



GOEDWERK
FOUNDATION



Corporate Story

Goedwerk Foundation

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About Goedwerk Foundation

The history of the Goedwerk Foundation starts in 2014 with the establishment of the organization by Elias Brhane. He came from Ethiopia to the Netherlands as a refugee, so he knows the challenges of the target audience as no other. He was able to build a life for his own despite the challenges and was able to get asylum in the Netherlands. However, a lot of his peers were still trying to survive without documents. This touched him so deeply and therefore he decided in 2014 to make a change for this group, on an individual level. Due to this ambition, Goedwerk Foundation was started.

The start of Goedwerk Foundation

In the beginning, Elias visited locations where migrants with no residence permit stayed. These were detention centers, family locations, and asylum centers. He talked to the individuals, one on one with trust and respect, about their future and the possibilities they have in their country of origin, the Netherlands, or a third country. He tried to stand by their side and advise them to the best of his capabilities. The goal was never to convince them to return, but to help them think about a dignified existence. Within a short period, Goedwerk made a name for itself within the migration working field and proved itself to be a worthy partner.

Further developments

The little organization of Goedwerk Foundation grew in a relatively short period into a well-known voluntary return organization with an international network of partners in the country of origin. The focus broadened to not only good counseling and support in the Netherlands but also reintegration and monitoring in the country of origin. Due to the intensive contact the Goedwerk Foundation has with their network and through work visits, the network of partners has further branched out into Afghanistan, Lebanon, Eritrea, and Surinam. These partners have played and will continue to play an enormous role in the counseling of the returnees.

Also, the activities of the Goedwerk Foundation in the Netherlands branched out in a short time with the coming of the LVV project. At first, we focused mainly on return counseling. However, over time we also started talking with the participants about their future when they were not yet sure of returning. This was when future orientation was brought into life. These conversations are mainly focused on information sharing and empowerment for the migrants to make a well-informed decision towards a perspective other than a legal stay in the Netherlands. Following these events, Goedwerk has been active in LVV Rotterdam since 2018, in LVV Amsterdam since 2019, and in LVV Eindhoven since 2021. Goedwerk Foundation has created its own methodology that fits the LVV program, the organization, and the target audience.

Furthermore, the team of Goedwerk Foundation has not only grown in numbers but more importantly in expertise and professionalism. This means that we have a team with various cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds. Many different languages are spoken within the team and we work together with a network of professional but empathic translators. Many interns have provided us with comprehensive research reports which aided the organization in its development.

About Goedwerk Foundation

Mission and Vision

Goedwerk Foundation is an organization that:

- Supports migrants with voluntary return to their country of origin practically, financially and mentally;
- Offers an empowerment program for undocumented migrants residing in the Netherlands within the Dutch LVV-pilot;
- Assists returnees with starting their own business with our project "Fund your Future".

Our mission

It's our mission to support (un)documented migrants with the decision for voluntary return by custom-made care and monitoring, and by giving the instruments and knowledge to build perspective and a future in the country of origin, so that (un)documented migrants can lead a sustainable and dignified life in their countries of origin.

Our principles

- Responsibility and empowerment
- Dignified and respectful approach
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Expertise
- Focus on a complex target audience
- Equality and inclusivity
- Low key, accessible, personal
- Tailor-made support

Our working method

It is the mission of Goedwerk Foundation to guide (un)documented migrants without perspective in the Netherlands towards a dignified and sustainable future in the country of origin or a third country. We do this based on a number of different principles and methods.

Building trust

The majority of the target group has lived undocumented in the Netherlands for years on end, and are disappointed in the Dutch government because there is no legal prospect for them. This often results in mistrust and fear of governmental, as well as non-governmental organizations. This is why building trust with the migrant lies at the core of our work. By forming a sincere and honest relationship, we can think together with the migrant about the possibilities (or impossibilities) of staying in the Netherlands, onward migration, and returning to the country of origin. Due to the teams' extensive experience, all team members are committed to building such a relationship with their clients as it forms the basis for all future processes.

Strong expertise

The Goedwerk Foundation team has broad educational and professional experience – from psychology and law, to entrepreneurship and research. This diversity is also reflected in (cultural) backgrounds and languages spoken by our team members. In addition, the team has a lot of work and travel experience, as we work together with a wide network of partners in the countries of origin. This diversity within the team and the organization is essential in offering tailor-made support: guidance in one's mother tongue, together with a Goedwerk colleague who was a lot of knowledge and experience with the country to which the migrant is returning.

Goedwerk Foundation also regularly researches the practices, policies, and motivations of our target group. In this way, we hope to continue to develop to meet the wishes and needs of those who return. In addition, monthly theme days are held. On these days experts on specific countries and themes are invited to speak. Theme days have previously focused on immigration law, the security situation in Iran, and return to Lebanon and Syria. Finally, we often travel to our partner countries such as Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Eritrea for work visits. We visit people that have returned to their countries of origin and we have meetings with our partners to strengthen our cooperation. We are always looking into new partnership opportunities and these possibilities are also explored during work visits. These visits provide us with a great deal of insight into the practice of reintegration in the country of origin and thus help us to continue to improve our guidance in the Netherlands.

Reintegration and monitoring

Goedwerk aims to provide strong guidance in The Netherlands to ensure that the migrant can build a valuable and sustainable livelihood after the return. It is important to us that the migrant becomes socially and economically self-reliant, and that he can make a new start with his head held high even after a long time in the Netherlands where he or she has not been able to live a sustainable life. We do not do this work alone: we do this in collaboration with a fantastic network of local NGOs, previous returnees, and involved individuals in East Africa and the Middle East. Our partners have been selected based on their expertise, involvement, and affinity with voluntary return and migration in general. Our partners are a great fit for our target group and contribute to the Goedwerk Foundation making a real difference for the target group.

