

## THE HERD SHOULD STAY TOGETHER

The story of Aram M., 28 years, a voluntary returnee who established a sheep raising business in Aliawa, near Sulaymaniyah, under the IOM project “Integrated Reintegration in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq”



Aram M. while herding his sheep

„The joy of life is being at home.”

Aram M., 28 years

As 28 year-old Aram M. is an only child, he has to shoulder the burden of care for his parents alone. Previous to undertaking his journey to Europe, the young farmer anticipated that he would find a regulated job to better support his parents who remained in Iraq. But after nearly nine months in Germany, with no possibilities of earning a living due to bureaucratic hurdles, Aram decided to return to the area of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) with the help of IOM’s assisted voluntary return programme “REAG/GARP”.

Accompanied by the reintegration experts from the IOM office in Sulaymaniyah, the young man outlined a promising reintegration business plan. As a result, he was supported with an amount of EUR 4,000 for the purchase of 25 sheep in order to open his own sheep raising business in Aliawa, half an hour south from Sulaymaniyah. The sheep raising and the sale of wool and dairy products are going well and Aram is grateful for the reintegration assistance. In the

meantime, the returnee serves around 15 clients a day who pay in cash or in certain circumstances are granted installments. He earns a monthly salary of USD 800. Half of this is invested back into his sheep, the other half enables him to financially support his parents. However, he does not see this as a burden. The young man feels indebted to his parents and in his view, family members are supposed to support each other. His parents help in other ways, especially in collecting the necessary documents for the establishment of his business. His father is always there with words of advice.

His journey to Europe has taught Aram an important life lesson: “One should never leave his family, his home, friends or relatives. A life alone, abroad is meaningless, the joy of life is being at home.” His plans for the future are to construct a little house close to his parent’s place and to get married. Although Aram has not yet found a partner, he is confident that his herd grows, so will his family.