

Making Return a Success

– Migrants' Stories

These testimonies highlight the plight of irregular migrants stranded in North Africa in transit to Europe revealing the many sorrows and dangers suffered at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers who show no respect for the basic human rights of migrants. Here, the migrants explain their decision to return to their country of origin with assistance provided under an IOM programme funded by the European Commission and Italy to better manage transit and irregular migration in Libya – TRIM.



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Mr. C left the Ghanaian capital, Accra, in 2002 with two friends, heading for Europe along the same route through Niger and Libya taken by thousands of Ghanaians every year.

When they reached the Libyan border, the smuggler's vehicle was intercepted by Libyan police and the occupants were told to walk off into the desert. They walked for three days without food following vehicle track marks. One of C's friends died of thirst and exhaustion.

When C finally reached the town of Sabah, he worked for two months as a carpenter to raise enough money to reach Tripoli.

In the capital, he survived by taking on two jobs as security guard and as a car washer to earn enough to pay a smuggler to take him to Italy.

But in 2005, when the planning of his journey was nearly complete, C's employer withheld his final salary payment, making it impossible for him to pay the last installment of the smuggler's fee.

It was a blessing in disguise. The boat that was to have taken him to Italy sank and, on hearing the news, his mother and his wife in Accra insisted that he come home. But C was stranded with no money and no documents until he learnt about IOM's assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme (AVRR).

He returned home and, with help from IOM, refurbished his old lorry, installing a new engine and other parts. He now transports goods in Accra, earning around US\$ 250 a month. **M**

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Mr. S.C. left Bamako, Mali, hoping for a better life in Europe. He travelled through Libya, where he intended to stay to raise more money to pay smugglers promising a smooth crossing across the Mediterranean. After spending a few years doing odd jobs as a painter, he had an accident and broke his leg.

As an irregular migrant with no family support, he was unable to receive medical assistance. When the pain became unbearable, he decided he would try to return to Bamako. But with no money and no travel document, this was impossible. Hearing of IOM's AVRR pro-

gramme he applied and was successful. IOM's assistance went beyond providing return assistance and he qualified for a small grant to start a tailoring business.

"Business is good and even better during the festive season," says Mr. S.C.

"My fractured leg continues to make me suffer and I now have to walk with crutches. But all in all, I consider myself fortunate."

Today, grateful to be back home, he now employs two junior tailors, as well as his son, who is an apprentice. **M**



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