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Research Report

Does information save migrants' lives? Knowledge and needs of West African migrants en route to Europe

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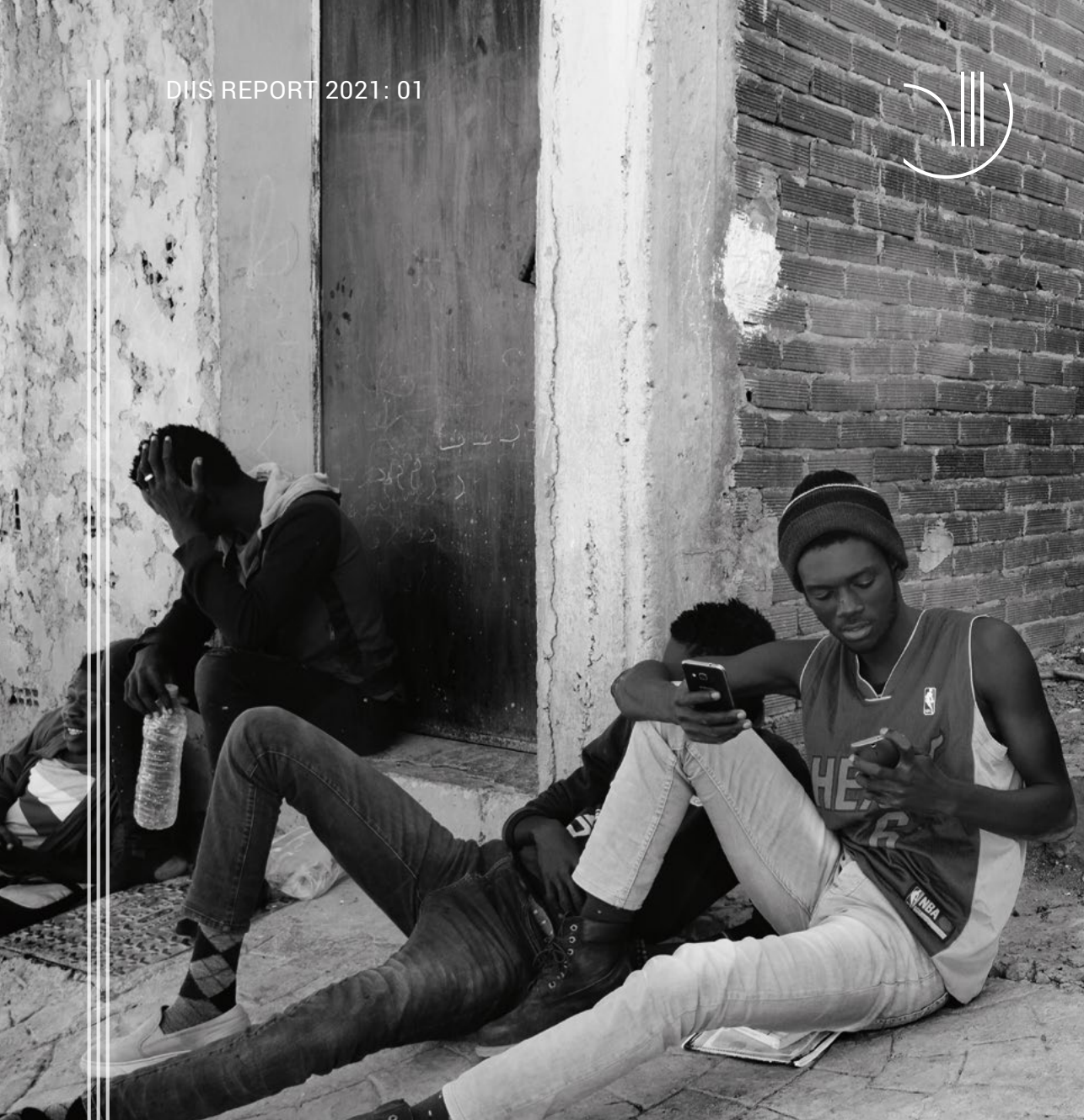
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DOES INFORMATION SAVE MIGRANTS' LIVES?

Knowledge and needs of West African migrants
en route to Europe



This report is written by Ida Marie Savio Vammen, postdoctoral researcher, Sine Plambech, senior researcher, Ahlam Chemlali, PhD candidate, and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, senior researcher, and is published by DIIS.

In Guinea Conakry, Brian Brady, Migration Program Delegate for the Danish Red Cross, played a vital role in data-gathering and analysis. In Morocco, Tunisia and Spain, research assistants Nabil Ferdaoussi, Hajer Arassia and Catarina Alves were instrumental in conducting migrant interviews and interpreting. In Denmark, DIIS intern Valentina Massone assisted with data-analysis and preparation of the report. We would like to thank those we interviewed for the report who have told us about their experiences en route: without their time and engagement, this report would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Saliou receives a call from his two younger brothers living in a rural town in Casamance, Senegal. They wish to come to Dakar to discuss their plans to migrate. Saliou has experience: he returned two years ago, though thirty kilograms lighter than when he left Senegal, after attempting to reach Italy through Libya. He never made it to Europe but instead was held for ransom by bandits for nine months in a prison in Libya, where he survived on meagre food rations, was forced to work without pay, and saw other migrants killed when their families were unable to pay a ransom. Saliou's family did not have money either, and although he had more luck and was not killed, he still felt like a slave. After a while he stopped believing that he would ever get out alive. But he did, and eventually managed to come back to Senegal under the International Organization for Migration (IOM) programme of assisting stranded migrants to return to their home communities.

