



GOEDWERK
FOUNDATION



Voluntary return in times of a global pandemic

Annual report 2020

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About Goedwerk

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



A word from Elias

I think everybody who reads this will agree with me: 2020 was a difficult year – unfortunately. For (un)documented migrants in the Netherlands it was particularly tough. Not only did they have health concerns like everybody else, but their situation became increasingly insecure during the outbreak of the pandemic. Could they stay in the shelters? What would happen if they caught the virus? Could they still count on the medical care they needed with hospitals and intensive cares filling up quickly? Could they still count on the counselling they wanted? How long would it take before they were able to return to their countries of origin? How are their home countries tackling the virus and would they be safe there? Many very important questions, and not all of them easily answered..

The outbreak of the pandemic meant that Goedwerk had to quickly adapt to a new and difficult situation, while at the same time being able to provide support for a group of people who now found themselves in an even more unstable and insecure situation than before the pandemic. It was difficult to reach our clients or to have meaningful conversations as most of them had to take place over the phone or digitally. However, we were able to provide a sympathetic ear, and sometimes that is what counts the most.

Organizing returns was problematic due to the almost worldwide closure of airspace, government institutions, and embassies or consulates. Frustrating for our clients whose wish for return only grew stronger over time. However, we were able to take our time to draft robust and elaborate reintegration plans together, so that when their time comes to go home, they are thoroughly prepared.

It was also difficult for us to maintain the same level of support we could provide pre-pandemic to people who had already returned to their countries of origin with us. People had to spend their days in quarantine, not being able to work and to execute the reintegration plan we had drafted. At the same time, the social safety nets in many of their countries are either very limited or absent, so many turned to us for support while it was in some cases this almost impossible. Luckily, we were able to count on our international partners who did their utmost to support them in these difficult circumstances



The pandemic also meant that many of the ambitions we had formulated for 2020 could not be realized. We were planning to roll out a pilot for a new project for financial support for our returnees, were planning to organize several international working visits to monitor pre-departure support, and we had plans to gather our international partners in one room for days of strategy, knowledge exchange and networking. Fortunately, our ambitions are merely postponed, not canceled. I'm looking forward to seeing them come to life in 2021.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Goedwerk team for their tireless efforts in very complicated times to support our clients, and for their seemingly endless flexibility in organizing their work. It has not been easy, but I am very glad that I can always count on you, even in the most difficult of situations. Thanks to you, we have been able to continue our support to this group of people who needed it direly.

Elias

Our work in a global pandemic

The global COVID-pandemic obviously brought many unique challenges to our work. Firstly, we had to organize our work from a work-at-home setting to avoid as much contact as possible. Quite challenging given the importance of face-to-face meetings with our clients, not in the least because not all of our clients have access to a solid internet connection or even a phone. So where possible, we organized skype-, facetime- or WhatsApp meetings, and if we had to, we met our clients in the office, obviously within the government-set limitations.

Future orientation

During our future orientation trajectories, we normally meet our clients (bi-)weekly in our office for a one-on-one meeting or a group meeting. Our conversations touch upon sensitive topics such as their experiences during the long and difficult travel to Europe, life as an undocumented person in the Netherlands, and a possible return to their country of origin. As such we want to provide a safe environment where we can drink a cup of coffee or tea, and where our clients can feel safe enough to tell us their stories and show their emotions. Obviously, face-to-face meetings are pivotal but unfortunately impossible at the beginning of the pandemic. Over time, we started to organize meetings in the office again, because some conversations are simply not suitable to be held over the phone. During the office meetings, we would also regularly check-in upon our clients over the phone, to see how they were coping during these extraordinary times and to monitor their mental health.

We did have to cancel our group meetings completely. That's a great loss as group dynamics often sparked different kinds of conversations where participants can share their experiences and advice with each other.

Voluntary return

The almost complete closure of global airspace obviously had a huge impact on our voluntary return trajectories. For most countries of origin of our participants, there were no flights available for months. Especially for the complex countries that we focus on (Libya, Syria, Eritrea), organising returns became extremely difficult.

