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**MY STORY**

**OF RETURN**

The stories featured in this publication are actual testimonies of migrants and have been relayed by the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The opinions expressed in the booklet are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IOM or CIMI.

CIMI and IOM are committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## Foreword

Since 1979, IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes have been supporting those migrants who voluntarily decide to return to their country but lack the means to do so. For IOM, AVRR is an indispensable part of a comprehensive approach to migration management. The successful implementation of AVRR programmes requires the cooperation and participation of a broad range of actors, including the migrants, civil society, private sector, academia and the governments in host countries, transit countries and countries of origin.

IOM cooperates with the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI) – which is committed to the AVRR programme's core values in providing services to migrants who are unwilling or unable to remain in Israel. The assistance provided under AVRR can help returnees in preparing for their travel, return and reintegration. Since 2013, CIMI and IOM have helped over 500 migrants in vulnerable situations to return to over 30 countries of origin.

### About the Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI)

CIMI is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to the development of international migration and integration in Israel. CIMI develops programmes and services in the fields of labour migration, refugees and asylum seekers, counter-trafficking and assisted voluntary return and reintegration. CIMI strives to support Israel in meeting its obligations under international law and in applying international standards and best practices in Israeli migration policy for the benefit of the migrants, their countries of origin, the State of Israel and Israeli society at large. CIMI works in cooperation with non-governmental organizations, governments and international organizations.



### About the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Established in 1951, IOM – the UN Migration Agency is the leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration, and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. With 173 member states, a further eight states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all. It does so by:

- providing services and advice to governments and migrant.
- promoting international cooperation on migration issues.
- assisting in the search for practical solutions to migration problems.
- providing humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.



## THE STORY OF JASMINE AND JEFFREY, PHILIPPINES

*"Being worried for the future of our children, as a family we decided that Jeffrey should return to the Philippines with the children, and so in late 2018 this happened, and I followed them in mid-2019".*

I migrated to Israel in 2005, while Jeffrey had been there since 1999. We had both left our families in the Philippines to work as caregivers. The long years have been both a blessing and a challenge for us, as Israel was the place where we met and started a family, but also where we experienced the fear of deportation during the later years – further impacting a health condition from which I suffered, and which did not allow me to work regularly. Being worried for the future of our children, as a family we decided that Jeffrey should return to the Philippines with the children.

Thus, they voluntarily returned home with the support of CIMI and IOM in late 2018, and I followed in mid-2019. Inspired by my father's existing business, and after Jeffrey and I thoroughly researched the labour market, we decided to use our reintegration grant to set up a business. Together, we capitalized on the support received from CIMI, IOM, and our families to expand my father's printing shop. In less than a year, we managed to set up our own shop and we are now planning to open another branch in the coming months.

The business is doing so well that we are more than able to cover our daily needs and send our two children to a good school. I can receive the medical care I need and through this business venture, we are creating jobs and actively engaging in the community.





## THE STORY OF ARTEM, RUSSIA

*"I felt hopeless. I realized I could not stay in Israel any longer, so I decided to return home, to Russia, with the support of CIMI and IOM".*

I moved to Israel from Russia in 1996 for financial reasons. I lived in the north of Israel and worked in many factories including those that manufacture plastic, produce medical equipment, and in the production of mineral water. During my life in Israel I was married twice. From my first marriage I have a daughter and from the second I have two sons.

In 2014, I was involved in an accident that resulted in a spinal injury which paralyzed three-quarters of my body. To my great regret, my wife left me and I found myself in the abnormal situation not only of having no medical insurance but also suffering the most devastating impact of the loss of communication with my children.

After three years of being in a nursing home, I realized that without medical insurance, I could not access medical treatment and rehabilitation programmes. I felt hopeless. It was clear to me that I could not stay in Israel any longer, so I decided to return home to Russia, and did so with the support of CIMI and IOM.

Here in Russia, with the help of my sisters, I managed to renew my identity documents, and I have almost completed all the bureaucratic procedures to be eligible for medical services, a disability pension and subsidies for medication.

I would like to express my personal gratitude to all those who participated in organizing my return and reintegration, as well as to the IOM doctor who escorted me during the flight.

## THE STORY OF AKOS\*, GHANA

*"I am very proud of myself because I picked up new skills with great ease".*

In Accra my life was very difficult because neither my husband nor I could find any stable means of income. We decided to move to Israel in search of better opportunities. The idea was to stay for five years, earn some savings and then return to Ghana to start afresh, but we ended staying in Israel for ten years. There I worked as a pre-school teacher. Our living conditions improved, but, after giving birth to my children, I realized that I could not take care of them full-time because of my work, and childcare was extremely expensive. That is why we decided to move back to Ghana.

A colleague told me about the possibility of AVRR, so in July 2018 my family and I returned to Ghana with the support of CIMI and IOM.

Upon our return, my initial idea was to set up a simple wig shop, but during reintegration counselling IOM advised me to think beyond just a simple shop, and look more into the production of wigs which would enhance my skills and provide a greater avenue of success. I decided to undertake training on making wig caps, which I successfully completed. I am very proud of

myself because I picked up new skills with great ease. If the counsellor had not given me that advice, I wouldn't have known I had that potential!

