

# CHOICES

## Post-Return Client Feedback

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## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>Sustainable Return</b>	3
<b>Client Feedback 2012-13</b>	5
1. Reports of safety issues	5
2. Problems at the return airport	7
3. Satisfaction with the service	10
4. Satisfaction with the overseas partners	12
5. Life in the country of return	14
6. Influence of family and friends	17
7. In employment or running a business	20
8. Do you intend to move to another country?	22
9. Is there any difference between male and female returnees in their experience of the Choices service and reintegration?	23
<b>Towards sustainable return ...</b>	27

## Introduction

After over 10 years of advice for those considering returning to their country, Refugee Action's Choices service took on the UK's Assisted Voluntary Return programme in April 2011. Refugee Action's approach is to enable people through impartial, non-directive and confidential advice to consider the options that are open to them, including voluntary return. Refugee Action does not put pressure on individuals to return or not to return, but provides a supportive environment to enable people to make their own decision. For those people who do opt to return to their country of origin, Refugee Action hopes to support them to achieve a sustainable return. As a result, Refugee Action collates data on sustainability of return, as well as information on the quality of the service received from Refugee Action and its partners, life in the country of return, and reintegration spend.

## Sustainable Return

There has been considerable discussion, both within Refugee Action and with its overseas partners, of what exactly a 'sustainable return' might look like. Refugee Action's working definition is:

“Sustainable return occurs when an individual (and their family):

- a) are able to engage in income generation sufficient to meet the accommodation and subsistence needs of their family,
- b) have successfully re-established family and social ties and feel a sense of belonging to the return community,
- c) do not suffer persecution or violence as a result of the political or security situation in the country of return,
- d) do not need to re-migrate except where this is via safe and regulated migration routes.”

This definition was based on the definition supplied by Black et al in 'Understanding Voluntary Return' (2004) published by the Home Office. Their definition covered physical, socio-economic and political sustainability (a), c), and d) above).

Following feedback from Choices overseas partners, the definition was expanded to the psycho-social dimension of return - see point b. Even where a person has sufficient money, physical safety, and housing they may still not feel like they “belong” either because they have not developed social ties with family and friends or because they still felt a connection or sense of belonging to the UK and had not fully come to terms with their return.

## Headline issues highlighted by client feedback

- There are regular reports of returnees' **fear for their personal safety** in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq Kurdistan and Pakistan.
- Returnees to Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India are often **stopped at the airport** of return by immigration officials demanding bribes.
- **Levels of satisfaction with the Choices service** are very high - 99% throughout the different countries of return.
- **Levels of satisfaction with Choices overseas partners** are also very high with no exceptions (99% on average - a range of 89%-100%).
- Returnees experience an increase in **disappointment about their lives** at the five month feedback point, with the exception of Afghanistan and Zimbabwe (which have lower initial levels of expectation).
- **Family and friends** provide accommodation and/or financial support to returnees in the majority of cases at the two week feedback point, as might be expected. However at the five month feedback there are large differences in returnees' dependence on friends and family depending on the country. Returnees to Afghanistan (71%), Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan (76%) having high levels of dependence, while Sri Lanka (22%) and Brazil (25%) show low levels. This may be related both to family structures and the state of the economy in the countries concerned.
- **Levels of employment** or involvement in business are high in countries such as Brazil (80% at 5 months) and China (77%), where the economy is strong, but remain very low in some countries, for example Afghanistan (36%) and Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan (36%).
- **Levels of returnees expressing a wish to re-migrate** are low overall (1.4% averaged across both feedback points) although countries such as Iraq Kurdistan (9%), Pakistan (2%), Bangladesh (3%) and Afghanistan (2%) do have a slightly higher percentage, which may be due to instability within these countries.
- **Women returnees** are less likely than men to be in employment or running a business (34% as against 38% for men), and are more likely to express disappointment at their lives after return (35% as against 23% for men). This effect is particularly marked at the five month point, in countries such as Brazil, Libya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

# Client feedback 2012-2013

## 1. Reports of safety issues

### 1.1 Two week feedback

An important element of sustainable return is that the returnee does not suffer persecution or violence as a result of the political or security situation in the country of return. While those who report concerns about their safety may not be harmed, their fears may affect their chances of psycho-social reintegration and ability to settle back into networks of family and friends.

Returnees' concerns for personal safety are significantly higher in certain countries of return. **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka** are among the countries where returnees are most concerned. This may reflect the unstable security situation in parts of these countries, and in the case of Sri Lanka and Pakistan the targeting of minorities, which has been widely reported. Albania and Egypt also show high levels of returnee concern, but as client numbers are low, it is not possible to draw any conclusions from this data. There are also a number of other countries that do not feature in this report, as very few clients have recently returned and we have been unable to obtain any feedback.

*'Life in Kabul is difficult because of the security situation. It is difficult to operate a business in this setting... am still thinking of re-emigrating because of the security situation in the small town that I am from. There is a strong Taliban presence in X and it is not a safe place.'*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan - client feedback 2012-2013

### Some examples of reported safety issues in countries of return

- Afghanistan Problems with the Taliban
- Albania Family problems
- Bangladesh The political situation, trouble with neighbours
- China Afraid of the Mafia
- Egypt Relative killed as refused to disclose client's whereabouts
- India Scared that the government will find out that he had claimed asylum in the UK
- Iraq Kurdistan General unrest
- Nepal Family problems
- Nigeria Worried about attacks on Christians
- Pakistan Blood feuds, Sunni and Shia conflicts, fear of the Taliban, violence against Christians, crime, general security situation
- Sri Lanka Fear of the government, of being traced

## 1.2 Five month feedback

A direct question about concern for personal safety was added to the feedback at the beginning of 2013; so the report refers only to the period from January - March 2013. A number of countries feature in terms of reports of safety issues at the five months point, for example it is clear that the majority of returnees to Bangladesh report safety issues at the 5 month point - where details are given this relates to strikes and political involvement. Some clients report fears or threats that relate to the reason they left their country initially, and the reason they claimed asylum in the UK, even where they have been refused asylum.