As such, we had significantly fewer returns than usual from March 2020 to December 2020. We met the other participants regularly to provide updates when necessary. As such, the trajectories with these people were long, often to the frustration of our participants – who often could not wait to return back home, especially during these times! At the same time, this also gave us the opportunity to get to know each other very well – which also led to beautiful conversations!



What is future orientation?

Within the LVV project, Goedwerk Foundation provides future orientation. The LVV (Landelijke Vreemdelingen Voorziening) is a Dutch project that has been implemented in five cities throughout the Netherlands: Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Groningen. The goal of the project is to find a sustainable solution for undocumented migrants in the Netherlands. It is a linear model that starts with a legal check. During this check, the possibility for a legal stay in the Netherlands is examined. If the outcome of the legal check is negative, the client enrolls in future orientation: a service that we as a return organisation provide. During this programme, the client will research the option of returning to a country of origin or migration to a third country.

Goedwerk in 2020

Goedwerk Foundation helps (un)documented migrants to orient on their future, and with voluntary return to their country of origin. With tailor-made support we work for a sustainable perspective, taking into account the wishes and interests of this group. In 2020 Goedwerk Foundation:



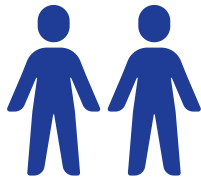
LAUNCHED 1 NEW WEBSITE

WENT ON TWO WORKING VISITS TO ETHIOPIA AND AFGHANISTAN



EXPANDED TEAM WITH 2 COLLEAGUES

OUR NEW

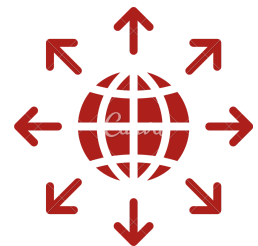


OPENED A THIRD OFFICE IN EINDHOVEN



PARTICIPAED IN TWO (INTER)NATIONAL SYMPOSIA

EXPANDED OUR NETWORK WITH 2 INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



STARTED 1 TWO-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



HELPED 6 MIGRANTS RETURN TO THEIR HOME COUNTRIES





Voluntary in 2020: Suní's story

Although the covid-pandemic practically brought the world to a standstill, the Goedwerk foundation has been able to realize several voluntary returns. This is the story of Suní, our client who returned to Morocco in December 2020.

Goedwerk already knew Suní for quite some time. It was totally difficult to get a hold of him: over the course of several years, he disappeared and reappeared on our radar several times. In 2020 the moment was finally there: Suní decided to return to his home country Morocco. In a mix of Italian, Spanish, German, and Dutch we spoke with Suní on a weekly basis and later on in the process on a daily basis. Because of the global pandemic, his trajectory remained hectic until the very last moment: suddenly, a direct flight to Fez wasn't possible anymore, so he had to fly to Tanger. This caused him a lot of anguish. And if this wasn't already enough, the day before his departure the Tanger flight was canceled as well – so he has to take a plane to Casablanca.

Suní left Morocco for Europe more than 20 years ago and he has been in the Netherlands for a long time now– sometimes even in detention for migrants. We meet him in June 2019. His situation is not very stable at that moment: when he doesn't sleep in the shelter, he sleeps in a container or in a friend's car. He's officially banned from the Pauluskerk shelter because of the problems he caused there. He's understandably frustrated over his situation. So many years in Europe, without a perspective for a sustainable future...

From the start, his trajectory is difficult and the covid-situation makes things even more difficult. Meanwhile, the pressure on him mounts, Suní stays on a so-called "return-bed". This means that if he doesn't cooperate with his return to Morocco, he will lose access to his shelter.

During our conversations with Suní, it becomes clear that he's done with his life as an undocumented migrant in the Netherlands. He's tired. With a lot of patience, we convince Suní that return could give him a second chance in life, back with his mother, brothers, and sisters. We agree that we help him set up a plan for a new start in Morocco, and promise him we'll try our best to arrange the necessary financial support.

Suní has a plan; he wants to open a bakery in Fez. This used to be his job, back in the day in Morocco. As Suní won't get governmental financial support (since he is from a country deemed safe by the government), we will request our partners for financial support for his plan and his return.