Complex focus group

Goedwerk focuses specifically on the so-called complex target groups. First, by seeking out local collaborations in more complex countries such as Syria and Eritrea. Goedwerk envisions the right to a dignified and sustainable return, for everyone, regardless of background and (criminal) past. In more complex countries, where many return organizations do not work, thorough guidance and support after the return is essential.

Secondly, Goedwerk offers guidance to target groups that are not usually not supported upon their return and that have been in the Netherlands for a long time. For example, people from Morocco and Algeria have been living as undocumented migrants in The Netherlands for the past 20-30 years. Relatively often problems such as addiction, medical issues, and involvement in crime occur in this particular group. There are usually many obstacles for this group that keep them from returning to their country of origin. By gaining their trust, sometimes with the help of previous returnees, we all try to think about a possible future in the country of origin.

Lastly, Goedwerk also focuses specifically on target groups that suffer from serious psychological problems. For example, we see many Eritrean status holders who cannot settle in the Netherlands. In some cases, this results in addiction issues and other serious psychological issues. We have experienced that offering someone the possibility of returning to one's country of origin can provide more perspective and possibly a less stressful life. These trajectories are not possible without close cooperation with mental institutions in The Netherlands and local (medical) partners. For example, Goedwerk works together with a trauma psychologist in Eritrea.

A word by Elias

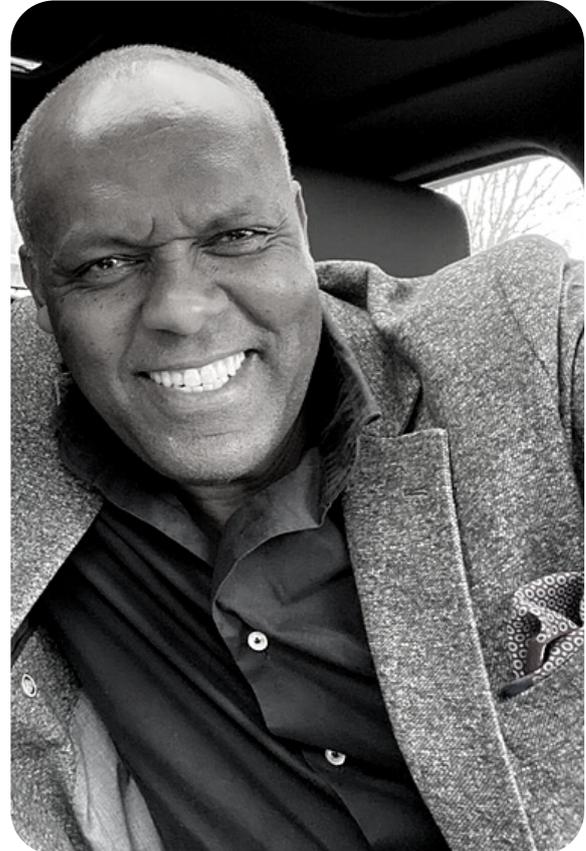
As I look in the rearview mirror of my car, I see a young man from Eritrea rocking his body back and forth, showing his despair and stress. He is not saying anything, just repeating the name of his mother and the place where she lives. I recognize the name of the place, since I spent a portion of my life in Eritrea as I was fleeing my own country Ethiopia, looking for a better future just like this young man. I can't stop thinking about how he will feel when he sees his mother again, and about all the people of which some still message me to this day. This is why I do what I do, and why Goedwerk Foundation was brought to life.

At 18 years old I fled Ethiopia in order to look for a safe place for myself in this world. A place where I could start a new life, in peace. For me, the Netherlands turned out as the place where I could start this new life. However, I saw many other migrants for which this was not the case. Looking for a safe space, a place where you can truly be your best self has been a big purpose in my life. I know the pain, but also I truly understand the happiness of finding your spot in the world.

The team of Goedwerk Foundation shares the passion of supporting migrants in this difficult position. On the one hand, they would like to return to their family, friends, and country of origin. On the other hand, there are feelings of shame and fear to return "empty-handed". We constantly see how shame and pride, two sides of the same coin, are in constant conflict inside the person in front of us.

An individual with all these complex emotions, who finds themselves in a different country with different a culture and a different language, far away from their family, friends, and the culture they know best, needs time and care to go through their own individual process. This is the cornerstone of the Goedwerk Foundation and what I find most important when my team works with this group.

We offer tailor-made support for each individual who reaches out to us for help with returning. Every team member of Goedwerk Foundation has their own area of expertise but shares the common traits of patience, respect, empathy, and honesty.





Not only migrants who have received a negative decision on their asylum application can find support with return at Goedwerk Foundation. We also help migrants with a residence permit or migrants who have never applied for asylum. Everybody is welcome at our office.

With this corporate story my colleagues and I would like to take you into the story of Goedwerk Foundation and underly the importance of return and reintegration. Not only will the team members talk about their experience at Goedwerk, we will share with you some of the most inspiring return stories and let a returnee talk about their process.

The process of the Eritrean young man had just started when I wrote this foreword. By the time he went through the difficult and long process of return, this corporate story was in its final stages. Our partner in Eritrea helped the young man through the difficult process of returning. We received pictures of the moment he held his mother in his arms for the first time in several years. Every time we get these pictures or videos, it's emotional for us. It's the capstone of our work here in the Netherlands, the reason why we go through every difficult bump in the road together with our clients and the reason why we will always keep raising awareness for return migration.

Elias



Mohammed's return to Algeria

A durable perspective at last

Mohamed (Algeria)
44 years, 17 years in the Netherlands
Perspective: Getting married and seeing family again

At a meeting in the World House for undocumented migrants, we meet Mohamed for the first time. He has been contemplating his return to Algeria for a long time. He wants to hear what our organization can offer him. Goedwerk Foundation is the only return organization who offers support for Algerian returnees. Partly due to our Arabic and French speaking colleague, he is convinced that Goedwerk is a good fit for him.