*'(Client) is currently on the run, as he cannot settle in one place for fear of his enemies. He says that the people who were after him when he last left have found out that he has returned. He is currently moving from city to city, never settling. He lives in fear that these people will find him, he says that they have been actively looking for him, and he is scared they will kill him. He said it was fine for his first two months after return, but now his return has been disclosed to these people who are looking for him.'*

### Some examples of safety issues in countries of return

- Bangladesh At risk due to political involvement, strikes and insecurity
- China Owes people money
- India Afraid of large organisation
- Pakistan Afraid of persecution due to religious faith, general security situation poor

## 2. Problems at the return airport

Problems at the airport in the country of return can occur in any country. However they are most pronounced in a small number of countries.

While some issues at the airport of return are concerned with logistics (lost luggage, missed connections), there remain a large number where returnees are either detained, undergo long periods of questioning or are pressured to pay a bribe. These instances are common in three countries where we see high numbers of returnees: Pakistan, where 22% of those answering the question have these problems, Sri Lanka 20% and India 13%.

In some cases, the detention and questioning of a returnee at the country of return airport may indicate that they are likely to suffer persecution on an on-going basis. In others, questioning appears to be the result of immigration officials being faced with immigration documents that they are not aware of, who feel the need to check (for example EU letters, ETDs). There are also consistent and continuing problems in countries such as Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka, where immigration officials routinely detain returnees and demand bribes before they release them. While these cases may not indicate the likelihood of continuing problems, in some cases returnees report feeling traumatised by their experience at the airport - an experience which makes psycho-social reintegration more difficult.

There is a clear indication that returning on anything other than a passport can increase the likelihood of scrutiny at the border. In some countries clients report being questioned as a result of returning on an EU letter.

*'The immigration officials at Colombo airport threatened to hand him over to the military. He had to give them £100 to stop them from doing this.'*<sup>2</sup>

*'Client had a problem at Lahore airport due to ETDs, immigration interrogated him for 4.5 hours and he had to pay a £200 bribe to be allowed to continue his journey. He had a lot of negotiation with them and he was told that if he did not pay he could well end up in prison. He had no choice but to pay the money. During his search at customs they saw his iPhone and demanded £90 in duty; he managed to negotiate this down to a £50 bribe. The ETD issued by the Pakistani HC in London mentioned that he was 'Black Listed' and the client believes this is what caused him the problems.'*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sri Lanka - client feedback 2012-2013

<sup>3</sup> Pakistan - client feedback 2012-2013

## Problems at the airport - countries where most common

Country of return	Number of people reporting problems at return airport	Number of people with problems involving detention, ID documents, or questioning	Number of people answering the question	Percentage reporting a problem re detention, ID documents or questioning	Details of problems recorded	Whether a travel document was involved in the problem and if so which type
India	33	22	169	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 clients detained, questioned, had travel documents queried</li> <li>• 1 client problem about bringing in medical supplies</li> <li>• 2 clients with delays</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23 ETDs,</li> <li>• 8 passports or existing travel documents</li> </ul>
Pakistan	61	46	212	22%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 client had a flight to the wrong city in Pakistan</li> <li>• 1 flight delayed</li> <li>• 1 stopped by immigration authorities</li> <li>• 1 questioned by authorities</li> <li>• 1 client issue with passport as the British visa had been stamped 'cancelled'</li> <li>• 1 client no 'Meet and Greet'</li> <li>• 1 query about why client travelled without a passport</li> <li>• 1 lost baggage</li> <li>• 43 involving bribes being demanded in order to release clients (and usually given)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 37 ETDs</li> <li>• 19 passports</li> </ul>
Sri Lanka	22	13	64	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 were questioned and bribes often demanded</li> <li>• 1 was not met by overseas partner</li> <li>• 1 arrested by army and taken to army camp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 ETDs</li> <li>• 8 passports</li> </ul>

## Examples of problems at the Country of Return airport

- Afghanistan 1 long wait for transport, 1 delay for IOM, 1 client detained for 3 hours until friend managed to get him bailed out
- Albania Kept overnight then released, kept for 6 hours questioning, questioned for 5 hours due to traveling on an ETD, questioned for 2 hours and documents confiscated
- Bangladesh Not met at Dhaka, delay, problems going from Dhaka to Sylhet, detained at airport
- Brazil Problems with excess luggage, lack of documentation leading to a police report having to be filed
- Cameroon Security kept client for a few hours to question about use of travel document instead of passport
- China Delayed while asked to prove identity, 2 hours in security, typhoon struck airport, missed connection, questioned for a while, luggage lost
- Congo Detained, questioned, had to pay a bribe
- Iran 2 clients were not willing to talk about it, 1 fined for bringing in medical equipment, 3 detained and questioned
- Iraq 1 client kept because security did not accept ETD (wife had to bring Iraqi ID)
- Iraq Kurdistan 1 client arrested and held for 1 hour, 1 client held at Erbil airport for several hours, 1 client had clothes taken from luggage, 1 client was detained together with others who had EU letters and 1 client was arrested and asked for Kurdish ID
- Jordan Held in detention for one day, problem with document
- Libya Detained, problem with travel document
- Nigeria 1 delayed for 30 min to check passports, 1 waited a while and was asked for a bribe but didn't give one, 1 waited for 5 hours for travel document to be checked, 1 problem with luggage, 1 waited for a long time for overseas partner, 1 questioned about travel document, 1 was made to give a £100 bribe as he didn't have a Nigerian passport
- Rwanda Questioned for 1.5 hours about travel document
- Tanzania Authorities did not recognise EU letter and detained client until he paid a bribe
- Uganda 1 client was delayed at airport while authorities verified document, 1 was questioned
- Vietnam 2 clients questioned for over an hour, 1 was asked for a bribe but released without paying
- Zimbabwe 1 charged excess baggage, 1 client not allowed to bring liquids, 1 client detained, questioned subject to violence