"Suní has a plan: he wants to open a bakery in Fez"

Suní's enthusiasm grows day by day, and he takes matters into his own hands. He asks his family in Fez to send the required documents to request a travel document from the Moroccan embassy. He goes to the embassy multiple times to check whether his travel document is ready. Every time he visits the consulate, he calls us in a panic: the consulate is closed, or he's told the embassy lost his files – problem after problem. However, we manage to calm him down every time, in a mix of several languages!

Suni is working hard on the realization of his plan. Through a mosque, he manages to acquire kitchen equipment for his bakery. The Goedwerk manages to arrange extra financial support from the government (DT&V) and the municipality of Rotterdam. This enables him to pay the first 6 months of rent and the shipping of his equipment.

“Thanks a thousand times for everything that you did for him!”

We notice that the process is too slow for Suni: every day he asks all parties involved when he can go. And then finally there is a date: December 22 he will fly back to Morocco. But to Tanger instead of Fez. This scares Suni. He calls us on the weekend and tells us he will not board the plane. We try to calm him down. In the end, Suni understands that due to covid, the situation is what it is. But another problem arises: the day before his departure his flight to Tanger gets canceled and has been rebooked to Casablanca – while his family is already on their way to Tanger to pick him up! Suni breaks down, but he wants to return, so desperately he gets back on his feet quickly.

The next day we meet him at Schiphol, and there he is: in his shiny new orange tracksuit, ready for his departure. With the whole Goedwerk team we wave him goodbye: Suni has impressed us all!

Messages from Morocco

The day after his arrival Suni texts us: he had to spend a night in jail after he arrived at the Casablanca airport. This was scary but the next day he was set free and he traveled to Fez to meet his family.

From Suni’s brother, we receive a message as well: “thanks a thousand times for everything that you did for him!”. Finally, after all these years, Suni is back home.

From a bakery to a clothing shop

After a little while, Suni let us know that instead of opening a bakery, he is planning to open a clothing shop. Turned out, that the oven that he needed for his bakery was a little too expensive for him. We are happy to see Suni's creativity after this initial blow to his plans. Every time we speak to him, he calls us from his shop, telling us he's working and doing well! We are so proud that we have contributed to Suni's sustainable return, and we wish him all the best in his future endeavors!