As part of my reintegration plan, I was able to purchase the necessary materials to start my business. I am very happy with the support I received from CIMI and IOM. Thanks to the proximity of my workplace to home, I am now able to spend much more time with my family. In the future, I plan to diversify the items I sell and develop my business further.

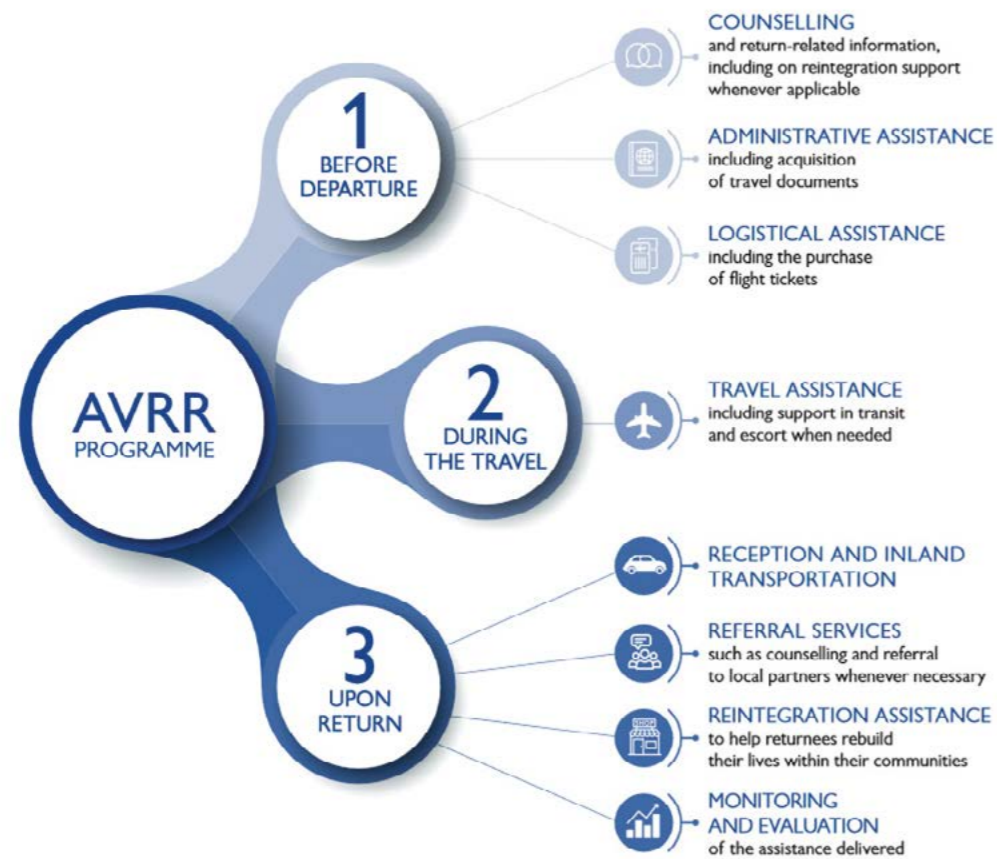
*\*Name changed in accordance with the migrant's request.*



## AVRR AT A GLANCE

IOM's AVRR services are delivered in accordance with a tailored and individualized approach, putting the needs of the returnees at the forefront, respecting their dignity and capacity to take responsibility for and ownership of the return process.

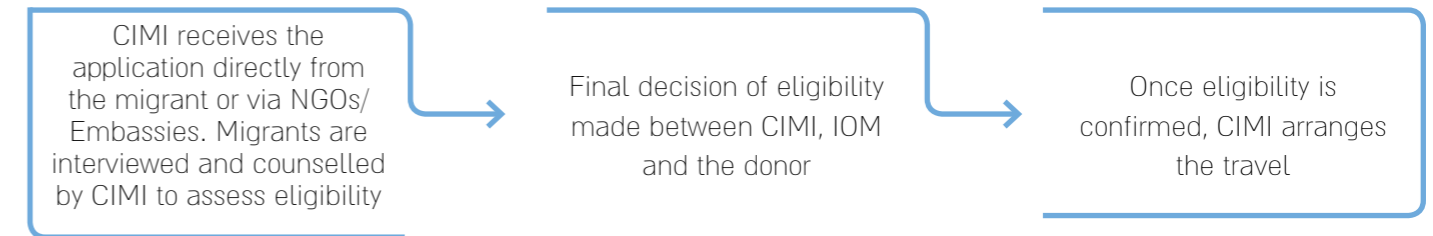
### THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF AN AVRR PROGRAMME\*



## AVRR IN ISRAEL

AVRR procedures in Israel are tailored to match the specific operational dynamics in the country. As such, the AVRR process consists of the following steps, depicted here in two main stages: 'Before Departure' and 'Once Back Home'

### Before Departure/Assessment



### Once Back Home



The AVRR programme in Israel is implemented with the financial support of the Israeli Government.



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