the agenda-setting report on migration for the next decade: 'Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action'. In that same year, a group of European practitioners met in Maastricht to put their shoulders to the wheel and start working bottom-up to innovate migration practices. Since then regular meetings have taken place between European politicians, national policy-makers, practitioners and other experts. In September 2007 migration players meet up at the European Parliament in Brussels to share their experiences and shape European migration policies that meet the demands of the 21st century.

## About the Migrant

The Migrant is a single edition newspaper, published by the HIT Foundation. HIT develops innovative methods for the participation of migrants in society, both in the Netherlands and in their countries of origin.

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## Who dares?

Of course this doesn't mean that our work is finished. Several European asylum organisations have already started to explore a potential new experiment on legal labour migration. We challenge you to contribute your opinion and/or sign up as a stakeholder at [www.migrationinpractice.eu](http://www.migrationinpractice.eu)