Mohamed has been in the Netherlands for 17 years. He has come to Europe not really by his own choice, but moreover because his family had pushed him to find a so-called better future. He has made the journey by boat to Valencia and from there, found his way to Amsterdam. Since then he has always struggled with thinking about return. He didn't have an easy life in the Netherlands and now has to return with not much to offer while his family expects the world. However, he does miss his family immensely. Also he noticed, as well as his peers from the Algerian community who accompanied him in his journey to Amsterdam, that he is getting older. A new generation is on the rise and life is getting harder for him...



Once he arrived at our office, we talked about his life, his past, and his future. We lay out the possibilities that he has at this point. Quickly we have a good connection with Mohamed, and he feels at ease with us. Mohamed doesn't own a phone. We offer him a phone he can temporarily use so we are able to contact him, and vice versa. But next to that, it offers him a possibility to communicate with his family in Algeria, which is also necessary to retrieve documents.

He shows his strong will to return by cooperation with the team.

Vulnerable

When he talks about his mother, the way she looks now and he imagines how it will be to be reunited with his family, his eyes get teary. Such a big, tough guy, but so vulnerable. Before we know it, our own eyes get teary because Mohamed is such an honest, open and vulnerable man. The contact with his family is of utmost importance for the return process. On a daily basis he comes to our office in order to talk to us. His brother arranges the birth certificate and sends it to us through mail. The laissez-passer has been taken care of at once. The flight can now be booked.

In the meantime we work on his reintegration plan: how do you want to form your life? What is important to you? How do you achieve what you want? The only thing he knows for sure, is that he wants to return. Rarely we have come across somebody with such an overt wish to return home.

He shows us this by doing everything we ask of him, with great enthusiasm. It's such nice cooperation to be part of for us as a team. When the flight is booked, we accompany him in order to purchase things with his in-kind financial support. He finds it hard to make choices because he wants to bring as much of the financial support with him to Algeria. He appreciates all the things he can bring with him in order to start a new life in Algeria.

The labor market in Algeria is not necessarily very accessible to him due to his age. He tells us that nobody over the age of 40 is treated like a worthy employee. That's why he wants to take control over it himself and wants to start his own taxi business. Due to the financial support of DT&V and the municipality of Amsterdam, he's able to start this.

At the airport he is waiting for us, with a big smile, looking tough and also stressed. He is at the airport two hours early! He is ready to return and can hardly wait. At the airport he tells us for the first time that he has never been inside an airplane.

When the moment is there, and we say goodbye to Mohamed he doesn't think twice and gives us a big hug. He also invites us to visit him when he is in Algeria and married. Mohamed, best of luck! And who knows... see you soon!



Last messages...

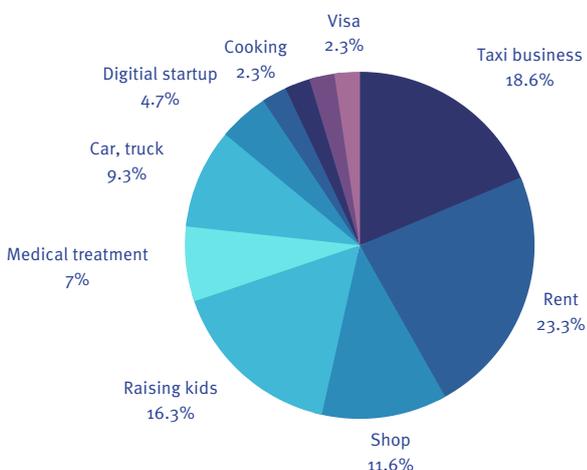
After his return we regularly speak to Mohamed. He has met a woman, even though the relationship did not last. However, he is still very pleased with his decision to return and be with his family. Especially the reunification with his mother was good for him. He didn't manage to build his own taxi company, but he is working with much pleasure as a taxi driver in an already existing company!

Our projects

OZV

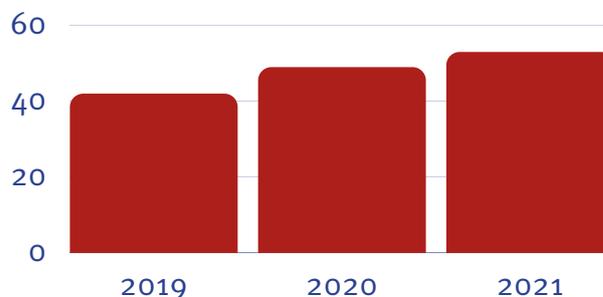
With the project, 'ondersteuning zelfstandig vertrek' Goedwerk Foundation supports (un)documented migrants with voluntary return to their country of origin. Our services include the arrangement of (source) documents and regaining contact with family members in the country of origin to support the reintegration after the return. The core of the support is its tailor-made aspect. Additionally, there is a budget for returnees (in-kind) which they can spend on a variety of different things which contribute to a sustainable future. The following graph shows what the returnees who participated in the OZV 6.0 project have spend their in-kind on.

OZV: in-kind expenditure



Throughout the years Goedwerk was able to build a strong network of NGOs and returnees in many countries. Goedwerk can adequately inform the returnee pre-departure as well as support the returnee post-departure through this network. In the past years most participants of the OZV project returned to: Ethiopia, Algeria, Libya, Syria and Eritrea.