### 3. Satisfaction with the service

In order to successfully reintegrate, returnees need to plan their return, taking into account the situation in the country of return. They also need to be supported in planning a safe and comfortable journey back to their country of origin. This report on returnees' satisfaction with the Choices service shows that in the vast majority of cases (99% across all countries) returnees are happy with the service that they have received. Extremely low numbers report unhappiness with the service (1% across all countries). In the table below, where countries with more than fifty respondents have been compared, the highest percentage of those unhappy with the service is 2%.

*'I travelled safely through the airports. The Choices staff were very supportive and helped me understand the process. I was supported at Heathrow and made my own way through Mumbai to meet the flight to Goa. I was met by Caritas; they arranged my first reintegration appointment and supported me to reunite with my family after thirty years away in the UK. I am very grateful for all the help and support given to me by Refugee Action and your partner agency Caritas. Thank you, I really couldn't have done it without your support.'*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> India - client feedback 2012-2013

*'I have moved to a different place where I have a few friends that are supporting me. I feel happy that I have still got Refugee Action Choices caseworkers and their partner agency Siyath to support me. Being able to talk to somebody about my situation is a great relief. I am sure that in time my fears will pass and I will enjoy a happy life.'*<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>5</sup> Sri Lanka - client feedback 2012-2013

Country of return	Number of clients happy with the service	Percentage of answers given - happy with the service	Number of clients unhappy with the service	Percentage of answers given - unhappy with the service	Total number responding
<b>All countries</b>	<b>1200</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1212</b>
Afghanistan	32	97%	1	3%	33
Albania	14	100%	0	0%	14
Algeria	2	100%	0	0%	2
Bangladesh	147	100%	0	0%	147
Bolivia	4	100%	0	0%	4
Brazil	30	100%	0	0%	30
China	158	99%	2	1%	160
Ghana	11	100%	0	0%	11
India	127	99%	1	1%	128
Iran	12	92%	1	8%	13
Iraq	22	100%	0	0%	22
Iraq Kurdistan	132	98%	3	2%	135
Jamaica	5	100%	0	0%	5
Libya	13	100%	0	0%	13
Malawi	14	100%	0	0%	14
Mauritius	11	100%	0	0%	11
Mongolia	6	100%	0	0%	6
Nepal	7	100%	0	0%	7
Nigeria	54	100%	0	0%	54
Pakistan	196	98%	4	2%	200
South Africa	7	100%	0	0%	7
Sri Lanka	61	100%	0	0%	61
Uganda	8	100%	0	0%	8
Zimbabwe	32	100%	0	0%	32

\*Please note that only countries with more than twenty returnees on the post return feedback, or where there may be a special focus (for instance where there is a partner) are included in this table. Levels of unhappiness with the service are extremely low, with the majority of countries recording a 0% or 1% score. The main exception is Iran with 8% unhappy with the service, but because of the low sample size in this case, no conclusions can be drawn.

Comparison of satisfaction with the service in countries, where more than 50 returnees answered the question

Country of return	Percentage happy with the service	Percentage unhappy with the service
Nigeria	100%	0%
Sri Lanka	100%	0%
China	99%	1%
India	99%	1%
Iraq Kurdistan	98%	2%
Pakistan	98%	2%

**Reasons why returnees are happy with only parts of the service or unhappy with the service**

It is clear from feedback that many issues arise around the payment of reintegration assistance, the need for documentation to support it, the practical and logistical issues of paying it and the length of time before it arrives. Inability to contact either the overseas partner or Refugee Action can also be a reason for reporting unhappiness with the service.

**4. Satisfaction with the overseas partners - at two weeks and five months**

Overseas partners increasingly play a large part in the reintegration of returnees. Primarily, they can assist clients to start to generate income, either through assisting them to find a job, or through training, or assistance to start up a business. But they also play a part in psycho-social reintegration, with some partners facilitating focus groups and meetings between returnees. It should be noted that levels of satisfaction with the overseas partners who have been in place for all of 2012-13 is extremely high, ranging from 89.2 to 100%.