When his two younger brothers arrive to see Saliou in Dakar a few days after their phone call, they are eager to know everything about the migration route. Their plan is to embark within days on an overland journey to reach Morocco and try to cross over into Spain. Saliou listens carefully and explains everything he knows, emphasising that they should never let themselves be tricked into going to Libya, be ready to see and experience anything, and never trust anybody, even people they come to consider friends. However, after learning that they have only saved half the money they would need for the journey, Saliou convinces them that they will face too many problems without the extra funds and that it is better for them to return home and continue their studies. The two young men are disappointed but decide to follow their brother's advice, at least until they manage to save the rest of the money.

Information about migration and the journey ahead is not only shared by experienced migrants like Saliou. Alongside concrete efforts to manage African migration to Europe through enhanced border controls and return and readmission agreements, information campaigns aimed at discouraging young Africans from migrating have become an increasingly popular policy measure. Especially in the wake and aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis, the European Union (EU) and European nation states have been investing in campaigns that aim to influence people's aspirations to migrate and stop unwanted migration (Carling and Collins 2018). Similar efforts are made by humanitarian organisations, with the intention of decreasing migrants' vulnerability and saving lives. As such, information campaigns cover a wide spectrum of interests, from political deterrence strategies to humanitarian concerns. But what kinds of information do migrants rely on and can they contribute to saving migrants' lives and reducing vulnerabilities en route?

This report aims to provide nuanced answers to these questions by focusing on how migrants select, access, and use information when leaving their home communities and while moving along the often dangerous migration routes to North Africa or Europe. As migration from West African countries has for decades been an intrinsic part of society and of families' survival and livelihood strategies, our approach has been to identify both the 'strengths' and 'vulnerabilities' in migrants' experiences, which is crucial to providing adequate humanitarian assistance. In doing so, we also identify the perpetrators who cause the abuses and create the situations of vulnerability along the migration routes. For instance, in current European policy debates, migrant smugglers are often portrayed as those actors who are most responsible for putting migrants' lives at risk. In this report, we ask whom the migrants consider the perpetrators and question the one-sided policy figure of the 'unscrupulous violent smuggler'. We hope that the report's findings and the key dilemmas concerning trust and information-sharing en route can spark debate and inform humanitarian actors and policy-makers about how to improve assistance to migrants who, like Saliou, end up in vulnerable situations, and how potentially to create safer migration alternatives.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

It is easy to arrive at a misleading impression of the scale and extent of African migration, especially in light of the often heated public debates that surround it, Europe's policy responses and press images of desperate migrants seeking to reach Europe. Most African migrants enter Europe legally, and for the past decade African

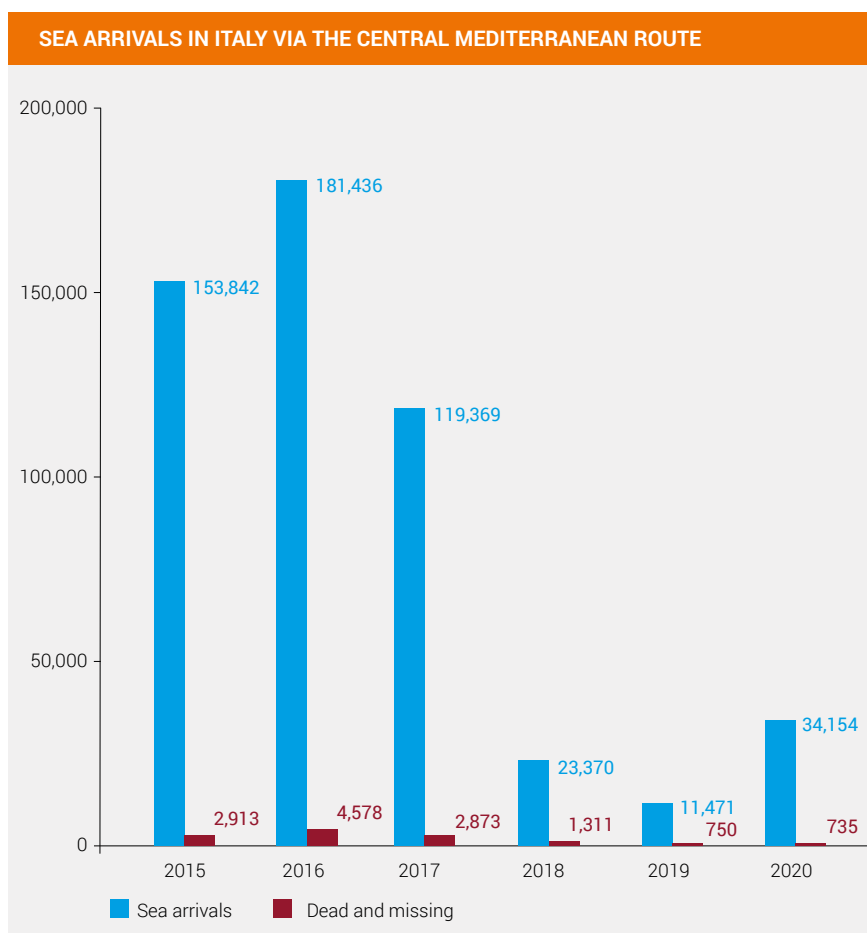
migration to Europe and elsewhere has been relatively constant relative to the total African population (cf. Bjarnesen 2020). The vast majority of African migrants move within their own subregion or within the continent. This is also the case for refugees who are internally displaced or who flee to neighbouring African countries. Despite aspirations to migrate internationally, very few make concrete plans to do so, and even when they do, only a few are likely to realise them (Carling 2002, Carling and Schewel 2018).

