Stories about Migration and Development

The Sector Project Migration & Development is financed by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and aims at strengthening migration's potentials and minimizing its risks in all phases of the migration cycle: before, during and after migration.

In order to do so, the Sector Project develops ideas to improve migrants’ situations in six core areas: migration policy advice, private sector development through migration, diaspora cooperation, remittances, labour migration and (re-)integration and return.

The six stories below serve as examples for the six core areas. By illustrating migration’s potentials and challenges, they demonstrate how diverse migration actually is.

**Stories about Migration and Development:**

- **Bojana in between two worlds** - reintegration and return
- **Abhik and the World Cup 2022** – labour migration
- **Xitlali’s Dilemma** – remittances
- **Nazarkhan’s Dream** – migration policy advice
- **Dodong’s Fine Cars** – private sector development through migration
- **Zohra and the Hackathon** – diaspora cooperation
Bojana in between two worlds:
re-integration and return

During the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, I lived with my family in Germany and attended elementary school in Munich. I really liked living in Germany, where I made many friends and practiced gymnastics at the TV Munich 1860 e.V. However, after the end of the war my family suddenly had to return to Bosnia without any preparation.

After the war in Bosnia ended, I had to learn my mother tongue again, as I now spoke better German. At first, we lived with family members in Mostar. It was not easy for us to reintegrate.

Although I had trained as a nurse, I was not able to find work, not even in the larger city of Sarajevo. However thanks to my education and my language skills, I had a good chance of finding a position in Germany.

Since nurses in Germany are scarce, I had no problems obtaining a visa. However, my Bosnian qualification as a nurse was only partially recognized in Germany, which is why I first had to complete a professional internship, during which I earned less than German nurses. After six months I successfully passed an examination, which enabled me to work as a certified nurse in Munich.

I decided to join a gymnastics club, in order to find friends with whom I could go on weekend trips to Lake Starnberg or have a drink with in the evening. Resettling in Germany was not easy, but due to my language skills easier than expected.

A few years later, I decided to go back to Bosnia in order to start my own nursing service. Thanks to my training as a practice supervisor in Munich I am now able to hire and train employees here in Bosnia.
Abhik and the dream of the football world cup: an example for labor migration

My name is Abhik and I am 25 years old. Together with my family I live in Chitwan, a very rural and poor region in Nepal. I never went to school, but a neighbor taught me carpentry. My family works in agriculture, but in recent years yields have declined. That is why we decided together that I should try to earn money abroad.

Through an acquaintance I learned about an employment agent. They told me that preparations for the World Cup in 2022 are under way in Qatar and that good money can be earned there fast. However, I had to pay the agency for the transfer to Qatar in advance. My family cannot afford the money, so the agent offered me a loan, but in return for a high double-digit interest rate.

Upon arrival in Doha I was surprised by the high temperatures. Suddenly I realized that I knew nothing about the country and the people. I was immediately given an employment contract, which I did not understand however, as I do not speak Arabic. Nevertheless, I signed the contract and was then transferred to a dirty and overcrowded accommodation.

Shortly thereafter, my pass was withdrawn by the agency, on the grounds that this was only for my own safety. After a one and a half hour drive, I arrived at the construction site of the Al Wakrah Stadium, where I realized that I would not be working as a carpenter. Instead, I have to weld together steel wires in dizzying heights without safety precautions and in unbearable heat.

I work day and night in twelve-hour shifts. On the steel beams it is unbearably hot and there is hardly any shade. At the end of the first month I wanted to send my first wage to my family. Then, however, I learned that I would not be receiving my wage, on the grounds that the building contractor was said to be in default with other payments. After the second month I still waited for my money in vain.

It was not until the third month that I finally received wages, but only a fraction of what I had been promised in the beginning, and just enough to finance my own life in Qatar. When I broached the subject, I was told that the rest of the money had been withheld in order to cover my rental debts. On April 25, 2015, I received some terrible news: my home region had been hit by a heavy earthquake. I want to travel back to my village to help and I immediately applied for leave, which however was refused by my employer. I thought about leaving, but without a passport, I'm stuck.
My name is Xitlali González and I live with my two children in my parents’ house in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. As a single-parent, it is difficult for me to pay my children’s school fees. After my father became seriously ill and my family needed money for medicine, we decided together that I should go to the US to earn money for my family.

I learned about a job as a nanny in Dallas. As my visa application was rejected, I crossed the border secretly. Although I managed to arrive in the US, I do not feel safe without a visa. While I am taking care of a strange family's children, I miss my own family.

I work a lot, have little free time and send almost all my salary to my parents in order for them to finance the cost of living, visits to the doctor and school fees for the children, as well as large festivals such as “fiesta de quinceañera”, a traditional celebration for my daughter’s 15th birthday.

Since neither I nor my family has a bank account, I pay cash deposits to a large financial service provider, which my family picks up in the nearest branch in Mexico. However, a lot of money is lost through fees and high exchange rates. Through other migrants, I have learned that it is cheaper to send money online - but both my family and I would need a bank account for that.