The QZC (Quanzhou New Home Social Work Centre) team in China

*‘WELDO are ... helpful with the advice and guidance to open up a business. WELDO are a good organisation not like other organisations in Pakistan that are corrupt.’<sup>6</sup>*

*‘(He) felt that they (Qandil) were nice people to work with and really happy that they were able to assist him claim his money soon after he returned.’<sup>7</sup>*

*‘Was very happy with Caritas (Zimbabwe) and had no complaints’<sup>8</sup>*

*‘He has been happy with all aspects of the service with Refugee Action and Siyath - commented that more money would be useful. He liked being able to make contact with his Siyath caseworker face-to-face directly in Colombo.’<sup>9</sup>*

**Overall satisfaction feedback for different partners (in countries where partners were in place during 2012-2013):**

Partner (Country)	Percentage happy with all or part of the service, taken over both feedback points.
Siyath (Sri Lanka)	100%
Projeto Resgate (Brazil)	100%
Qandil (Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan)	98.5%
WELDO (Pakistan)	97%
Pro Natura International (Nigeria)	96.5%
Caritas Zimbabwe	94.5%
Caritas India	92%
Caritas Bangladesh	89.2%

It should be noted that small differences in the satisfaction rating of partners may be influenced by local geography, the economic climate and cultural expectations around services. However, the most common issues for example in Zimbabwe, India and Bangladesh were concerning difficulties accessing reintegration assistance which is a systemic problem associated with EU funding rules, rather than a difficulty specific to the partner themselves.

<sup>6</sup> Pakistan - client feedback 2012-2013

<sup>7</sup> Iraq Kurdistan - client feedback 2012-2013

<sup>8</sup> Zimbabwe - client feedback 2012-2013

<sup>9</sup> Sri Lanka - client feedback 2012-2013

## 5. Life in the country of return

Measuring returnees' experiences of life upon return at both the two week and the five month point can give an impression of whether life is measuring up to their expectations. In some countries where the sample size was large enough to draw conclusions, there is a reduction in returnees' satisfaction with return (life is worse than expected), whereas others show little change in attitudes.

The countries where returnees' experiences were better than expected after five months were Afghanistan, Libya and Zimbabwe, suggesting that returnees had low expectations which were exceeded as they re-integrated. Pakistan and Bangladesh showed little change in returnees' reports, suggesting that after five months, life was very much as returnees had anticipated. However in Iraq, Iraq Kurdistan and Nigeria, there were noticeable increases at the five months point in returnees' negative perceptions of life in the country of return, suggesting that initially favourable impressions had declined.

*'Enjoying life in China, says that it has changed much since he left, but the standard of living is much better than when he lived there last, things are of a much higher quality.'*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> China - client feedback 2012-2013

*'Very happy, but still getting used to everything. Have been celebrating being back with family and resting for a couple of days now. All the family are really happy ... Very happy with making the decision to come back. There have been positive changes. Mumbai is really beautiful now and there are lots of things to see - new bridges etc. The police are more strict but in a good way; for example, you must have a license to drive now, whereas before police would let you off if you didn't have one.'*<sup>11</sup>



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<sup>11</sup> India - client feedback 2012-2013

Country of return	Life better than expected				Life same as expected				Life worse than expected				Total number responding	
	Two weeks		Five months		Two weeks		Five months		Two weeks		Five months		Two weeks	Five months
<b>All countries</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>1280</b>	<b>436</b>
Afghanistan	7	17%	4	28%	16	39%	5	36%	18	44%	5	36%	41	14
Albania	4	22%	1	20%	9	50%	2	40%	5	28%	2	40%	18	5
Algeria	1	20%	0	0%	4	80%	1	33%	0	0%	2	67%	5	3
Bangladesh	18	11%	8	18%	62	39%	13	28%	79	50%	25	54%	159	46
Brazil	9	30%	6	60%	18	60%	2	20%	3	10%	2	20%	30	10
China	35	21%	17	24%	84	50%	29	40%	49	29%	26	36%	168	72
Ghana	4	44%	0	0%	3	33%	0	0%	2	23%	3	100%	9	3
India	28	22%	7	37%	70	55%	6	31.5%	29	23%	6	31.5%	127	19
Iran	2	12.5%	2	18%	10	62.5%	5	46%	4	25%	4	36%	16	11
Iraq	6	21%	7	35%	17	61%	4	20%	5	18%	9	45%	28	20
Iraq Kurdistan	39	28%	10	20%	73	53%	21	41%	27	19%	20	39%	139	51
Jamaica	2	40%	0	0%	2	40%	0	0%	1	20%	1	100%	5	1
Libya	3	12%	12	43%	15	60%	11	39%	7	28%	5	18%	25	28
Malawi	3	27%	1	25%	4	36.5%	2	50%	4	36.5%	1	25%	11	4
Mauritius	0	0%	0	0%	7	63.5%	1	50%	4	36.5%	1	50%	11	2
Mongolia	1	14%	0	0%	3	43%	1	100%	3	43%	0	0%	7	1
Nepal	0	0%	0	0%	9	69%	1	50%	4	31%	1	50%	13	2
Nigeria	11	24%	8	31%	22	48%	2	7%	12	28%	16	62%	45	26
Pakistan	24	12%	4	10%	96	45%	18	46%	91	43%	17	44%	211	39
South Africa	3	43%	1	16.5%	3	43%	4	67%	1	14%	1	16.5%	7	6
Sri Lanka	12	18%	3	33.5%	42	64%	4	44.5%	12	18%	2	22%	66	9
Uganda	0	0%	1	50%	4	57%	0	0%	3	43%	1	50%	7	2
Vietnam	1	17%	0	0%	2	33%	1	50%	3	50%	1	50%	6	2
Zimbabwe	9	32%	3	37.5%	11	39%	3	37.5%	8	29%	2	25%	28	8

\*Please note that only countries with more than twenty returnees on the two week post return feedback, or where there may be a special focus (for instance where there is a partner) are included in this table.