The West African migrants in this study have travelled along the changing overland routes to North Africa or Europe to work and in some cases to seek asylum within the past year. Some have travelled via Mali or the Ivory Coast to Burkina Faso and onward to Niamey and Agadez in Niger, before crossing the desert to reach Libya. Others go to Mali and continue directly to Niger, Algeria or Morocco. Since 1979 movement within West Africa has been regulated by the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) protocol, which in principle allows all ECOWAS citizens free movement within its fifteen member states. In practice, however, border crossings often pose numerous barriers to migrants on the move. Primarily due to the increase in targeted operations to stop unwanted migration put in place by EU–African agreements and deteriorating local security situations that have raised the demand for and professionalisation of the smugglers who assist migrants in overcoming such hindrances (Andersson and Keen 2019, MMC 2019a).

Those who attempt to reach Europe use one of two main routes: the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR), mainly from Tunisia and Libya across the sea to Italy and Malta; and the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) to Spain, either entering overland by jumping the tall barbed-wire fences into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa, or by sea from the shores of Morocco.¹ In the last months of 2020, however, African migrants have yet again departed from North and West African shores to attempt the sea route to the Canary Islands. Nearly 20,000 migrants have arrived in the islands this year. More than 5,000 arrived in November alone, compared to 2,698 in all of 2019. The IOM estimates that there have been 41 shipwrecks along the route, but the actual number might be higher (Infomigrant 2020). One shipwreck occurred on 24 October, where it was reported that the engine of a pirogue carrying 200 migrants exploded, causing at least 140 people to drown only hours after setting off from the coastal town of Mbour, Senegal. This year, 511 people are reported to have lost their lives attempting the journey, nearly twice as many as in 2019.

Within recent years, there have also been changes along the CMR route. Until the revolution of 2011, Libya was a primary destination for African labour migration, and it remains so, despite the country's political turmoil and ongoing conflict (IOM 2020). While it has remained a key embarkation point for migrants trying to reach Italy, the numbers of migrants setting out from the Libyan coast have been significantly reduced, not least due to the ongoing conflict's negative impact on migrant's livelihood opportunities and their safety. The EU, and the agreement between Italy and Libya of 2017, extended until 2023, have outsourced the responsibility for search and rescue operations at sea (SARS) to the Libyan coastguard, resulting in an increase in interceptions and the return of migrants

Figure 1.



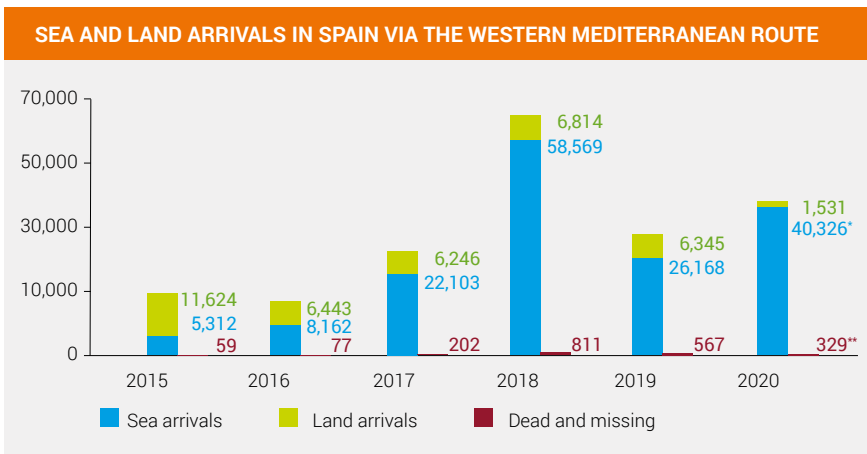
Source UNHCR: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>

attempting to cross borders. The detained migrants often end up in inhumane and overcrowded conditions. Severe human rights violations, such as torture, death, exploitive and forced labour, and sexual violence, have become everyday experiences for transit migrants in Libya. Government officials, the security forces and militia groups have all been found to be responsible for the abuses. Migrants have therefore increasingly set out from the Tunisian coast: whereas 91 per cent of all sea arrivals in Italy came from Libya in 2017, in 2020 Tunisia has accounted for 47 per cent of arrivals in Italy so far (MMC 2020a). Though the absolute numbers of migrants who are recorded as having died along the two routes have reduced, the dangers have increased. In 2019, 1 in 33 of all the migrants that were accounted for died attempting to cross the CMR route, as opposed to 1 in 51 in 2017 (ibid.). However, the exact scale of the deaths along these routes is unknown, as most deaths are believed to go unrecorded (UNHCR 2020).

DANGERS EN ROUTE

The risks and dangers of travelling along long overland routes have been widely documented (UNHCR 2020, MMC 2020b, 2019b, BRC 2018). Crossing the harsh Sahelian desert, and the risks of extortion, kidnapping, physical and sexual violence, forced returns and detentions, and the lack of access to basic needs such as food and health care are part of the migrants' everyday challenges.

Figure 2.