Fortunately, I have a proof of identity given to me by the Mexican Consulate, which allows me to identify myself in a bank despite not having a work permit. I have opened an account in the US and my mother now has one in Mexico, making transfers much cheaper.

I would like to travel home regularly and see my children, but flights are expensive and the risk of not being allowed back into the US afterwards is high. I have no choice but to continue working in Dallas and save money for my family. Meanwhile, my mother saves money on the account in Mexico, with which she has opened a small grocery store. Who knows, maybe I can earn enough money quickly, so that all of us can be together again soon.
Nazarkhan’s dream:
migration policy in Central Asia

After a PhD in Migration Studies in Oxford, I returned to my home country of Kyrgyzstan and am now Secretary of State for Migration. I know that migration not only holds risks, but also offers a wide range of potentials for the development of my country. Nevertheless, I am plagued by worries, because there is still so much to do...

Kyrgyzstan is a poor country despite its mineral resources. The unemployment rate is high and many Kyrgyz people are trying their luck abroad, especially in Russia. They feel very connected to their homeland and send huge sums of money to support their families.

For a long time, my government has ignored the issue of migration. The economic consequences of this attitude are serious: there are hardly any safe ways for international transfers or good saving possibilities. In the field of work and education, there is no coordination with the labor market needs of the countries of destination. In addition, no concepts exist to re-integrate return workers into the Kyrgyz labor market.

The lack of cooperation between the ministries also gives me a headache. Communication with the Ministry of Labor and Internal Affairs is not easy and there is often a lack of information. Important institutions, such as the agency for labor abroad, are technically and managerially overburdened and procedures are lengthy, complicated and not customer-oriented. That is why many Kyrgyz people opt for irregular labor migration.

Another problem is the lack of statistics: no one knows how many people emigrate and return, how much money is sent back annually by migrants or what further potentials are slumbering within the global Kyrgyz diaspora. In addition, the emigration of skilled workers leaves huge gaps in the labor market. The private sector, which places the issue of migration high on the agenda, is demanding political reforms.

I can build on a good relationship with my colleagues in the neighboring countries, with whom I have agreed to organize joint workshops. The issue of improving and coordinating the respective migration laws will also be dealt with. I believe that the participation of Kyrgyzstan in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) will lead to a better cooperation with Russia and our neighboring countries.
My name is Dodong, I am a mechanic and live in the Philippines. For me and my family and friends the issue of migration is part of everyday life: nearly 10 million Filipinos live and work outside their countries of origin, and remittances accounted for 10% of the Filipino GDP in 2014.

Like many other Filipinos, I decided to go to Saudi Arabia for five years, where I can use my skills and obtain further qualifications as a car mechanic. In Saudi Arabia, I began to dream of having my own small garage - „Dodong's Fine Cars“. My plan is to rent a garage at home in Iloilo with my brother and offer my service to the surrounding villages.

For the implementation of my idea, I need starting capital. My family could save some of the money that I send home every month, but they still doubt my idea. Instead, they would rather invest in their own car.

I would like to be self-employed after my return, but I have doubts about whether I can manage this without the necessary business know-how. Taking this into account, I pragmatically decided to stay on in Saudi Arabia, as I can at least continue to support my family through my stay abroad.

In the Filipino Embassy in Riad I noticed a pamphlet of the organization „Athika Overseas Workers and and Community Initiative“. Through Athika, I signed up for a training which aims at developing a business plan, thereby supporting me in the establishment of my own business.

I am enthusiastic about Athika's advanced training and hope that not only myself, my family and possible employees but also my potential customers will benefit from „Dodong's Fine Cars“.
As a child of a Tunisian guest worker family in Germany, I feel part of both countries: in Germany I study computer science at the University of Cologne and often go to the Tunisian Cultural Association. During the holidays I visit my relatives and friends in Tunis with my parents.

Alongside my studies, I am engaged in a German-Tunisian student group that is committed to the successful integration of Tunisian students at German universities. In 2011, my life changed through the Arab Spring, whose events I followed through social media.

Feeling enthusiastic about the optimistic spirit of the Arab Spring, our student group organized information meetings and discussions on the topic at my university. But after a while this was no longer enough for us - we wanted to help shape Tunisia's social transformation rather than just commenting on it from the outside.

My student group holds a lot of potential: all members are experts on different topics, yet we all share the common desire for a peaceful, democratic and open Tunisia. In order to contribute to this goal, we decided to establish a common knowledge platform between Germany and Tunisia.

As part of this knowledge platform we established so-called “Hackathons”, which refers to organized brainstorming on a specific problem. I believe that the Hackathons are a way to bring together experts from Tunisia and Germany and I hope that solutions can be found for current issues in Tunisia.

The solutions developed by the „Hackathon“ are supposed to serve as the basis for pilot projects in Tunisia. Through my contacts with various migrant organizations in Germany, I learned about the Center for International Migration and Development (CIM), a working group formed by GIZ and the Federal Employment Agency. CIM advises diaspora groups and supports them through networking meetings and financial contributions. Could this be a chance for our group?