

« I don't regret my return to the fold at all »

After five years in Europe, including two years in Switzerland, Emmanuel C. finally decided to return back to his country, which is Nigeria. He is among his people since January 10th 2011. The former asylum seeker declares today that his



is very happy to be back in his country. He even plans to celebrate his wedding, as soon as possible, and to start his own business . Meeting with a man who “doesn't regret his decision to return back”.

Voix d'Exils : How was your trip to Nigeria ?

Emmanuel C. : My return to Nigeria went well. I left Switzerland on the 10th January with another Nigerian of the program of voluntary return. Arrived at the Lagos international Airport, we were welcomed to our descent from the airplane by an officer of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). He booked a room in a hotel in Lagos, where I spent my first night. The next day, I returned to my native State which is Imo State, located about 450 km from the capital Lagos (the economic capital of Nigeria).

How did you meet with your family ?

My sister came to me at the airport of Imo State. She was really happy to see me again and when we got home, my family has exploded with joy. My mother was the more delighted to finally find her only son which is me. I postponed so many times my return so that ultimately, she really did not believe in it anymore.

What motivated you to take the decision to return back to Nigeria?

The first reason is that I realized that it is useless to try to stay somewhere where people do not want you. The Swiss authorities have not come in on my application for asylum. I spent a total of five years in Europe. I was in Austria and Spain before landing in Switzerland. And I can tell you my stay in Europe was not easy at all. I went through a lot of problems. The last two years I spent in Switzerland were the most difficult in my life. I even spent time in the prison. So I finally realized I had no more perspectives in Switzerland, and that the best was to return to my country, where people who love me are waiting for me impatiently.

The second reason, directly related to the first one, is that I had to refocus my life and stop hurting those I love and who love me too. My mother, for whom I am the only son, would not stop crying because she wanted to see me before her last day's. Unlike those who hide the real situation of their life in the West and dangle their families in homeland that all goes well, I have played fair with mine. My family knew the truth about my situation in Switzerland. She knew that I was an unsuccessful applicant and that I lived on the social help. Given the dramatic situation in which I lived with, my mother used to tell me that if I did not know where I went, I should at least know where I come from. Faced with the various reports of my return, she lost her patience and resolved to answer anymore to my phone calls.

On the other hand, I left the country where is my love was. I could not wait desperately my future wife who spent five long years to wait for me, for a life without a future in Switzerland. Then, one day, I took stock of my life and decided to return to live among my people, whatever it would cost.

Can you tell us about your new life in Nigeria, especially

since you have not received the aid for return?

I am doing my best. Aid to return had not actually been given to me because of delinquency acts I committed. But life goes on as usual. It would be dishonest and an outright lie to say that today, I live in opulence or I did not need especially financial means to get up. But, what I am however sure, it is that the satisfaction which I feel to find myself among mine gives me a great stability and imports at the moment more than anything. Today, I take time to make the space in my head and to digest my stay in Europe. And then, I will face my new life here. Now, I prepare my wedding with my wife who had to be patient and who waited for me during all these years, and then I will look for ways to create my own business. I can't tell you yet in what kind of business I'll work. But, I have a Master in Management and Marketing, I have no doubt that I have the knowledge needed to manage my own business, and I have the will to succeed in my new life. Moreover, the fact of seeing my family again gives me energy to face the challenges that lie ahead and I don't regret my return to the fold at all.

Returning back of the unaccepted asylum seekers from Nigeria, suspended nearly one year ago, starts again this year in Switzerland. What do you think about that?

I have the impression, like most of my country follower's for asylum in Switzerland, that because of prejudices, the Swiss authorities have informally agreed to systematically reject asylum application from my country Nigeria. There are among us people who really deserve it grants them asylum. I would like to ask the Swiss office of immigrations (ODM) to avoid putting all files in one basket and to penalize those who deserve recognition as refugees.

What did you learn after your stay in Europe and to lesser extent in Switzerland?

When you are in Nigeria, and in Africa more generally, you think that Europe is a paradise. But when you put your foot in Europe the disillusion comes very quickly. In my case, I realized that Europe didn't not want me anymore, and I decided to leave this continent. Nevertheless, I can't advise my brothers, Nigerians or Africans, to return back as I did, because my decision is absolutely personal and belongs to everyone. However, I would ask the West countries to encourage the establishment of a real democracy in Africa, to take measures to ensure that their banks do not host more funds embezzled by African leaders at the expense of their people's. This situation creates poverty in Africa, as poverty afflicts the continent despite its abundant resources, Africans always choose to take the way to Europe. And migration will remain an unresolved issue.

This Interview was translated from French to English and was partly done in Visp (Switzerland) threw phone calls with Nigeria by CDM .

CDM is a member of the Valais's editorial office of Voix d'Exils