Source: UNHCR: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5226>

* Incl. the Canary Islands

** Excl. the Canary Islands

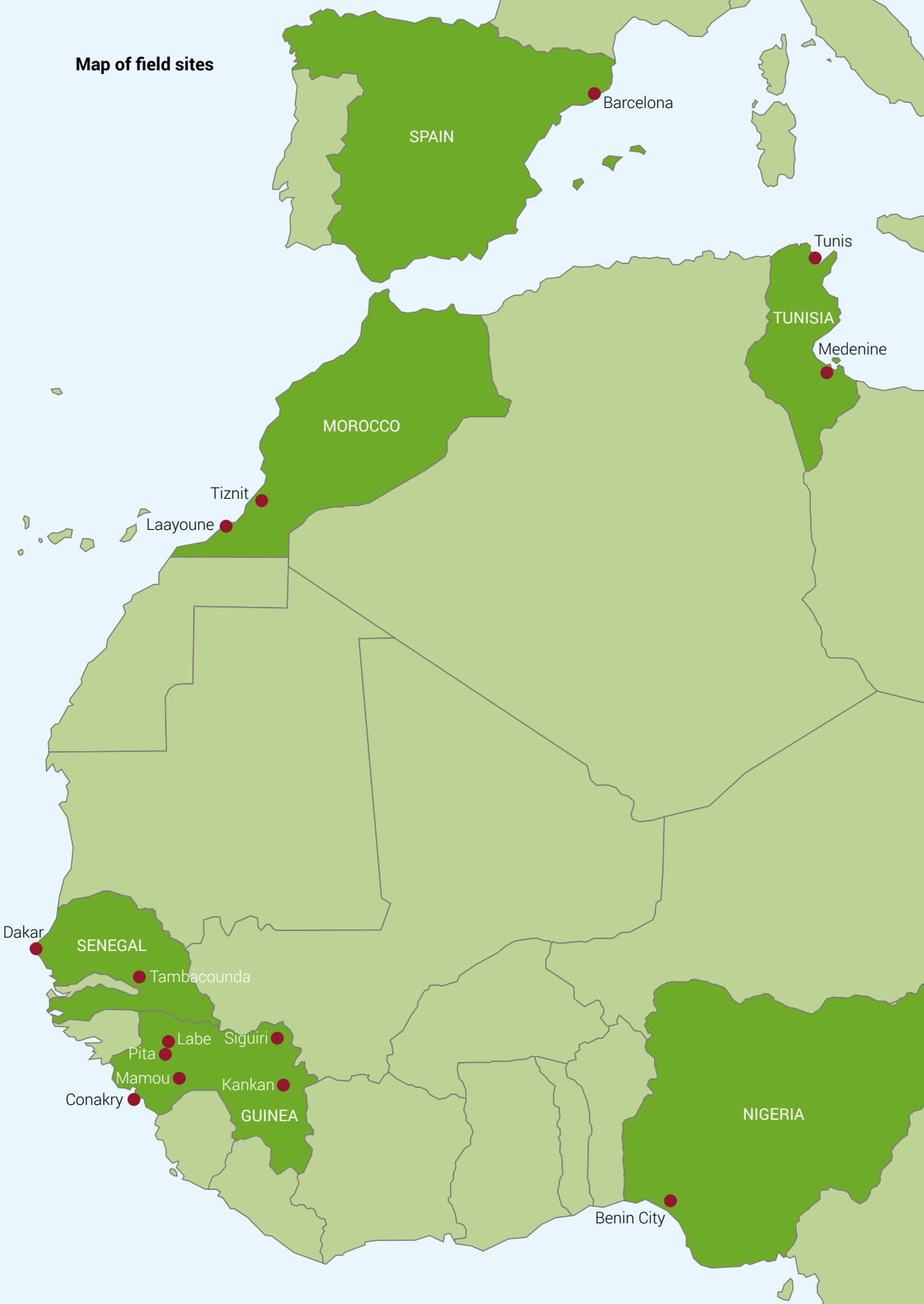
A contributing factor behind the increase in dangers along sea and overland routes to Europe is the EU's border-control initiatives and externalisation policies in so-called third countries like Niger and Libya, as well as bilateral agreements between Spain and Morocco and between Italy and both Libya and Tunisia. Relying on African governments, these efforts aim to stop and detain irregular migrants long before they reach European shores. Since 2015 they have been effective in reducing the numbers of migrants reaching Europe, but they have not had much impact on reducing the instability and human suffering associated with these movements (Andersson and Keen 2019). In many instances, they have spurred a negative development in which migrants' movements and the facilitation of mobility have become securitised and criminalised. Both authorities and security forces have come to pose a risk to migrants because of their often brutal efforts to detain and deport African migrants (*ibid.*, UNHCR 2020). This development is also reflected in legislation: all states along the CMR route have adopted laws to penalise migrants in irregular situations such as migrant smuggling and human trafficking. Algeria, for example, has for many years expelled Sub-Saharan and Nigerien migrants from its territory. The Algerian authorities round up migrants and asylum-seekers, detain them in camps and later drive them to the border, where they are forced to walk through the desert until they can cross into Niger, Mali or Tunisia. In addition, migrants caught in the attempt to cross to Europe by sea risk a six-month prison sentence in the country (MMC 2020a). A similar development is seen in Niger which has become a key site of European anti-migration and counter-terrorism interventions, the number of migrants entering Niger en route to Europe has decreased, not least due to the country's enforcement of Law 2015–36 punishing the smuggling and trafficking of migrants (IOM 2020).

The increasing precariousness of migrating along these routes outlined above has also spurred a range of humanitarian and often route-based initiatives. From a critical perspective, such humanitarian interventions risk accompanying rather than counteracting the increasing securitisation of and battles against unwanted African migration that inflict great suffering in the borderlands (Andersson 2020). As such, the increasing criminalisation of irregular migration poses a delicate balancing act for humanitarians, who on one hand want to assist and rescue struggling migrants, but on the other hand cannot risk being suspected or charged with facilitating illegal migration. Furthermore, humanitarians risk endangering their access to aid delivery in the field if they raise concerns about local authorities' harsh and violent treatment of migrants too loudly (Gazzotti et al. 2020).