While feedback is limited, looking at the feedback from the major countries of return, it is possible to establish which countries see a rise in positive reports from the 2 week to the 5 month mark, or a rise in reports suggesting that life has not met expectations. By totalling the ‘better than expected’ and ‘same as expected’ reports, it is possible to find out where returnees feel that their expectations of life on return have been met, or exceeded. By then comparing these figures at the 2 week and the 5 month mark, together with those that suggest life is worse than expected, it is possible to see movements in returnees’ rating of their lives on return.

Returnees to Afghanistan and Zimbabwe were most likely to have revised their opinions about life in the country of return favourably.

This may be because media coverage and reports from contacts at home lead returnees to have low expectations. However, in the case of Afghanistan the percentage of those expecting a positive experience was small initially. Indeed, some countries where returnees revised their expectations downwards after five months were still ahead of or equal to Afghanistan in terms of overall numbers of those reporting a positive experience (India, Sri Lanka, China). In Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, although satisfaction levels showed a reduction, it was a small one. Those countries which showed the greatest drop in satisfaction in life were Nigeria, Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan. This may be due to a reverse effect where returnees had picked up prior to return that life was improving but they were in fact disappointed once they had settled.

Country	% finding life <b>better</b> or the <b>same</b> as expected		% change over 4.5 months in reports of life meeting or exceeding expectations	% finding life <b>worse</b> than expected		% change over 4.5 months in reports of life not meeting expectations, being worse
	Two weeks	Five months		Two weeks	Five months	
<b>All countries</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>8% reduction</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>8% increase</b>
Afghanistan*	56%	64%	8% increase	44%	36%	8% reduction
Bangladesh	50%	46%	4% reduction	50%	54%	4% increase
China	71%	64%	7% reduction	29%	36%	7% increase
India	77%	68.5%	8.5% reduction	23%	31.5%	8.5% increase
Iraq*	82%	55%	27% reduction	18%	45%	27% increase
Iraq Kurdistan	81%	61%	20% reduction	19%	39%	20% increase
Nigeria*	72%	38%	34% reduction	28%	62%	34% increase
Pakistan	57%	56%	1% reduction	43%	44%	1% increase
Sri Lanka*	82%	78%	4% reduction	18%	22%	4% increase
Zimbabwe*	71%	75%	4% increase	29%	25%	4% reduction

\*Trends should be treated with caution as response numbers are low in this country

## 6. Influence of family and friends

Family and friends play a vital part in the reintegration of many returnees. Their role is not limited to psycho-social reintegration and the re-establishment of social networks. They are also key to returnees' ability to generate income, find a place to live, and survive when times are difficult. In every country where feedback is large enough to measure, a majority of returnees depend on their friends and family for accommodation, financial assistance and support in business, at least at the two week feedback stage. While some returnees feel stigmatised by families due to their lack of success in the UK, for others family provide a lifeline.

- Afghanistan 79% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, and this reduces only to 71% at 5 months. This reflects the low levels of economic activity in Afghanistan, and it may also be a feature of family structures in the country.
- Bangladesh 80% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, and this reduces to 52% at five months, possibly reflecting the number of returnees who enter the economy through small businesses.
- Brazil 77% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, but this reduces markedly to 25% at five months, reflecting Brazil's growing economy.
- China 60% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, a lower number than in other countries, and this reduces to 42% at the five month point.
- India 86% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, which reduces to 63% at the five month point.
- Iraq / Kurdistan In Iraq 67% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks, which increases to 80% at the five month point; and in Iraq Kurdistan 63% are dependent on family and friends at 2 weeks, which increases to 71% at the five month point. This may reflect the very high cost of rent in Iraq, combined with difficulties for returnees in accessing employment or business opportunities and may also be a feature of family structures in Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan.
- Nigeria 59% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks which decreases to 48% at the five month point.
- Pakistan 78% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks which decreases to 58% at the five month point.
- Sri Lanka 84% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks which decreases markedly to 22% at the five month point. This could reflect Sri Lanka's renewed economic growth, after a dip in 2012.

- Zimbabwe 87% of returnees are dependent on friends and family at 2 weeks which decreases to 40% at the five month point. While unemployment and underemployment remain very high, Zimbabwe's economy is growing.

*'Is good... wants to set up a food stall (business), he has seen a stall, which he likes and is preparing to get this food stall. The client has a strong support network, both his sister and his friends are really helping him to settle in. ... is embarrassed about the amount of assistance he needs, but his family and friends are keen to assist ... after (he) returned his wife left him for someone else because he had not brought any money back with him.'*<sup>12</sup>

*'Very optimistic about life back in Brazil. A friend has offered to help (him) find a job for which he will need to complete a one week course. Wife is a bit concerned about cost of food in Brazil.'*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> China - client feedback 2012- 2013

<sup>13</sup> Brazil - client feedback 2012- 2013

Country of return	Total number of clients receiving financial support from friends and family		Total number of clients receiving support with accommodation from friends and family		Total number of clients receiving financial support and/or accommodation from friends and family		Number of clients giving some answer to the questions about support and accommodation		Percentage of those giving feedback receiving help from friends and family	
	2 weeks	5 months	2 weeks	5 months	2 weeks	5 months	2 weeks	5 months	2 weeks	5 months
Afghanistan	19	6	30	9	30	10	38	14	79%	71%
Albania*	12	1	14	3	18	3	19	7	95%	43%
Algeria*	2	2	2	3	2	3	4	3	50%	100%
Bangladesh	106	3	130	22	130	22	162	42	80%	52%
Brazil	20	2	17	2	20	4	26	16	77%	25%
China	85	14	103	26	105	33	174	78	60%	42%
Ghana*	8	3	11	3	13	4	13	5	100%	80%
India	92	6	71	7	109	12	127	19	86%	63%
Iran	16	4	14	0	17	4	19	11	89%	36%
Iraq	16	11	11	12	18	16	27	20	67%	80%
Iraq Kurdistan	76	23	65	27	86	37	137	52	63%	71%
Libya	14	8	6	12	17	14	18	27	94%	52%
Malawi*	7	2	7	1	11	2	13	7	85%	29%
Nepal*	10	0	8	1	11	1	13	1	85%	100%
Nigeria	31	13	21	9	32	16	54	33	59%	48%
Pakistan	130	15	136	17	158	22	202	38	78%	58%
South Africa*	5	1	4	2	5	3	8	7	62.5%	43%
Sri Lanka	44	0	35	2	52	2	62	9	84%	22%
Zimbabwe	25	4	17	2	26	4	30	10	87%	40%