Participants joining the OZV project

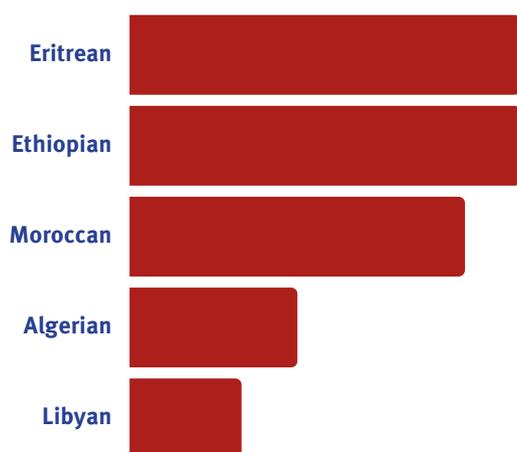


LVV

Since 2018 Goedwerk Foundation offers "future orientation" within the LVV projects. The LVV is a cooperation between municipalities and governmental bodies of the Netherlands to provide a sustainable perspective to a specific group of undocumented migrants whilst offering sheltering for a period of time. Currently Goedwerk is active in 3 municipalities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Eindhoven, each with their own unique LVV project. Amsterdam has a 24 hour shelter, Rotterdam a night shelter, and Eindhoven a night shelter in combination with allowance. The LVV shelters also occasionally offer vocational trainings for the residents. The LVV project is organized by cooperation between governmental agencies, NGO's and the municipality, and by offering shelter in combination with counseling services. The counseling Goedwerk offers is mainly focused on the group of undocumented migrants for whom there is no legal perspective in the Netherlands. Together with the client, we look at alternative perspectives like migration to another country, or return to the country of origin. The counseling sessions are aimed at activating and motivating the migrant to make well-informed decisions about their future.

The participants of the LVV project come from all across the world. The following chart shows the 5 nationalities we see most often in the LVV projects during the future orientation guidance GWF offers.

Nationalities of LVV participants



Microfinance, "Fund Your Future"- A pilot project for extra support

For the ambitious entrepreneurs who would like to start their own business after returning, Goedwerk offers returnees the possibility to take out a loan through the Fund Your Future project and focuses on extra support focused on entrepreneurship. The pilot, taking place from 2021-2022, will focus on Ethiopian entrepreneurs. The project will be carried in close cooperation with our local partner who will act as our main expert regarding entrepreneurship and the working climate in Ethiopia. Our first participant was able to start their own company through the Fund Your Future project in 2021. In January 2020, Mulu voluntarily returned to Ethiopia with the help of Goedwerk. Back in Ethiopia, Mulu wanted to go back to work as a chauffeur. He was able to upgrade his driver's license using in-kind assistance.

With this job Mulu earned a salary of 20-30 thousand birr (400-500 euros) a month. According to Mulu, this would be enough to sustain him and this family and to also save some money. After returning, Mulu upgraded his driver's license and was able to buy a second-hand car with the help of his friends and family. Soon after he went to work as a chauffeur. GWF offered him a loan through its future microfinance project, but Mulu thought the money would be better spent by others. Unfortunately, in December 2020 Mulu was involved in a car accident. A 48-year-old woman died due to the impact. Even though Mulu was not to blame, it is common in Ethiopia that compensation is paid to the victim's family. Mulu also sustained injuries to his eyes and arm due to the accident. A lot of money was needed to cover the compensation, his medication, and the repair of his car. Mulu was forced to sell his car and lost all of his savings.

Mulu decided to contact Elias, Goedwerk's founder. Goedwerk was able to calm him down and we asked him to submit his business plan. Using the loan, Mulu wanted to buy a pool table and rent it to youngsters in the area. He found a good location and was able to buy a second-hand pool table using a friend's connections. After our partner in Ethiopia assessed the viability of the plan, GWF agreed to provide a loan of 25.000 birrs. Mulu now owns a pool table and earns around 15.000 birrs a month. 2500 birr is used for rent, leaving 12000 birrs for other expenses. When our partner asked Mulu about his decision to return, he answered: 'I do not regret returning to Ethiopia. These things can happen. I am very grateful for Goedwerk's guidance during this process. It has been a year, and they haven't forgotten me. I have a dream again.'

Our international partners

Goedwerk Foundation is specialized in providing support in the pre-departure phase. However, it is extremely important to have a strong network of partners in the country of origin in order to support the returnees in the post-departure phase and provide consistent monitoring after return. Therefore, we have made it one of our mission to build a solid network of partners who have the same mission and vision as Goedwerk.

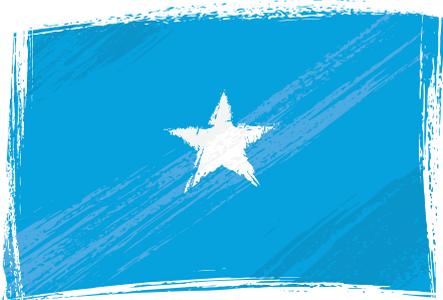
The main tasks of the local partners exists out of the following (not exhaustive) list:

- Supportive phone calls in the pre-departure phase in the Netherlands
- Pick-up service of the airport
- Accommodation for the first couple of days back in country of origin
- Medical and psychological support
- Help with legal and administrative matters
- Support with rebuilding of network in country of origin
- Assisting with finding a relevant course in country of origin
- Supporting with setting up of a small business



Eritrea

In Eritrea, we work together with a trauma psychologist. This was opted due to the fact that Goedwerk has noticed a great deal of young Eritrean man applying for voluntary return with a complex history which could lead to psychological difficulties. The partner focusses on the support on a psychological level, but also aids in return and reintegration support and rebuilding relationships within the family of the returnee.



Somalia

In Somalia we work together with COOPI, an Italian NGO which operates in many countries. Due to this, the partnership provides a broad range of possibilities for returnees to Somalia such as the possibility to take part in vocational trainings and temporary housing.

Surinam

In 2021 the need for a partnership in Surinam became more apparent and after a long search, a partner was found. The NGO is officially recognized by the Surinam Government. The partner herself has lived in the Netherlands for a very long time before making the move to Surinam. This particularly provides great insights while advising clients in the pre-departure phase. Furthermore, the partner is involved in the whole process of return.