THE REPORT

Knowing the diverse and gendered experiences of West African migrants en route and how they select, access and use information when setting out on often dangerous journeys to North Africa and Europe is essential to the humanitarian organisations that provide aid and assistance along these routes. Therefore the purpose of the present study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of these issues. The report is structured as follows. After introducing the methodology and describing the data collected in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 summarises what is already known or assumed about African migrants' use of information sources and technology, including information campaigns. The following four chapters then present the empirical findings of the study. Chapter 4 examines the information that migrants rely on when planning their journeys and while travelling en route. While social networks play a pivotal role for migrants' knowledge and risk awareness, important information gaps persist. Chapter 5 identifies the everyday gendered vulnerabilities that migrants are confronted with en route and the effects of Covid-19. Human smugglers and traffickers are generally portrayed as the main actors responsible for the abuse that migrants are subjected to during their journeys, but as Chapter 6 shows, other actors contribute substantially to migrants' vulnerability. Chapter 7 then delves further into migrants' encounters with humanitarian actors and identifies some of the barriers many of them face in accessing the services provided. Based on what the migrants themselves have to say about the humanitarian assistance they need, Chapter 8 lists migrants' concrete pieces of advice to humanitarians who are present in the field. A summary of the main findings concludes the report.

Map of field sites



METHODOLOGY

The report builds on 71 qualitative interviews with West African migrants, 45 men and 26 women.⁴ They were interviewed at different points along their journeys or conducted after their return in six countries: Guinea Conakry, Nigeria, Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia and Spain during two research phases.

The first phase drew on two ongoing DIIS research projects: *Borderwork: Migrants, Brokers and European Border Governance in West Africa*, focusing on irregular migration and the role of European-driven information campaigns in Senegal; and *Women on the Move*, focusing on the mobility of Nigerian female migrants, some of whom were involved in human trafficking themselves. Twenty-two qualitative interviews conducted in 2019 and 2020 with male and female return migrants in Nigeria and Senegal provided information on migrant experiences en route, complemented by insights from five focus-group interviews. In Benin City, Nigeria, interviews were made with eleven female return migrants and three focus groups were conducted. Similarly, in Senegal, in the cities of Dakar and Tambacounda, eleven male return migrants were interviewed and one focus group was conducted with recently arrived return migrants. Most of the return migrants we interviewed had been detained or stuck along the route and had subsequently returned under one of the IOM's assisted voluntary return programmes that bring stranded migrants back to their home communities from transit and/or destination countries like Libya, Niger and Morocco.

In the second phase, in-depth qualitative interviews were collected specifically for this report. Original fieldwork plans and research methods were adapted to the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In Guinea Conakry, with the assistance of Guinean Red Cross regional focal points and Danish Red Cross Migration Program Delegate Brian Brady of the Action for Migrants: Route-based Assistance project (AMiRA), in August 2020, 24 qualitative interviews with return migrants were conducted in six different areas: Conakry, Labe, Pita, Mamou, Kankan and Siguiri. Ten interviews in Tunisia (Tunis and Medenine) and another ten in Morocco (Laayoune and Tiznit), were conducted by on-site research assistants. Five interviews with recently arrived migrants were done over the phone and through video conferencing in Spain, often with poor connections. The interviews during the second phase focused thematically on: 1) migrants' decision-making processes, their pre-departure use of information and trusted key actors; 2) the journey, their use of information and trusted key actors en route; 3) migrants' experiences of abuse and their own risk-reduction strategies; and finally, 4) research participants' perceptions of humanitarian organisations en route, as well as their perspectives on how to improve assistance for migrants while on the journey. In Morocco and Tunisia, additional questions about how the Covid-19 situation had impacted on the migrants were included.

The interviews were conducted giving careful consideration to the emotional and physical vulnerabilities that migrants are often exposed to. The testimonies used throughout this report have been anonymised. In addition to migrant interviews, the report also draws on stakeholder interviews with Alarme Phone Sahara and Red Cross AMiRA delegates in Niger and Senegal, as well as on recent academic articles and reports, statistics and web-based materials.

SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The migrants who were interviewed were between 19 and 45 years old. Most of them had not completed secondary education, though a few had undergone higher education, including university students who had decided to put their studies on hold to pursue migration. Most were unmarried and did not have steady jobs prior to migration but worked as day labourers to survive and support their families. For the vast majority, it was the first time they had attempted international migration, and they did not have children accompanying them on their journeys except for one female migrant. Their hope was that migration over time could create a better, more stable and safe future life for themselves and their families, as well as giving them access to education and health-care.

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT AFRICAN MIGRANTS' USE OF INFORMATION WHILE EN ROUTE

In this chapter, to inform the research findings of this report, we draw on key findings from recent studies and commissioned research reports on African migrants' use of information, communication channels and social media, as well as on information campaigns. For most West Africans, access to legal migration and regular work opportunities in North Africa and Europe is rarely within reach, despite their desire for mobility. As migration controls are intensified, the journeys of irregular migrants become longer and more precarious. They should therefore be understood as involving a stepwise and adaptable process rather than a linear trajectory from A to B (Schapendonk and Steel 2014, Collyer 2007). In moving through these volatile borderlands, migrants are highly dependent on their social networks of family and peers in their home communities and the diaspora, as well as other migrants they meet en route. Social networks play an important role for travelling migrants not only by providing economic support, but also by imparting trusted information about how and where to go and job opportunities along the way (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016). Gender also shapes migrants' networks: male migrant networks tend to be larger and more diffused, whereas women's networks tend to be smaller and more tightly linked to close family members. Moreover, women tend to move to destinations where they have ties to their social networks (Cummings et al. 2015).

When seeking trusted information and advice about border crossings, the costs of a journey or how to contact smugglers along the route, migrants largely rely on and discuss critical events, opportunities and the potential risks and dangers with people in the diaspora or other peers they meet in transit (Wissink et al. 2020, EU COM 2017, Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016). For information to be trusted and acted upon, it needs to come from trusted sources, especially from people with

whom one already has a trusted relationship. But migrants also place trust in those who are in the same situation as themselves and in those they have only recently met who can help them overcome the obstacles to onward mobility or livelihood opportunities (Wissink et al. 2020, Suter 2012). Recent studies also stress that migrants' networks in the course of migration are not stable. They can change over time and play shifting roles in facilitating onward movement as well as in discouraging and preventing it, depending on migrants' evaluations of the opportunities and the resources available within their network (Wissink et al. 2020).