Suni's clothing shop under construction



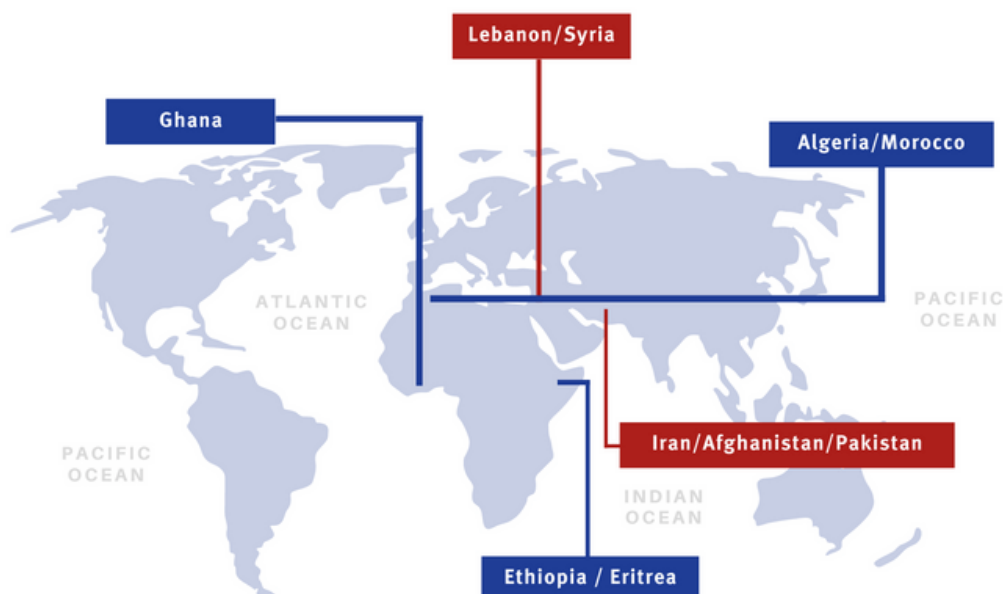
New partnerships in 2021

The core of our work is to support migrants with their voluntary return to their home countries. Often, our clients have not been in their countries of origin for years, so they are full of questions about the current situation in their countries and require support for the first months after they come back home. To provide them with the information and support they need, Goedwerk Foundation entertains a large international network of partners in various countries. In 2020 we have been able to expand our network to Afghanistan and Ghana, and our team is working to conclude new partnerships in Surinam and Somalia in 2021.

Network expansion

With the tireless efforts of our small team, we were able to further expand our network by concluding new partnerships in Ghana and Afghanistan in 2020. Our partners play a crucial role in informing the migrant about the possibilities in the country of origin, organizing official documents that confirm the migrant's identity, mediating contact with family members, and supporting the migrant after arrival in the country of origin. Goedwerk and its partners can provide post-return assistance to an official maximum of one year, but if desired and necessary we can either extend or shorten this period: tailor-made support is at the heart of our work!

In 2020, Goedwerk Foundation is working with partners in the following countries:



Ghana

We are very proud that since 2020 we work together with our valuable Ghanaian colleague John who works for the Heartstring Project LBG: an NGO which executes projects that help support vulnerable communities in Ghana by setting up small businesses – the profits of which will help set up a school for the communities' children. A born Ghanaian, our enthusiastic colleague John obviously has a solid understanding of his country's situation and our target group. He also has extensive experience in microfinance projects and setting up small businesses. As such, John is a perfect partner for Goedwerk. In 2020, he has assisted several of our Ghanaian clients before and after their return to Ghana. John also supports us in our future orientation program – aimed at clients who have not (yet) decided to return. Within this program, John occasionally joins us in conversations with our Ghanaian clients to support them with their decision to return.



Afghanistan

In 2020, Goedwerk Foundation launched a cooperation in Afghanistan with Save Our Soles of Afghans Organization (SOSAO) to offer support to Afghans returning to their country of origin. With branches in Iran and Pakistan, SOSAO can also support returns to these countries. In 2020, SOSAO provided support to migrants who have returned to both Afghanistan and Iran.

Working visit

In 2020, Goedwerk Foundation traveled to Afghanistan and Ethiopia for a working visit. In Afghanistan, we officially confirmed our partnership with SOSAO. With a team of two colleagues, Goedwerk Foundation also visited the SOSAO's local development projects and visited some of the people whom we had helped return to their homes in Afghanistan.

In March 2020 - right before the Covid crisis hit the Netherlands - two of our colleagues traveled to Ethiopia to discuss the cooperation with our local partner, and to explore the possibilities for an exciting new project in Ethiopia (see "Fund your Future" on the website...). Of course, we also went to see our former returnees – obviously the most memorable part of our trip!





Meet our partner in Ghana: John



In 2020, we concluded a new partnership with John in Accra, Ghana. John helps us in our future orientation-, microfinance,- and return trajectories. John is really supportive, experienced, accessible to migrants, speaks 6 local languages, and knows his way around the country. He is very valuable for our organization. As such, we're very excited to introduce him to you!

John, we are so happy to have you on board! Could you please shortly introduce yourself and your work?

"My name is John Siisi Annan. I am a 37-year-old graduate of communication studies, and living and working in Accra, Ghana.

I run an NGO called 'The Heartstring Project'. This is a registered NGO in Ghana with a primary focus on supporting vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and people living with disabilities. We support them by teaching them employable skills from catering to hairdressing. Currently, we are working with a group of young people in a school for children with special needs in the eastern part of the country. To give an example: in this group is a young boy who is learning how to play the drums. His father is a pastor and his church has a music group that travels around the country to play. We are hoping that we, by the end of this year, will be finished with his tutoring so that he can successfully integrate into his community."

What made you want to be our partner?