\*Trends should be treated with caution as numbers are low in this country

## 7. In employment or running a business

The ability of returnees to generate enough income to support themselves and their families is key to sustainable reintegration. Large variations are shown in this feedback, varying significantly from country to country. While in countries like Brazil 80% of those returning are either in jobs or part of a business by the five months point, in Iraq this falls to as low as 35%. The figures are likely to reflect the economic conditions within the country of return. Using UN statistics on output per capita (in US dollars) it is possible to see some correlation.<sup>14</sup>

Generally, the higher the GDP per capita, the higher the percentage of returnees in some form of economic activity. However there are some exceptions; Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan show low levels of returnee economic activity although GDP per capita is high. Libya also has a high level of GDP per capita with lower than expected levels of economic activity amongst returnees. It may be that these anomalies are partially due to levels of aid in different parts of these countries, an uneven distribution of resources, and partly due to returnees being disproportionately disadvantaged by having been out of the country for some time, when seeking work or setting up businesses.

Bangladesh shows extremely high levels of those in economic activity, although its GDP per capita is the third lowest. This may be explained by the fact that many returnees in Bangladesh engage in small businesses, which are not capital intensive and make very little profit.

<sup>14</sup> UN statistics on the environment in different countries (including economy) updated February 2013  
[http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/Country\\_Snapshots\\_Aug%202013/Afghanistan.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/environment/envpdf/Country_Snapshots_Aug%202013/Afghanistan.pdf)

*'Finding employment is very difficult. He was lucky as his brother was able to give him an employment opportunity. Everyone is asking for bribes for helping to find employment.'*<sup>15</sup>

*'Everything has been going well. Friends and family are providing additional support for things like food and travelling to find work. Planning to become a partner in a friend's shop but it is not busy at the moment.'*<sup>16</sup>

**Percentage of returnees in economic activity 5 months after return, compared to GDP per capita in US dollars:**

Country of return	Percentage of those involved in economic activity (employment, business) at the five month feedback point	GDP per capita in US dollars
Afghanistan	36%	586
Iraq and Iraq Kurdistan	37%	3,758
Zimbabwe	44%	695
Pakistan	50%	1,182
Nigeria	55%	1,509
India	58%	1,528
Libya	63%	4,885
Sri Lanka	67%	2,812
Bangladesh	70%	706
China	77%	5,439
Brazil	80%	12,594

<sup>15</sup> Pakistan - client feedback 2012 - 2013

<sup>16</sup> Iraq Kurdistan - client feedback 2012 - 2013

**Number of returnees in employment or running a business:**

Country of return	In employment		Running or being part of a business		Number of clients giving an answer		Percentage of those answering the question that are in employment or running a business	
	2 week	5 month	2 week	5 month	2 week	5 month	2 week	5 month
Afghanistan	3	4	9	1	32	14	37.5%	36%
Albania*	1	2	0	2	19	6	5%	67%
Algeria*	0	0	0	0	4	3	0%	0%
Bangladesh	1	3	20	30	154	47	14%	70%
Brazil	4	4	0	4	30	10	13%	80%
China	12	10	36	44	174	70	28%	77%
Ghana*	1	1	0	0	13	5	7%	20%
India	4	2	15	9	127	19	15%	58%
Iran	0	4	1	3	19	11	5%	63%
Iraq	1	3	3	4	27	20	15%	35%
Iraq Kurdistan	7	13	3	5	127	48	8%	37.5%
Libya	0	11	2	6	20	27	10%	63%
Malawi*	0	0	2	5	15	7	13%	71%
Mauritius*	0	1	0	1	10	2	0%	100%
Mongolia*	1	0	1	0	8	0	25%	0%
Nepal*	0	0	2	0	13	0	15%	0%
Nigeria	3	4	0	11	56	30	5%	55%
Pakistan	3	4	35	15	202	38	18%	50%
South Africa*	0	2	0	3	8	6	0%	83%
Sri Lanka	1	1	5	3	62	6	10%	67%
Zimbabwe	1	4	0	0	30	9	3%	44%

\*Trends should be treated with caution as numbers are low in this country

## 8. Do you intend to move to another country?

An intention to re-migrate counts against a 'sustainable return', except when this intention is realised through legal migration routes. It is not possible to discover from existing feedback whether those intending to re-migrate will do so via these legal routes, as at this stage they have not acted on their intentions. But those who are willing to share this intention in feedback are presumed to have found problems in reintegrating following return - they may not have been able to generate sufficient income for themselves and their families, they may feel unsafe due to possible threats, or they may have been unable to resettle back into networks of family and friends.