In general, people tend to have more trust in fellow nationals with successful migration experiences than in international organisations and governments (EU COM 2017, 2018). However, that does not mean that their most trusted sources necessarily have a complete overview or accurate and up to date information about the many difficulties that migrants will face en route or about ways of accessing the labour market on the way or upon arrival at their destination. Two recent commissioned research reports stress that migrants often leave their countries of origin with a minimum of concrete information about the journey ahead of them or life in Europe and are therefore not well prepared for the challenges that they will inevitably encounter (ibid.). Along the way, migrants often find that their networks have not provided them with accurate information, despite having been told about the risks and dangers. Many migrants therefore find the overall migration experience very different from what they originally envisaged, leading to the perception that false promises have been made about both the realities en route and life in Europe (ibid.). The lack of concrete and up to date information not only results in disappointment, potentially it can lead migrants into vulnerable and abusive situations that prevent them from accessing the assistance they need. Furthermore, migrants' social links with the diaspora often do not have the mechanisms and resources in place to ensure the safety of their family members and friends en route (EU COM 2018: 17). This means that migrants constantly have to come up with and improvise their own harm-reduction strategies, adapting and expanding their social networks to deal with critical events (Wissink et al. 2020).

However, why do migrants tend to rely on successful migration stories and make decisions upon that basis, despite continued disappointing results and awareness about the risks and dangers en route? Cognitive psychology has shown that people's search for trusted information is prone to confirmation bias, meaning that motivated thinking guides how they select and rely on the available information. Confirmation bias refers to a general human tendency to search for information that supports and favours already established beliefs, values, social identities and

belonging while downplaying information that contradicts them (Peters 2020). West African migrants' aspirations to migrate are furthermore shaped by the social context, its history and the cultural imaginaries following decades of regional and extracontinental labour migration and meagre local development opportunities (Carling and Collins 2018, Kleist and Thorsen 2017).

STAYING CONNECTED THROUGH PHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In a context of closed European borders, online connectivity and social media play an important role in facilitating irregular migration (Brekke and Beyer 2018, Frouws et al. 2016).⁵ In this respect, information and communication technologies (ICTs) can strengthen existing ties to family and friends and facilitate access to people on the periphery of social networks who can assist migrants en route or upon arrival (Dekker and Engbersen 2014). Despite overall optimism in the ICTs' role in and potential for increasing the autonomy of migrants and refugees, it is important to emphasise that ways of accessing ICTs and the ability to use them vary both within and between groups of migrants (Zijlstra and van Liempt 2017).

For travelling West African migrants, phone calls are a common means of staying connected with social networks, but migrants also rely on information shared by word of mouth (Internews 2018a). Along the route, not everyone travels with a phone or has access to the internet, nor do all travelling migrants have the literacy required to use the internet and social media (Frouws et al. 2016, 2019, Internews 2018a, 2018b). For those who have access, social media are primarily used as a cheaper way to facilitate private communications through calls, voice and text messages, and not to search for migration information on the internet. WhatsApp and Facebook are the most popular platforms and are seen as inexpensive ways of staying connected (*ibid.*, EU COM 2017).

Social media, like telephone calls, also become more important in transit as migrants try to reach other migrants and people in the diaspora to seek advice and access the resources they need. Within migrants' networks, messages passing on the latest news en route – for example, about possible border crossing sites and the situation in North Africa and Europe – are widely shared. Facebook may sometimes be used to expand migrants' networks and to connect with and seek advice from people in the diaspora with whom they only have weak former ties. Occasionally, dating sites are also used to look for new friends and potential partners in Europe (EU COM 2018).

SMUGGLERS AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Smugglers are another important source of information for migrants, and they often play an important role in shaping migration trajectories. Most West African migrants rely on a so-called passeur or 'guide', a term used for a variety of actors involved in the business of facilitating and guiding migrants' mobility at some point in their journeys (MMC 2019a). Migrants see them as professional smugglers or travel agents (Alpes 2017b). Contact with smugglers is often made through personal interactions, intermediaries or direct calls and text messaging, and does not appear in open or public social media-based conversations. It is often friends or acquaintances of the smuggler who direct the migrants to the smuggler, social media only playing a minor role in the latter's communication with migrants (Frouws and Brenner 2019).

Some migrants do not need a smuggler until they reach Agadez, but nevertheless they often prefer to use one to avoid the many checkpoints where the risks of having to pay bribes and of being detained by the local authorities are perceived to be high. Yet, movement within the ECOWAS region is less dependent on smugglers compared to other routes (Frouws and Brenner 2019, MMI 2019a). In general, West African migrants seek information from smugglers who can connect them with people along the journey to facilitate their movement.

Generally, West African migrants trust smugglers and see them as key agents in facilitating their onward travel and border crossings. Migrants are not naïve when they trust smugglers with their travel plans and money, but regard them as important gatekeepers facilitating their migration and bringing them closer to realising their individual dreams. When they fail to facilitate migrants' journeys, migrants do not necessarily consider it to be the smugglers' fault, but rather see smuggling as an aspect of what is a risky travel project (Alpes 2017a, 2017b). That said, migrants also associate smugglers with poor treatment. Some migrants have concrete experiences with smugglers who abandoned them en route, are violent, abuse them physically and sexually, and deceive them (MMC 2019b, MMC 2018).

