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Good reasons for attending re-entry workshops

Re-entry after a working experience overseas, in the field of international cooperation, presents a number of challenges for the returning person. The nature and intensity of these challenges are often unexpected, which makes dealing with re-entry a difficult experience.

cinfo offers three kinds of re-entry workshops.

One of them deals with the more **personal and social dimensions of re-entry**. Over a two-days process, it helps participants to become aware of the adaptation process linked to re-entry, to know the typical phases of re-entry, identify their own stage in the process, and think of the most appropriate coping strategies in order to live this experience in the best possible way. Among the issues returning expatriates have to cope with, the following examples are some of the most frequent or most difficult ones:

- For bicultural couples that met during the overseas experience, re-entry for one actually means departure for the other.
- Returning families with children have to deal with the re-entry processes of all family members.
- People who went on short term missions may come home whilst they are experiencing their culture shock in the host country. Thus, their perception of the host country and host culture are often very negative and extremely critical, which makes re-entry more difficult.
- Returning expatriates usually experience a "re-entry culture shock". As mentioned above, this is often difficult to handle, as it is unexpected, and people are not prepared to face it.

- Early return because of broken contracts generates complex and complicated emotions to deal with.
- Social and professional pressure to move on quickly back home leave little time for the actual re-entry process.

The professional dimensions of re-entry are central for the expatriates' future career. *cinfo* offers two kinds of workshops to address specifically the professional dimensions of re-entry. Returning expatriates are sometimes unaware of their own learnings, and find it difficult to name the new skills developed overseas. Skills assessment workshops are very useful to help them name their skills and start planning their career's future.

Some returning experts wish to start a consulting career in the field of development. Such a decision needs to be based on serious skills assessments and market studies. Some of *cinfo's* re-entry workshops offer such a process.

These examples of issues and challenges are not exhaustive. They are, however, indicative of the variety and complexity of issues returning expatriates have to face when coming "home".

Most of the time, re-entry workshops combine various objectives. They may be focussed on professional or on personal dimensions linked with re-entry, but they also aim at providing participants with a platform of like minded people, or at least of people living a similar experience. Exchange and mutual understanding become important parts of such processes.