Uganda

Our partner in Uganda is The Refugee Trumpet Metropolis Organization LTS, which is based in Kampala. Our contact person has experience of living in the Netherlands and thoroughly understands the process of voluntary return. Therefore, clear and individualized support can be provided. Again, this partner is involved within the full process of return.

Afghanistan/Iran/Pakistan

In Afghanistan, we work together with an NGO located in Kabul. The NGO is registered with the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It works toward creating social-, integration-, and educational facilities in Afghanistan. The partner also works together with local contacts in Pakistan and Iran in order to provide the return support for returnee from these countries.



Lebanon/Syria

In order to support the returnees of Syria and Lebanon we work together with an NGO in Lebanon. The NGO is officially recognized by the Lebanese government. They provide empowerment trainings for Syrian refugees. The partner is involved within the whole process of return.

Ethiopia

We can provide additional guidance and support for people returning to Ethiopia; the founder of Goedwerk Foundation is from Ethiopia himself. He still has close contacts in Ethiopia and travels back and forth regularly. We also have a partner organization in Ethiopia with whom we maintain warm contact.



Algeria/Morocco

Goedwerk Foundation has extensive experience with supporting returnees from Algeria and Morocco. In the past, Goedwerk has worked in the city of Rotterdam and Amsterdam for the project “long-term undocumented migrants” in order to support undocumented migrants who have been in Rotterdam or Amsterdam for at least 10 years. Due to the good contact we still maintain with many of the returnees, we have built a bond of trust. Many of the returnees help us with the trajectories of Moroccans or Algerians who are thinking of return, or are planning on returning.

Workvisit Lebanon

Reuniting with our returnees

Every year, Goedwerk organizes a couple of working visits. The goal of these visits is to monitor returnees and build a strong relationship with the local partner. Next to that, working visits are a great way to gain more insight into the workings of the country and provide new ideas for future projects. In July 2019 Goedwerk has traveled to Lebanon for a working visit. The main purpose was to meet with returnees and monitor their process. Additionally, the visit posed a great opportunity to meet with our local partner. Next to that, various NGOs were visited to gain more insight into the field.

From 18-21 July 2019 Goedwerk Foundation traveled to Lebanon for their third work visit since the start of the organization. During the trajectory in the Netherlands, Goedwerk Foundation discusses the plans after returning thoroughly with the returnees. This work visit had the main purpose to meet up with the returnees from the OZV 5.0 (voluntary return project) and finding out how they are doing. Additionally, this work visit was a great opportunity to discuss our partnership with TightKnitSyria, an NGO which enables Goedwerk to financially aid the clients and make sure that they receive this financial aid. Furthermore, during this work visit, Goedwerk had thorough contact with UNCHR, amongst various other NGOs to gain more insight into the current situation in Syria.



The journey from Syria to Lebanon was not an easy one. There were many requirements such as a travel fee of 300 dollars, as well as being able to show a hotel reservation and owning 2000 dollars. The journey itself takes 2 hours. Participants of the O.Z.V 5.0 project explained that they could not always meet these requirements and explained that they found solutions for these harsh criteria, such as hiring others to cross instead of them to Lebanon to circumvent the strict rules. In the future, Goedwerk will aim to let participants be in direct contact with our partner organizations in Lebanon to assist them as best as we can. We discussed this in good order with our partner organizations.



A word by our project leader – Josephine Jacobs



Josephine Jacobs has been working with Goedwerk Foundation for almost 4 years at the moment we were writing this corporate story. Due to her long experience, she has become an expert on all things concerning return migration. Her motivation, vision and passion for the work and the people she works with is interesting and inspiring.

How did your career with Goedwerk Foundation start?

I have started with Goedwerk Foundation when it was still relatively small. There was only one other colleague working with me and she was very experienced in the field. I realized that I didn't have as much of knowledge on the topic as she did, so I tried my best to gather as much knowledge as I could. This took a while but I learned so much from her. For example, one lesson I found very valuable is that you always have to give clear information to the client. I wasn't used to this. I come from a more left-wing city called Nijmegen where the organizations don't put the clients in their own power. My colleague viewed the people we work with as self-reliant which was very inspiring for me. By treating the clients in this way, you make sure that they are empowered and feel the responsibility for their own lives. This can help them to make a clear decision for their future.

After working for two years as a case manager, I have grown into the function of project manager. This means that I don't guide clients as much as I did before and I have a different view on the organization and where Goedwerk positions itself within the working field. However, I still find it interesting to see how our clients are doing.

I keep up to date of all the trajectories that are active in the organization. Eventually, this is why I work with Goedwerk!

I believe in Goedwerk Foundation. Together with the whole team we make the organization. To lead this is so inspiring for me because I believe that our organization deserves it to optimally use our colleagues and the knowledge and skills they possess in order to help our returnees with their future in their home country.

“ I believe in Goedwerk Foundation. Together with the whole team we make the organization. ”

What characterizes Goedwerk Foundation according to you?

Goedwerk distinguishes itself from other organizations due to the founder of the organization; Elias. Due to his migration story, experience and personal involvement he senses the clients perfectly and understands what they are going through. This is unique. Elias shares his knowledge and experience with colleagues which is why this involvement is felt throughout the whole organization. This is what makes our organization really special.

A big characteristic for our organization is the entrepreneurial character and the thinking out of the box mentality. We really think about how we can really make our clients feel like kings and queens in order to get to a sustainable return. We think of creative solutions, work proactively, and really get to the bottom of everything. We look at everything with a fresh outlook. All of this really makes Goedwerk different in my opinion.

In what direction do you see Goedwerk going to in the next years?