"I had a conversation with Juliette, a very good friend of mine who was in Ghana as a volunteer,

and she told me about Goedwerk Foundation. I believe in assisting people who genuinely want to do something good with their lives. I've had some experience with people who lived overseas who found out life there wasn't what they had expected. Returning, however, can be difficult: there is shame attached to returning. If an organization is dedicating itself to supporting people who want to return, by taking away a little bit of this shame, I believe it is something I want to be a part of. That's why I gladly took on the opportunity to be a partner with Goedwerk Foundation."

What do you think of the work of Goedwerk Foundation?

"I know from experience how difficult it is to return back home after you have lived abroad – overseas. Your family will have many financial expectations. If your family hears you're coming back home, they will expect that you return with money and gifts. If you come back without having accomplished anything, you will meet a lot of shame. That is what a lot of people don't want to come back to. "

"So, when I see the work Goedwerk Foundation is doing, supporting people who want to return financially and with the skills to build something for themselves, I believe it is amazing work."

We've worked together to organise the return of Mr. George. How was this experience for you?

"The very first day I spoke to mister George, it was a good conversation. He was very honest and adamant about coming home: he had a plan. All he needed was somebody to reassure him he would be able to make a life here. One thing that worked in his favor was the fact that he had prepared his mind for his return. My experience is that people who want to return are in two minds: whether to come or not to come back home.

George really wanted to come home. His main concern, however, was his health. He was not sure whether he would be able to have access to the healthcare he needs. So, I went to Kumasi to do some research.

There, I spoke to a number of specialists to get an idea of the facilities that they have there. Back in Accra, I went to the Kor Le Bu hospital to speak with doctors to create a solid health care plan for George. This gave George the reassurance that his health wasn't going to be in danger in Ghana. So it was a good process overall."

How have you experienced corona as an obstacle in the returnee trajectory?

"Corona has affected everything. The borders where closed. Corona made it impossible for anybody to travel and for me to support people in need."

Do you have any tips for Ghanaian migrants who are thinking of going back to Ghana?

"To all Ghanaian migrants who are thinking of coming home: the first thing I want to say to you is "there is no place like home". With the support and the love that you get from home, you can't get it anywhere else. I understand how difficult it would be to come home, especially when you have been.

away for a very long time and you don't have a job. Goedwerk Foundation is ready to support you. Take advantage of that."

What do you think of our upcoming start-up capital project?

"I would be very interested in supporting such a project. In my previous NGO, I was the project manager of a microfinance project in Cape Coast, one of the poorest regions of Ghana. The communities there are predominately fishing communities where you would normally have very uneducated men who have large families. The man is the one that brings the fish home and the woman is actually the breadwinner of the family; the backbone. These women don't have a lot of capital, so what our project did was to support them with start-up capital for their small businesses. They sold fish and palm oil in order to take good care of the families.

I'm very proud of the result that we got in the three years we ran the project: these families turned their lives around as now there are two breadwinners in the family and they are now able to send the children to school.

So, if I get another opportunity to work on a microfinance project I would jump head first!"



George and Elias at Schiphol Airport

Towards 2021

We have big plans for 2021. Although we don't expect the pandemic to be over just yet, we do feel that this is the right time to roll out new projects, ideas and partnerships. We expect that we'll have more returnees in 2021, as many returns have been postponed in 2020 due to the closure of airspace of many countries. Therefore, we seek to expand our team to make sure we have enough people to support migrants in their voluntary returns, and to realize our plans and dreams!



Counselling

Firstly, we further wish to deepen our expertise with regard to our one-on-one and group counselling. We made a start with this already in 2019 – when two of our colleagues followed a training in 7roses counselling. In 2020 we developed our own counselling method inspired by the 7roses method, which we seek to implement and evaluate in 2021. This method - centered around the concept of empowerment - will help us support migrants build self-esteem and (re-)gaining their independence and notion of self-worth.

