



Tailor Made: New Hope for Migrants Returning... and their Communities; Since September 2017, International Organization for Migration (IOM) has assisted 1,681 vulnerable Burkinabés stranded in Libya and Niger

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Faso Danfani, a very fashionable fabric in Burkina Faso—it's a traditional fabric made from Burkinabé cotton. Tiraogo*, a newly-qualified Burkinabé tailor, crafts it accessories for his countrymen and countrywomen. The young Burkinabé is back home now, but he once had ambitions of a life far away from home and embarked upon a journey that took him away from his family for several years. "Going to Spain was my dream," he explained recently, while sewing the last handle onto a cotton bag. "But all [that] is behind me, and now I just want to move forward!" he added.

Tiraogo now works in Manga, his hometown in the southern-central region of Burkina Faso; he returned after two journeys to Libya and Algeria, and four years away from his family. Upon his return, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) offered him the opportunity to join five other young Burkinabés in a project launched by the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI)—a new initiative building on the nexus between fashion and sustainable development, implemented by NAS Mode (an NGO that has become a reference in vocational training).

Tiraogo is one of six 18-to-35-year-old Burkinabé returnees who participated in a one-month training focused on tailoring skills organized by IOM in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC). At the end of a session, IOM provides each cohort with additional professional training including accounting and financial management to gradually help them create a small business that can meet market needs quickly and efficiently.

"When we receive these young people, we listen to their needs. At the end of a first session, we invite them to develop reintegration projects according to their ambitions and based on sectors which will potentially generate jobs in their region of origin," explained Abibatou Wane, IOM Chief of Mission in Burkina Faso. "It is essential that these returning migrants find ways to effectively partner with the local private sector for their future but also for [their relatives' futures]," she added.

"Through this type of project, community members become indirect beneficiaries of reintegration assistance, especially through the new jobs it creates," said Andreas de Boer, IOM Project Manager in Burkina Faso.

The Faso Danfani and other raw materials that Tiraogo and his colleagues work with are produced and purchased exclusively from Burkinabé craftsmen to encourage local production. "If we can develop this pattern, it will potentially change many lives by creating jobs," de Boer added.

This is the first project carried out by IOM in collaboration with ITC in Burkina Faso. Both agencies have sought to develop a sustainable pattern that encourages the socio-economic self-sufficiency of returning migrants while enabling family members, friends, and relatives to benefit from this indirectly.

"This activity with IOM has contributed to strengthen the social capital in the communities from which the returning migrants come by enabling them to acquire new skills and access new opportunities," said Chloé Mukai of ITC.

About 500 bags were produced during this training. They will be used by returnees and migrants in transit to carry basic products provided by IOM before their return to their communities or countries of origin.

Honoré*, one of the participants with more than 15 years of experience in tailoring, attracted the attention of the EFI, which plans to recruit him to support a team of experienced professionals in manufacturing clothes.

His work will consist of tailoring clothes and other items that will be sold on the local and international market. The referral was made by IOM and ITC; the two organizations have been able to pool their resources and expertise for the benefit of returning migrants.

With 40 per cent of its population living below the national poverty threshold, Burkina Faso is one of the Least Developed Countries according to the 2018 Report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). For nearly 60 per cent of the population, migration is the answer to a precarious economic situation.

Since September 2017, IOM has assisted 1,681 vulnerable Burkinabés stranded in Libya and Niger for with voluntary returns under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration. Among them, more than 1,500 received reintegration assistance tailored to their profile and needs, which include medical and/or psychosocial care, support for setting up a micro-enterprise or vocational training.

*names have been changed.

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