Smugglers do not seem to encourage migration, not when it comes to the initial decision-making process, nor when choosing destinations (MMI 2019a, EU COM 2018). Nor do they seem to provide much information about European protection and human rights. African migrants may not begin the journey with a specific idea about a preferred destination or a clear expectation of what to find there. According to the already mentioned commissioned research report, the vast majority of

migrants from Mali, Senegal and Nigeria who cross to Europe from Libya have only limited knowledge of Europe and had no clear final destination in mind when they started their journeys. Only upon initial contact with humanitarians in Europe do they encounter narratives about protection, asylum, trafficking and human rights issues, as well as immigration relief. This points to less dependence on smugglers, other migrants or diaspora members for the circulation of such information that reports often assume take place (EU COM 2018). Instead, research shows that ideas about where to go often evolve en route (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016). Apart from transportation, smugglers offer a range of other services, like housing, food and water, as well as connectivity in the form of access to phone calls, credit and the internet (MMC 2019a).

Though information from migrant networks and smugglers is important in underpinning migrant mobility, recent studies of African migration suggest that factors ranging from increasing insecurity, precarious living conditions, the economic crisis to a lack of access to legal documents and jobs, as well as debt and, more recently, the effects of Covid-19, are important drivers of onward movement, as well as of return (Wissink et al. 2020, Kleist 2020, Brekke and Beyer 2018). The increasingly complex, deteriorating and violent situation in North Africa explains why people who would otherwise have stayed and tried to make a living see no other option than to continue their journeys to the EU (EU COM 2018).

INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

Some of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, launched by European and African partners at the Valletta Summit on Migration in November 2015, is directed at informing local communities and potential migrants about the risks and dangers of irregular migration, including migrant smuggling and trafficking. To date, more than 1,800,000 potential migrants in West Africa have been informed by Trust Fund campaigns.⁶ Information campaigns aimed at discouraging Africans from migrating have become a popular tool of migration policy. As already mentioned, especially in the wake of the 2015 'refugee crisis', European countries are investing in information campaigns aimed at reducing migration aspirations, both among potential migrants and migrants already on the move. European governments such as the Norwegian and Danish governments have used negative nation-branding strategies to deter migration by communicating information about strict migration and asylum laws directed at potential migrants and asylum-seekers through newspaper ads and on Facebook (Gammeltoft 2017, Brekke and Thorbjørnsrud 2018, Beyer et al. 2017).

USEFUL ADDRESSES

WEBSITE : ALARMEPHONESAHARA.INFO <http://www.facebook.com/AlarmePHONESahara/>

Mali :

ADEM (Association pour la Défense des Emigrants Maliens) Bamako-Mali
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e-mail : traoreidory@yahoo.fr

AEI (Afrique Europe Interact)

Bamako-Djélibougou
Tél : (00223) 20 80 03 23 / 78 88 25 80
www.africain-europe-interact.net

ARACEM (Association des Refoulés de Afrique Centrale au Mali) Bamako-Mali

Tél : (00223) 78 55 65 23 / 75 09 99 63
<http://www.aracem.org>

AME (Association Malienne des Expulsés) Bamako

Tél : (00223) 66 78 21 11
www.expulseeumaliens.info

Niger

APS (Alarme Phone Sahara)

Agadez
e-mail : chehouaziou@gmail.com
Tél : (00227) 80 29 68 26 / 85 75 26 76

Morocco

Association Internationale des Migrants
Alarme Phone Sahara - Oujda
Tel-Watsap : (00212) 651179463 / 651418994
Email : ammar_hassane1@yahoo.fr

Algeria / Oran

SNAPAP (Syndicat national autonome des personnels de l'administration publique)
Tél : (00213) 771 53 53 23
found : hassane1@hotmail.fr

Algeria / Telemcen

LADHD (Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme)
Tél : (00213) 771 33 03 05
Email : cberiah@gmail.com

Togo :

ATE (Association Togolaise des Expulsés)

Sakodé
e-mail : atesoko@live.fr
Tél : (00228) 90383487 / 93 954565

Burkina Faso

ARSIMWorld (Association de Recherche de Solutions et d'Information pour les Migrations dans le Monde) Ouagadougou
e-mail : cuslenango.roufou@yahoo.fr
Tél : (00226) 70 36 61 51

In case of distress on the Mediterranean Sea :

Alarmphone Mediterranean

(Watch The Med Alarmphone)

Site web : www.alarmphone.org

Facebook : [watchthemed.alarmphone](https://www.facebook.com/watchthemed.alarmphone)

Tél : 00334 86 51 71 61

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8

Advice to migrants when crossing the desert

We hope that this information will be useful to you, but you should already know that despite everything, your crossing will be hard and dangerous !



RISKS, RIGHTS AND SECURITY IN THE DESERT

Do you really want to cross the desert ?
Be aware of the risk and danger you are facing. People regularly die on this crossing due to thirst, heat, breakdowns and abandonment in the desert. The actual figures are unknown. But the bodies of migrants are frequently found in the desert.



« Everyone has the right to freedom of movement..., to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. »



When people migrate, they do so for different reasons that push them into exile. Since 1995, the Schengen visa has been required for access to the territories of the European Union. Due to the difficulty of accessing visas to reach European territory - and despite the dangers that threaten their lives - many people decide to cross land borders in an unregulated way. They are nevertheless entitled to it since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantees in its article 13 that :
« Everyone has the right to move freely (...), to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country ».

2

DIFFICULTIES UNTIL THE GATE OF THE SAHARA

✓ If you decide to leave anyway, you must inform your loved ones of your departure (time of departure and arrival, telephone number) to alert the emergency services if you do not give any sign of life.
→ Take information from different sources before putting yourself in the hands of

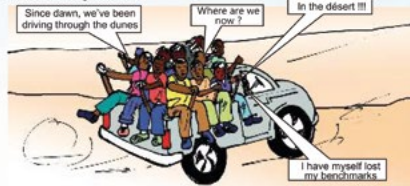
smugglers or intermediaries to reduce the risk of falling into the wrong hands. Possible sources of information to consult : humanitarian and human rights organisations of former smugglers, former drivers etc.