"Fund your Future"

Secondly, we seek to expand the ways of (financial) support we can offer our clients. Many clients who we support in their return process, wish to set up their own business in their country of origin, but lack the financial resources and knowledge to do so. So, in 2020 we undertook extensive research to see how to fill this gap. As a result, we have established a new project; Fund Your Future. With this project, clients who have a plan for a business can apply for a small loan up to 5000 (we don't charge rent). We then support them in setting up their business: we start drafting a business plan, and we help execute it after their return through the support of our international partners. This first project in Ethiopia will serve as a pilot. We will carry out research in order to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the project. In 2021, the pilot in Ethiopia will commence. We are very much looking forward to support our clients even better and to receive the first results of our research!



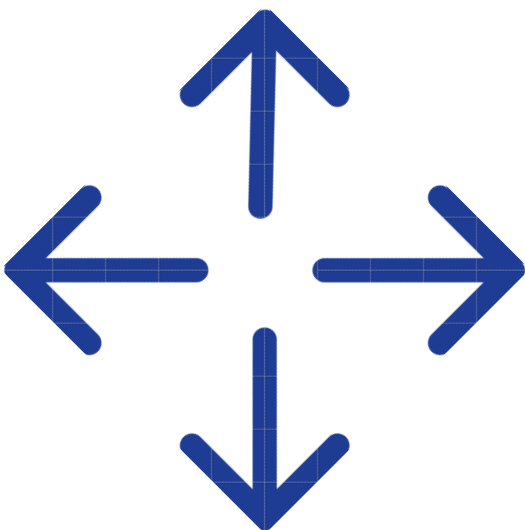
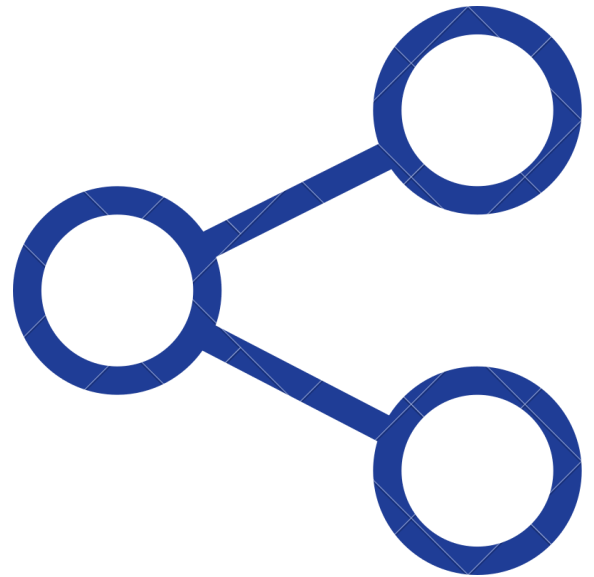


Partnerships

Tailor-made support is the core of our work and our international partners play a crucial role in pre-and post-departure support. Therefore, we are always working to further develop our international network. In 2021 we will look to expand our network to at least three countries and to develop new ways of cooperation, also amongst our partners themselves.

Communication

We like to show what we're doing. We meet so many beautiful people with so many different stories, that we want to make sure that they're heard. Therefore, we will expand our presence on social media, continue with our two-monthly newsletter, present our work to (international) organizations working with migrants. We are also looking to organize a symposium in 2021, bringing together (international) migration experts from governmental and non-governmental organizations and academics for exchange of information, experience and ideas. During the symposium, we will also officially launch "Fund your Future". Would you like to receive updates on this events and other work? You can subscribe to our newsletter by clicking [here](#).



New office!

Goedwerk Foundation is expanding! We were already active in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and since January 2021 we are present in Eindhoven as well! In Eindhoven we work closely with different NGO's such as "Vluchteling in de Knel", "Leger des Heils", "IOM" and "Vluchtelingenwerk". Eindhoven is one of the five LVV-pilot cities, so we're providing future orientation as well as voluntary return.

Goedwerk Foundation bedankt onze samenwerkingspartners Gemeente Amsterdam, Gemeente Rotterdam, en de Dienst Terugkeer&Vertrek die ons werk financieel mogelijk maken.

 **Gemeente
Amsterdam**



Mogelijk gemaakt door
**Gemeente
Rotterdam**



Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek
Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid

Colofon

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