Goedwerk has grown immensely in the last couple of years. The amount of colleagues has doubled, a lot of new clients have received counseling in future orientation and return trajectories and we expanded our expertise in countries of origin because of the new partnerships we have started. Therefore, our ambition is to gain stronger networks in the countries of origin so that the clients can be counseled with as much knowledge as possible. For example, our Afghan partner provides IT-trainings and our partner in Ghana has extensive experience with microfinance projects and has his own NGO in Ghana in which he supports local populations. I hope that we can organize meetings in the future where our partner organizations come together and share knowledge and experiences. We can get so much out of these meetings in order to constantly improve our counselling here in the Netherlands and after return.

Where do you get most of your fulfilment in this work?

Generally, I get the most fulfilment out of return counseling. My most beautiful memory is attached to the return process of the Algerian Ali Baba. During two years I have counselled him which didn't always go as planned because he had his doubts on the undocumented life in Amsterdam. We really build such a strong bond and I can even say friendship. When he made the decision to return, I accompanied him on the flight. He took me to his family and they received me with open arms and didn't allow me to sleep in the hotel, I had to sleep next to his mother and sister in their house. This man had not seen his mother in more than 10 years. I thought it was such an honor and it was so special for me to be present at that moment. It will always stick with me.

Since a couple of months we also organize thematical days where the goal is to expand our knowledge on various topics of migration. This also gives me a lot of fulfilment. The knowledge expands and as a team we really develop ourselves. It is so noteworthy that we do this as a team!

What client had a lasting impression on you?

The Iranian man who decided to return this year. The time leading up to the return was extremely long. Despite the fact we heard from other organizations that he showed some unsettling behavior, he always treated us with the utmost respect. We are a team with only woman who are very empathic which leads to a very special and deep bond we build with the clients. However, we do really set boundaries from the outset and work in a feisty way!

What are the main challenges you experience in the work?

I personally experienced 2020 as a big challenge, not only on a personal level but also on a professional level. The biggest part of our work is having conversations with migrants and due to Covid this was taken away. We had to think about questions such as “how do you contribute as a return organization in times of Covid?”, “how can you still serve the clients in the best possible manner?”. On a personal level I found it difficult to find meaning in the work because we weren’t able to organize much returns and the counselling was mostly over the phone. The personal guidance is one of the core things of Goedwerk, and this wasn’t possible.

On the other side, this period helped us to develop further as an organization and to look really critically at where we want to go with the organization. It gave us a sense of calm and direction to look at the organization in that sense.

A reoccurring challenge we face is the sensitivity about the subject of return. In our everyday work we notice this when working with our clients but also with partner organizations. 99% of the time I notice this has to do with a lack of knowledge about all the possibilities before and after return. Therefore I am always enthusiastic to share our beautiful work with every-one who wants to listen. Return is a complex topic but it can give someone new perspective and meaning in life, and that makes it worth talking about over and over again.

Can you share an experience with us that will always stick with you?

The work visits are always so interesting. In 2019 I’ve had the chance to go to Lebanon which was very impressive. I met with some of our Syrian returnees. They told us about Syria and how their life after return has folded out. The conversations had a disillusioning effect on me. I realized that there is also a shadow side to return. A returnee might take all the time necessary to think about the decision and then makes the decision but still faces challenges after return. This work visit showed me that return in general and specifically return to Syria is complex.



Soher and Amira's return to Syria

An emotional goodbye

Soher and Amira (Syria)
31 years and 3 years, 2 years in the Netherlands
Perspective: medical treatment

Two and a half years ago Soher's husband fled to the Netherlands. He was looking for a safe haven for himself and his family and found this in the Netherlands. His wife Soher and his daughter Amira have followed him with the airplane straight after. The three of them started a new life in the North of Amsterdam. However, Soher makes the interesting decision to return together with her daughter to Syria. It has been six months ago when Soher suddenly feels tingling in her legs. After many examinations and visits to the hospital, uncertain times await her. Even on the day, she returns to Syria, it is not known what is the cause of her condition. Eventually, she cannot even walk anymore and is in a wheelchair. After a lot of contact with various hospitals in Europe and Syria, Soher decides to start treatment in Syria. Hoping she can ever walk again. Goedwerk Foundation has intense contact with the family and DT&V to arrange the return of mother and daughter as well as possible. Due to the physical situation of Soher, the colleague of Goedwerk Foundation visits her regularly in Amsterdam-North.



Back in Syria, Soher and her daughter are being awaited by their family in Damascus. The first couple of months in Syria will be dedicated to her medical examinations physiotherapy and possible surgeries. Everything has been thoroughly thought through before return. Amira is being taken care of by the family and will commence school in Damascus. When it is possible again, Soher will rent her own house and will start a mini-market. For now, her time and energy will be dedicated to medical treatment and the rebuilding of her life in Syria.

Emotional departure

On the day of departure, Soher, her daughter, and the husband get picked up by a taxi. The situation at the airport stays nerve-wracking till the last minute. Due to a missing inbound stamp, the flight company doesn't allow Soher and her daughter to fly. DT&V and Goedwerk Foundation have tried their best so that they can both fly again. Right before the passport check, they say goodbye to their husband and father. Due to his Palestinian background, he hasn't been able to get a travel certificate. This makes the departure extra emotional for the family. Due to the long hug and tears, everyone witnessing their emotional goodbye cannot prevent themselves from tearing up as well.

Last messages

In Syria, Soher and her daughter are met by their family. And... most important: Soher can walk again! We stay in touch regularly with her and her husband and they are both positive about the decision to return. However, they do both miss each other very much and the husband is struggling to cope without his family in the Netherlands. When he may return to Syria as well, he tells us multiple times.

Insights by our Ethiopian partner

What is the added value of a partner in the country of origin?

Our returnees often left their country of origin a long time ago, so after returning there is an acclimatization process. Someone needs to be shown the way. As a partner, we can help with this first reintegration. Returnees can come to us with questions. We can help them with the purchase of materials, with finding a place to live and with the start-up of a small business for example.



How do we distinguish ourselves from other return organizations?

