



*Musah Yussif with his family. With reintegration support, he started welding and steel fabricating business. © IOM 2013*

## Voices of Ghanaian Migrant Workers returning from Libya

### Musah Yussif

The 2011 Libyan crisis was one of the largest migration crises in modern history. Of the 796,915 migrants that crossed the border to flee violence, 18,500 were Ghanaian. In close cooperation with Government of Ghana, IOM successfully evacuated and provided travel assistance to 12,034 Ghanaians fleeing the conflict.

The majority of the returnees were irregular migrants. Those who managed to reach Libya worked in harsh conditions in order to support their families and communities in Ghana until heavy fighting took place. When the migrants returned to Ghana, they did not have sufficient assets, insurance, housing, or employment. Returnees thus found themselves in very difficult circumstances and commonly expressed sentiment of desperation and frustration, and displayed obvious signs of psychological stress and trauma.

To meet the needs of these returning migrations, IOM Ghana, with generous support from Government of Japan, implemented a project to strengthen the capacities of 161 returnees and vulnerable community members through the provision of business development and management training and in kind support to start up business. The project also provided national health insurance to 2,108 returnees, their families and sending community members; and psycho-social counseling to 152 returnees.

is a welder and steel fabricator, who also dabbles as a local movie actor. He is married with three children. Musah says his journey to Libya began when a friend introduced him to another friend who convinced him into embarking on such adventure. According to him, they spent over three months before they reached Libya through the desert. Recounting the experience, Musah, he wished he could repress them because it was nothing to write home about. Musah thinks that good health is an asset and worthwhile to see dreams and hopes materialized, therefore the renewal of the facility present a great opportunity and an impetus for reaching the dreams and hopes. He stated that the exercise has bailed him from one year medical bills which he thinks is of significant essence and on behalf of his family extends their profound gratitude to the government and people of Japan for this kind gesture.

Musah regards the business development trainings and the renewal of NHI as a life changing program. To him the training has positively impacted his business and general life pointing at customer service, recording, savings among other skills he acquired through the training. He further added that the training better positioned him to face life with all the seriousness it deserves and will always see problems in life as challenges that can be

curbed within his home land. Musah feels indebted to the project on account that it has instil patience in him which intend has increased his cliental base.

### Abdule Hanan Umar

says he was misled into believing that life could only improve when one goes out of his country of origin but he got the reality when he travelled to Libya where he better could be liken to a slave. According to him, there is no place like home, and as such he will do all that it takes to grow his sheep farm here in Ghana.



Abdul thanks IOM and the Japanese government for the support given him from which he is determined to succeed. When asked whether he will ever go back to Libya or the like, he says never in his life. He was however quick to add that though he did not return to Ghana with anything material, he has acquired enormous experience such as hard work that will forever guide his life.

### Iddrisu Abubakari

is a 31 year old artisan with profound skill in masonry, plumbing and poultry and crop farming. He is married with three children. In 2010, according to Abubakari, some compelling factors to push him to leave behind his cherished family including his incapacitated father and embark on journey to North Africa, with the view of crossing over to Europe, in search for greener pastures. According him he was compelled to embark on such a life



threatening endeavour through the desert because of lack of job opportunities here in Ghana to search for what life preserve for him outside. On how life was in Libya; he says the entirety of his travel to Libya seems to be full of regret because in his first year, he was without job but later got one and never went anywhere with it before the crisis visited them.

Abubakari was short for words to express the kind of joy and relief the National Health Insurance registration and renewal assistance brought him and his family. He says, though, his pregnant wife and children were already registered, their membership had expired and he could barely provide for their food needs and was also ill prepared for any eventuality of any of the family particularly his pregnant wife to undertake ante-natal visits to a health facility. The renewed insurance had brought in great amount of relief such that the wife could now access health-care with ease. "May God have mercy on the government of Japan and IOM for this assistance", his wife added.

### Baba Alhassan Seidu

is a beneficiary of sewing machines from the project. According Baba, hitherto, he had to go to other places for designs but with the assistance he now completes all sorts of designing and sewing in his shop. Recounting other benefits, his involvement in business development trainings has been of tremendous help for now and the future.



"My savings culture was very bad before I participated in the training, but now I do not longer joke with savings." Baba stated. To him work is moving on well and as such there will be no need travelling out of the country for means of livelihood again. He believes he can make it here in Tamale and therefore he will try very hard to expand his shop.

