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Iraq: Centres for Migration and Development

Working together to shape migration for the benefit of all

Background

There are more than 281 million people around the world living in a country different from the one in which they were born. Most of them (some 169 million) leave their country to secure a livelihood elsewhere (IOM, World Migration Report 2022). These migration flows are linked to significant development potential for both the countries of origin and the destination countries, as well as for the migrants themselves. Safe, orderly and regular migration can help realise these potentials and therefore makes a valuable contribution to sustainable development.

Our approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH implements the Centres for Migration and Development (ZME) in different countries on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to support people throughout the entire migration cycle. This includes supporting socioeconomic reintegration for persons returning to their countries of origin on the one, and regular migration opportunities for work and education on the other hand.

At the same time, the centres play an important role in promoting partnerships among state and civil actors in the respective countries by managing and developing support services together. This supports the partners in governing migration in an independent and development-oriented manner.

Given that the centres bring different partners together – both private businesses and multilateral organisations or the European Union (EU) in addition to organisations from civil society – they also contribute to an improved linkage to existing services and initiatives.

Project name	Centres for Migration and Development (ZME)
Commissioned by	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)
Project region	Iraq
Lead political partner	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Iraq, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Kurdistan Region of Iraq
Duration	06/2023 – 05/2027

Thus, the potentials created by migration can be strategically exploited in favour of the migrants, the countries of origin and the destination countries.

ZME in Iraq

The Iraqi-German Centres for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration (GMAC) first opened in Erbil in 2018, followed by the inauguration of the Baghdad centre in 2019. Both centres operate in close cooperation with both the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in Federal Iraq and the one in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The GMACs offer consultations on economic opportunities in the country for Iraqi citizens who returned from abroad and for the disadvantaged local population. They also offer consultations for Iraqis interested in regular migration to Germany and within the region. Based on the consultation services which are open for all interested persons, the GMACs offer further support through their cooperation with civil society organisations, their partner ministries and other GIZ-implemented projects.



For returnees in need of reintegration assistance, possible measures include:

- Economic reintegration support through business start-up support or job placements,
- Referrals into skill development and vocational training offers,
- Social reintegration support through mental health and psychosocial support.

For persons interested in labour migration measures include:

- Referrals to relevant partners that can support with preparatory steps, including job search and language acquisition,
- Soft-skills training and migration preparation courses.

On the political partner level, ZME aims to strengthen the institutional capacities of MoLSA and other stakeholders to support returnees and potential migrants in a target group-specific manner. These measures include training for staff and support with the development and implementation of suitable strategies.



Success factors

ZME builds on the achievements of the preceding Programme Migration for Development (PME) that was implemented in the period from 2017 to 2023. Within this framework the GMACs

succeeded in providing returning migrants and vulnerable local population with reintegration advisory services and referrals into social and economic (re-) integration measures.

The dedication of the governmental partners and the close cooperation with civil society organisations and private sector actors are the foundation for jointly working towards a successful governance of migration that benefits all parties involved.

Ahlam's success story



Ahlam's return to Iraq in 2022 marked a turning point in her life, transitioning from a six-year stay in Stuttgart to becoming a successful online cosmetics entrepreneur in Baghdad. With the support of GMAC and its partner Heartland Alliance International, Ahlam overcame the challenges of returning and transformed her journey into a thriving business.

Guided by GMAC, Ahlam participated in a business management training upon her return which was crucial for her in developing skills in bookkeeping, marketing and sales. This training laid the ground for her online cosmetics venture, realised in October 2022 with in-kind support from GMAC.

At 54 years old, Ahlam, a mother of seven, sells her products mainly through WhatsApp. She plans to expand her business with a dedicated website to embrace growth opportunities.

The comprehensive assistance by GMAC that has included training, business planning and ongoing mentorship, has given Ahlam and other returning Iraqis the knowledge, skills and tools to become independent entrepreneurs.

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