Goedwerk and its partner organizations have a very personal relationship with their clients. With some returnees, we're still in touch after one or two years. Because Goedwerk is not a hierarchical organization, the threshold for them to contact us is quite low. Most return organizations say their goodbyes at Schiphol airport, but we provide monitoring and aftercare. I am thinking of our returnee Mulu for example. He had some bad luck with the truck that he bought after returning, which was his only source of income. He had already been back for two years, but still, he found the courage to contact us and to ask for help. A loan of a few hundred euros, within the framework of our Fund Your Future project, helped him to get back on his feet.

Did something change in our counseling from/within the country of origin since the start of Goedwerk in 2014?

In recent years the role of the partner had increased in the phase before return. Before going back, the participant talks with the local partner about what is possible in the country of return and if a certain business plan is feasible. This way the participant can adapt his or her ideas to the current situation in the home country.

Can you tell us about a return trajectory in which your contribution as a partner made a big difference?

The story of Sabu: an Ethiopian mother who found herself lost and all alone in the Netherlands. It was an intensive trajectory. First, we needed to make contact with (one of) her children, who she did not speak to for a few years. Once we got in touch with her son, first we had to work on the trust: having not heard from his mother in years, he and his siblings had assumed that she did not survive the trip to Europe. When he first heard his mom on the phone, he finally believed it was all true. I traveled from Addis to his hometown to collect the necessary documents to prepare for his mother's return to Ethiopia. After her return, we paid her and her family a visit. She was so thankful to us for reuniting her with her children. That was a beautiful process that touched me deeply.

Or the story of our returnee Teddy, an Ethiopian young man with addiction problems who I met while I was in Amsterdam. The night before his flight, we had arranged a sleeping place for him and someone to keep an eye on him. Still, he managed to sneak out of the building. There we were, waiting for him at Schiphol airport the next morning. We arranged a taxi ride for

him but he was nowhere to be found.

At the last moment, he came to the airport by himself on a train from Leiden, just on time to catch his plane to Addis Ababa. After his return, Teddy changed completely: he started doing sports, he shaved, he dressed better. He became another human being, someone who took care of himself. And he was so proud to show it to me, the fact that he was doing well, and that this was the result of what we had meant to him. Those trajectories touch me deeply and leave me with a satisfied feeling. To see someone being so impacted by their return is very touching.

How would you like to see your role as a partner develop itself in the future and what is needed for it?

It would be great if in the future our work could be expanded on a preventative level. Right now what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. By providing information in Ethiopia (and other countries of origin) to people who are thinking of making the trip to Europe, we can paint a realistic picture of the (im)possibilities there. We could let former returnees share their stories for example. A lot of people who asked for asylum in the Netherlands, had a better life in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the threshold is often too high for them to return once they arrived in Europe, even though they live an undocumented life there. We should tackle this problem at its roots.

In regards to the migrants who are already in the Netherlands, I have to say that the current reintegration budget of 1800 euros does not motivate a lot of people to return. It is not a realistic amount to start a small business for example. Especially not when

someone can not count on help from family members or friends. Our ‘Fund Your Future’ project – in which returnees receive a small loan to set up their own business and receive counseling while developing the business plan – that would make people think, that would interest them.

“Most return organizations say their goodbyes at Schiphol airport, but we provide monitoring and aftercare.”

Which obstacles have you encountered as a partner in the last few years? Did you overcome these?

In the last few years, I realized that you cannot find a solution to every problem. For example when someone falls back into his or her drinking problem. As a partner, you cannot call them every day to ask how it is going or give someone 10 euros for cigarettes every time they ask. As a partner, you have to set your limits and sometimes say ‘no’. This is very difficult in Ethiopia when you get to know someone personally. We work in two different frames of reference: in the Netherlands, people are very direct and clear; in Ethiopia, a ‘no’ can be misinterpreted for a ‘yes’. I have to admit that, despite my long stay in the Netherlands, I have unfortunately not mastered the Dutch way of setting boundaries.

Work visit Ethiopia and Eritrea

The birth of new ideas and projects

In June 2019 the Goedwerk Foundation planned a combined work visit to Eritrea and Ethiopia. The reason why Goedwerk decided to visit Ethiopia is due the (positively) changing political climate, and the fact that many Ethiopians find it difficult getting a residence permit in the Netherlands. Due to this, Goedwerk expects more Ethiopians having the wish to return in the future. Also, Goedwerk has started a new project which aims to provide additional financial support for returnees to Ethiopia. In order to further accommodate the project a visit to Ethiopia is necessary. Additionally, Goedwerk has visited Eritrea on this work trip because there is a visible increase in often young, and vulnerable Eritreans searching for help in the Netherlands. Goedwerk has the aim to provide adequate and personally tailored advice for such Eritreans if they have the wish to return, therefore this workvisit was of great value.

Eritrea

When Goedwerk arrived in Eritrea one of the main aims was to meet up with participants who returned in the past, to reflect on their return, and check in on how they are doing. One of the returnees, Semhar tells Goedwerk the situation in Eritrea is relatively safe and that she is positive about the future. She has not yet been able to start her restaurant but has started as a freelancer in the catering business and she and her children are doing well. Apart from talking to returnees during this work visit Goedwerk also came into contact with Doctor Aklilu Yemanab who is a renowned psychologist with a specialty in the treatment of traumas, and the most important contact person of Goedwerk in Eritrea. Dr. Aklilu plays a major role within the monitoring process, thus his information and the discussion that Goedwerk had with him were very valuable to better assess the return project.

Additionally, Goedwerk discussed the possibility of returnees following vocational training in Asmara to further improve their skills. Lastly, Goedwerk had a meeting with the Eritrean consulate who was very positive about the plans of Goedwerk to further help Eritrean returnees with a business plan.

The consulate is prepared to help Goedwerk by playing a significant role in retrieving and delivering necessary documents to obtain travel documents needed for return.