While low numbers of returnees in some countries mean that percentages for those intending to re-migrate may not be representative, by taking countries that figure on both the 2 week and the 5 month feedback point it is possible to see where this is most common. The countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iraq Kurdistan and Pakistan. It must be stated that the numbers are extremely low, given the large numbers of returnees to these countries, ranging from 1 to 10 individuals in each country. However, it may be noted that all of these countries also have a number of returnees who have concerns for their safety, suggesting that there may be some correlation.

**Iraq Kurdistan alone shows a high number of those intending to re-migrate at the five month feedback point (9%), suggesting that some returnees are finding it difficult to reintegrate. Afghanistan (2%), Pakistan(2%) and Bangladesh(3%) also show slightly higher rates of intention to re-migrate at five months than other countries.**

In Sri Lanka, despite low levels of returnees expressing a desire to re-migrate when Choices staff asked this question, our overseas partner has reported that as much as 90% of returnees they work with express an interest in re-migrating. It may be that returnees from some countries feel more comfortable expressing this desire to overseas partners.

*'(He) said that the situation is very bad. He had to leave his family 3 weeks ago because they were threatening him. (He) wishes to return to the UK legally or illegally.'*<sup>17</sup>

*'Could not stay in Afghanistan as it is too dangerous for him. He is living with friends in Peshawar, Pakistan ... (He) doesn't go out as he does not feel safe. He received all his money from IOM and used it for rent. He told me that he does not have money problems. It's just that he does not feel safe. He is planning to return to the UK as soon as he can.'*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Iraq Kurdistan - client feedback 2012-2013

<sup>18</sup> Afghanistan - client feedback 2012-2013

## 9. Is there any difference between male and female returnees in their experience of the Choices service and reintegration?

While it is not possible to compare the responses of the different genders to issues of personal safety and intention to re-migrate (due to much of the information at this stage being narrative), it is possible to compare responses to some of the feedback questions.

In general, at the two weeks feedback stage it appears that there is little difference between the experience of male and female returnees. While most of the feedback varies only by one percentage point between the two genders, there are two small areas of difference. Female returnees appear slightly more likely to report that they are happy with all parts of the Choices service. Also there are slightly fewer female returnees that report they are in employment or running a business.

However, at the five month feedback stage some quite marked differences occur. Female returnees are less likely to judge that their life is the same or better than expected, and 12% more of them report that their life is worse than expected. There are also fewer female returnees who report being employed or running a business. It may be that income generation poses more of a problem for female returnees, particularly in certain countries.

### At the two weeks feedback stage

	Male		Female	
Happy with all parts of the service	919	55%	167	58%
Happy with parts of the service	95	6%	16	6%
Unhappy with the service	12	0.7%	0	0%
Life same as expected	548	33%	90	31%
Life better than expected	205	12%	38	13%
Life worse than expected	341	20%	55	19%
In employment or running a business	163	10%	21	7%
TOTAL feedback recorded	1673		286	

### At the five months feedback stage

	Male		Female	
Life same as expected	135	24%	22	21%
Life better than expected	95	17%	12	12%
Life worse than expected	134	23%	36	35%
In employment or running a business	217	38%	35	34%
TOTAL feedback recorded	571		103	

*'Finding it more difficult than expected. Finding a lot of problems as a single woman in her 30s. Normally in her culture women are married at 18. Finds people narrow minded. People are gossiping and society isn't accepting of her situation.'*

*'Has invested in a fish & chip shop using her reintegration grant. It is quite a successful business and she is learning lots. However it is necessary for her to work long hours and she is missing her children. They are settling in ok and spend a lot of time with (her) mother.'*<sup>19</sup>

In many countries the numbers of female returnees are very low, making it impossible to draw conclusions, but in Brazil, Libya, Nigeria and Zimbabwe it is possible to see significant differences between male and female returnees in terms of economic activity and experience of life back home. Interestingly, China was an exception to the trend whereby women are less economically active than men, with the numbers being almost the same, although women's experience of life in China was significantly worse than men's.

- In Brazil, at the five month point, 50% of women found life was better, and 50% found life worse than expected, whereas 67% of men found life better and only 33% found life worse than expected. In terms of economic activity, 25% of women were dependent on friends and family for support, while 75% were in employment or running businesses, whereas 100% of the men were economically active.

- In China, at the five month point, 11% of women found life better, 11% the same and 78% worse than expected, whereas 25% of men found life better, 45% the same and only 30% worse than expected. In terms of economic activity both genders had similar experiences with 20% of women dependent on friends and family for support, while 80% were economically active, whereas 22% of men were dependent on friends and family for support and 78% economically active.
- In Libya, at the five month point, 25% of women found life better and 75% worse than expected, whereas 46% of men found life better, 33% the same and 21% worse than expected. In terms of economic activity, 50% of women were in employment and 50% were dependent on family and friends, whereas 71% of men were in employment or running a business and only 29% were dependent on friends and family.
- In Nigeria, at the five month point, 100% of female returnees thought that life was worse than expected, whereas 44% of men found life better, 12% the same and 44% worse than expected. In terms of economic activity, 37.5% of the women were running businesses and 62.5% were dependent on friends and family, whereas 60% of men were in employment or running a business and 40% dependent on friends and family.
- In Zimbabwe there was no difference between male and female returnees in terms of percentages of those who found life the same as expected (75%) and who thought life was worse than expected (25%). In terms of economic activity, 75% of female returnees were reliant on support from friends and family and 25% were in employment, whereas for men the situation was reversed with 25% reliant on support for friends and family and 75% in employment.

