



The continuity approach to repatriation

Although HEINEKEN repat partner Ida Rutten was delighted to return home after being away for seven years, she decided against trying to resume her old career.

Right place, right time

“People say repatriation is the hardest assignment, yet I was very happy to return home. That’s not to say we wouldn’t happily go on another assignment next year, if an opportunity arose, but I feel like our repatriation came at the right time,” says Ida, who previously shared with Global Connection her experiences of setting up a business to import Dutch flowers to Lagos as well as successfully finding a Nigerian business partner to take over the business when she repatriated.

Settling back in

“After living in London, Paris, Kinshasa and Lagos, I guess I was ready for some peace and quiet. Our expat life was incredible yet relocating home is a different feeling. I didn’t feel restless about anything. I am not wondering where we are going next,” says Ida, who trained to become a coach while living in Nigeria. “I must say it was helpful to have made some decisions about what I wanted to do before returning.”

No more 9-to-5

“To be honest, I’d always imagined that I would resume my old career when I eventually repatriated,” says Ida who started to apply for jobs before leaving Lagos. “After a few interviews, I received one job offer and decided to turn it down. I realised that I didn’t need to resume my old way of life with a 9-to-5 career. As we have three sons, none of whom knew Holland very well, obviously I wanted to keep an eye on them!”

As you were...

“In the end, I thought, why not continue what I am doing as an expat? I had already started coaching expats in Lagos. Besides expats living in Holland and all over the world, I have also been working with primary school teachers – it turns out when they join a new school, they have similar experiences as an expat moving to a new country!” says Ida, who has maintained a share in her flower business in Lagos and regularly checks in with her business partner. “People back home might not recognise that your expat life is such a big part of who you are. It feels good to have maintained connections while also establishing a job that gives me the same sense of freedom.”

Photo: Ida Rutten