Ethiopia

Similar to the visit to Eritrea, Goedwerk also decided to meet and check up on some of the returnees who have returned to Ethiopia in the past. One of the returnees Dawey Ibrahim tells Goedwerk that he is glad he returned. He is reunited with his sick mother and able to slowly rebuild his old life and regain his high-end position within the municipality of Addis Abeba. Overall he is therefore positive about his return to Ethiopia. Except for checking in with returnees, Goedwerk also discussed the cooperation with the organization Live-Addis about the new microfinance project. Live Addis was enthusiastic about the new microfinance project and will present a proposal about their role within this project, and Goedwerk will draw up a contract to clearly explain the goal of the project and the role that Live-Addis will play. Lastly, Live-Addis will take part in further research about other micro-finance organizations to help Goedwerk with the realization.



Insight by a returnee

The main goal of the work we do at Goedwerk Foundation is to support people with their return to their country of origin and help them make the first steps toward a new and sustainable future. A lot has been said about the way the organization has operated. However, showing the impact of the work can be described best by somebody who has been through the process. Following, you will read an interview with George. George has returned to Ghana in 2021 and has been so kind to share with us his story.

George 58 years old ,
16 years in the Netherlands,
8 months back in Ghana)

What did you miss the most during your stay in the Netherlands?

I missed a lot of things about Ghana like the food, but I missed my family the most. And now, I am so happy here. Even now I don't miss the Netherlands. Not at all. I have felt lonely in The Netherlands and luckily I do not have that feeling anymore. I am with my family, we talk together, I eat my own food.

What motivated you to return to your country of origin?

I was going through a lot of stress and at one day I made the decision. Somewhere in October 2020. I never regret it.

What do you remember about your first few days back in your country of origin?

The moment when I landed. Everything has changes here. I was thinking I just find my way through the city but I couldn't find my way home. Somebody helped me, haha. After I checked in at the hotel I felt stressed because the place was not good. I didn't feel welcome. The day I reached Kumasi I was feeling better. Finally, I saw my family again! It was 'party day': they organized a small party for me. So nice!

How did Goedwerk support you during your return process?

You helped me a lot with the money and the goods.

What is a lesson you learned in the Netherlands that you will always take with you?

It's not easy to live in Europe. As soon as I arrived in Europe I was going through a lot of stress and it didn't go away for 16 years. I would tell anybody with the struggle to go to Europe or not to change. Just concentrate on your life here in Ghana. Europe is not heaven! If you have money use it to set something up in Ghana.

What are your dreams for the future?

I have really a lot of dreams. I am dreaming of starting a business but I don't want to tell more about it now. I will call you after I start!



Sustainable Development Goals

In this way, Goedwerk aspires to continue to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), drawn up by the United Nations and signed in 2015 by 193 countries. The goals act as a compass for tackling the global and local challenges ahead. As an international NGO, Goedwerk Foundation contributes to the following goals:

SDG 1 – No poverty

GWF contributes to the first objective through the micro finance project. The microfinance project ensures on a micro and individual level that returnees have a greater chance of success in their country of origin when they have access to microcredit. By means of entrepreneurial training and jointly drawing up a business plan, they are prepared to generate their own income and contribute to the development of local economies.



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



SDG 3 – Good health and well-being

GWF contributes to SDG 3 in several areas. The situation in which many undocumented migrants find themselves is often hopeless and extremely stressful. This naturally also has an impact on the mental and physical health of the migrant. Many complex emotions and feelings surface when thinking about return. By building trust and a strong relationship with the client, we help them to make an informed decision. In addition, we ensure that the returnee receives the appropriate psychological and medical help that he or she needs. This is done through partnerships with local NGO's and Veldzicht.

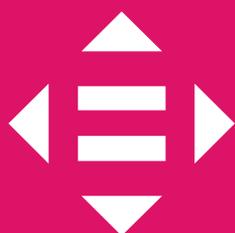
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth

The 8 goal states that sustained an inclusive economic growth for all must be achieved. We contribute to this goal through the microcredit project, which enables people with a difficult and complex migration background to start a business in their country of origin.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



SDG 10 – Reducing inequality

Goedwerk Foundation contributes to the social inclusion of undocumented migrants both in The Netherlands and in their country of origin. Undocumented migrants are part of an often forgotten group. By supporting voluntary return and offering future orientation, we offer equal opportunities and better appreciation for their situation.

SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Through our microfinance project, we contribute to sub- goal which states that international support must be increased to implement effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries. In addition, we work together with our government partners towards a common and sustainable goal.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Ambitions of Goedwerk

We are well aware of the small impact that we have as a small NGO on the global developments that follow. However, we derive satisfaction and motivation from every individual who has been able to build a future in his or her country of origin through a dignified and sustainable return.

Europe: the debate about return

With our experience and knowledge of the theme of voluntary return and reintegration in our focus countries, we want to play a role in the discussion on the theme at multiple levels: municipal, national and European. In 2020, the European Commission presented the New Pact of Asylum and Migration for EU Member States. One of its ambitions is a successful strategy for organizing sustainable return and reintegration. Our colleagues have a clear vision about this based on our experience and self-conducted research within our organization. We will continue to have conversations and discussions about our stance on these matters – voluntary return and the reintegration process must be sustainable. This is what we stand for and what we believe in.

Specific ambitions:

- Further expand Goedwerk Foundation's European network;
- Continue to expand and strengthen the networks in the countries of origin based on the basis of recent developments;
- Further expand the reintegration options for returnees for a sustainable return plan, together with our local partners.

Goedwerk will continue to:

- Offer tailor-made support;
- A focus on the target group from complex countries of origin, but also with complex problems (such as addiction and psychological problems);
- Gain knowledge and experience in the countries of origin themselves.



Colofon

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Gemeente
Rotterdam



EINDHOVEN



Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek
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