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<sup>19</sup> South Africa - client feedback 2012-2013

## Two week feedback

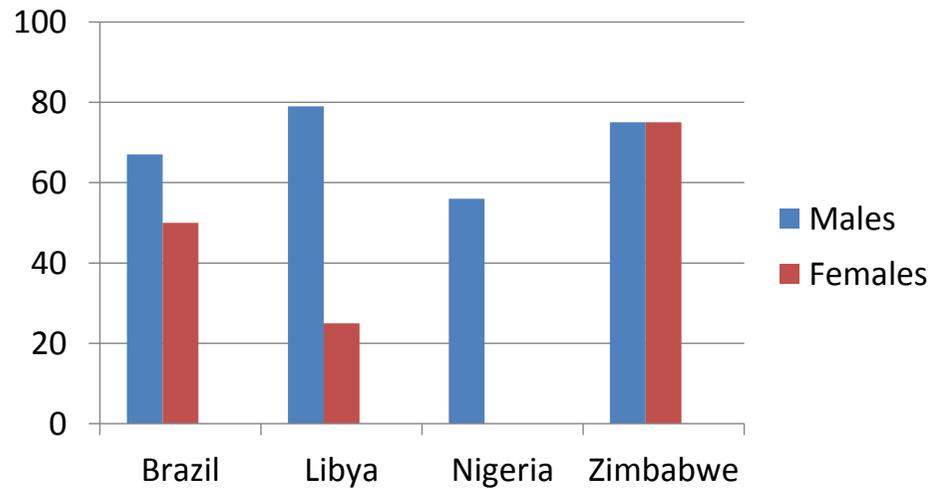
	Brazil				China				Libya				Nigeria				Zimbabwe			
	Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women	
Happy with all parts of the service	11	55%	18	72%	122	48%	22	56%	12	38%	1	25%	34	68%	15	68%	17	68%	14	88%
Happy with parts of the service	0		1	4%	13	5%	1	3%	1	3%	0		2	4%	3	14%	0		1	6%
Unhappy with the service	0				2	1%	0		0		0		0		0		0		0	
Life same as expected	4	40%	14	56%	73	29%	11	28%	14	44%	1	25%	14	28%	8	36%	7	28%	4	25%
Life better than expected	5	50%	4	16%	31	12%	4	10%	3	9%	0		6	12%	5	23%	3	12%	6	38%
Life worse than expected	1	10%	2	8%	42	17%	7	18%	7	22%	0		8	16%	4	18%	5	20%	3	19%
In employment or engaged in business	3	15%	4	16%	17	7%	5	13%	2	6%	0		1	2%	2	9%	1	4%	1	6%
<b>Total feedback</b>	<b>20</b>		<b>25</b>		<b>254</b>		<b>39</b>		<b>32</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>50</b>		<b>22</b>		<b>25</b>		<b>16</b>	

NB: Percentages are of the number of clients giving feedback in each gender.

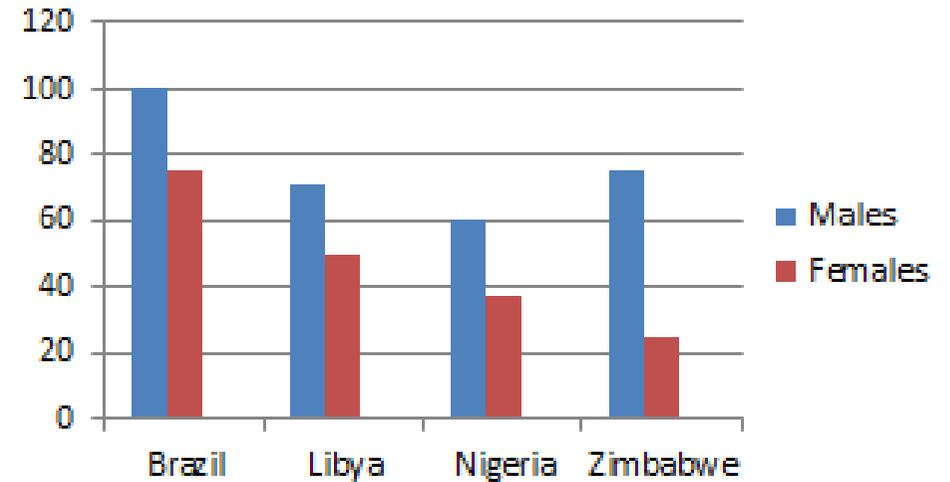
## Five month feedback

	Brazil				China				Libya				Nigeria				Zimbabwe			
	Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women		Men		Women	
Life same as expected	2	22%	0		28	33%	1	10%	8	30%	3	60%	2	9%	0		0		3	50%
Life better than expected	4	44%	2	22%	16	19%	1	10%	11	41%	1	20%	8	35%	0		3	50%	0	
Life worse than expected	0		2	22%	19	22%	7	70%	5	19%	0		8	35%	8	80%	1	17%	1	17%
In employment or engaged in business	5	56%	3	33%	49	57%	4	40%	15	56%	2	40%	12	52%	3	30%	3	50%	1	17%
<b>Total feedback</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>9</b>		<b>86</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>5</b>		<b>23</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>6</b>		<b>6</b>	

**Life same or better than expected at five months point**



**Economically active returnees at the five month point**



## Towards sustainable return ...

In the absence of more detailed research into the outcomes for those returning through the AVR programme, the client feedback remains a useful tool for assessing whether clients are making sustainable returns or not. It also highlights areas and issues which may helpfully be explored as part of the development of the service by the Home Office, Refugee Action and its network of international partners. For example, taking a gender-centred approach to AVR, reviewing impact of travel documents on returnees' experiences at the airport on return and reviewing reintegration payment criteria.