3

THE RISKS OF DESERT CROSSING

On regular tours, the journey in the desert did not last very long. Now, as regular roads are blocked due to repression and criminalization of smuggling by the authorities, all journeys have become long and difficult.



As in the practice of any profession, there are people of good faith and people of bad faith in the migrant transport sector. So there is the possibility of running into networks of mafia traffickers throughout the chain. Whether it's intermediaries, drivers, or smugglers. This puts you at risk of destitution, violence, rape or abandonment in the desert. Before criminalization, the transport of migrants in the Sahara of West Africa was mainly managed by people who were known and who knew each other. There was therefore a solidarity between smugglers and drivers who

provided mutual assistance and relief. The criminalization has encouraged strangers to get into the business and has increased the risk of running into the wrong people. In addition, fear of criminalization can lead to irresponsible reactions from drivers.



4

DRIVERS AND MIGRANTS IN THE DESERT

- ✓ Border crossing officers often racketeer, mistreat and abuse migrants and take large sums of money to cross
- ✓ During the transport, you will be trapped in a small space, in the heat of the desert, in extreme conditions, with many people of different origins. This situation produces enormous stress and can create conflict and violence between migrants themselves and sometimes between migrants and the driver.
- ✓ Some drivers abandon migrants in the desert to escape persecution by defence and security forces.
- ✓ Unexperienced drivers use new, remote and very dangerous roads to avoid checkpoints. This carries the risk of death: in the event of mechanical breakdown, misplacement or lack of fuel, you will be lost with little chance of being found alive.
- ✓ Some drivers strip migrants of their belongings, mistreat them and rape women.
- ✓ Often robbers or armed militias arrest migrants and strip them of everything (money, telephones, valuables, food and water). Sometimes there is even rape and murder.



Agadez-Libyan border
Before : 2-4 days - Now : at least one week
Agadez-Algerian border
Before : 1 day - Now : 2 or more days
Gao - Algerian border
Before : 2 days - Now : 5 days or more

5

SPECIFIC CASE OF NIGER :



PROTECTION MEASURES

- ✓ Train for the extreme conditions of the desert. Before leaving, get used to drinking only small amounts of water during the day!
- ✓ Ensure that your driver has a working satellite phone.
- ✓ Check that the driver has enough fuel, spare tires and spare parts (spark plugs, etc.).
- ✓ Bring water, food, gas or charcoal, medicines, hygiene products, clothes and a piece of white cloth in case of distress.
- ✓ Seek to maintain respect and discipline towards the driver and the other passengers to avoid stress and conflict between you.

BEHAVIOUR IN CASE OF BREAKDOWN OR ABANDONMENT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT

- ✓ Place a piece of white cloth as a clearly visible flag to indicate that you are in distress.
- ✓ If possible, locate your precise position using a GPS!
- ✓ In general and especially in the Agadez region : Call the number of Alarm phone Sahara with a satellite phone : (00227) 80 29 68 26 ou 85 75 26 76



6

AVOID PANIC REACTIONS !

- ✓ Don't let yourself get carried away by fear!
- ✓ Always keep hope alive.
- ✓ Never walk alone in the desert unless

you have safe landmarks ! Stay where you are to save energy and to improve the chance of being found and saved.



THE ESSENTIAL THINGS TO BRING WITH YOU IN YOUR LUGGAGE :

- **Food** : Gari (1 scoop), cookies (5 packs), sardines (5 or 15 cans), 10 baguettes per person
- **Water** : reassure that there are at least 3 50-litre water cans in the vehicle and a small 2-litre can for each one
- **Essential medicines** (paracetamol, quinine, products against diarrhoea, etc.)
- **Clothing** : sweaters, blankets, glasses to protect the eyes, light, thin and loose clothing to protect from the heat.
- **A white fabric** that is clearly visible

to show you are in case of distress.

- **Hygiene products** : tooth brushes and massage balms, sanitary towels or tampons.



GOOD LUCK AND MAY GOD PROTECT YOU !

7

Information campaigns are not a new policy tool. Over the past two decades, they have been used for both anti-trafficking campaigns and more general migration-awareness campaigns (Nieuwenhuys and Pécoud 2007, Pécoud 2010, Carling and Hernández-Carretero 2011). In Nigeria, for example, the government and international donors have funded locally televised anti-trafficking warnings and billboards for many years, warning potential women migrants in Benin City about the dangers of being 'lured into human trafficking' (Plambech 2014). Throughout Africa, European funded campaigns, often implemented by the IOM in collaboration with local NGOs, popular local artists and theatre groups, and increasingly by return migrants, have communicated the many dangers and obstacles facing irregular migrants trying to reach Europe.⁷

More recently, governments and international humanitarian organisations have also started targeting refugees and migrants through web-based campaigns that strategically use social media platforms. An example of this is the Italian-funded website *Aware Migrants*, which, through migrant testimonies, highlights the dangers en route and the difficulties of life once in Italy, or the recent Dutch-funded *Migrants as Messenger* campaigns that have been rolled out in seven West African countries (Brekke and Thorbjørnsrud 2018). Such campaigns generally aim at raising awareness of the dangers involved in irregular journeys, the difficulties of living undocumented lives in the transit and destination countries, the benefits of staying home and not migrating, the implications of stricter migration policies in destination countries, and also – but only rarely – advice about migrants' human rights and safe migration. As such, the campaigns cover a wide spectrum of fields, from the humanitarian interest in decreasing vulnerabilities and saving lives to the political interest in deterring migration (Schans and Optekamp 2016).

However, research stresses the likelihood of the campaigns having little effect, especially if they build on the assumption that potential migrants are ignorant about the dangers that they may encounter, or because they ignore the risks related to staying put when faced by pressure to migrate from family, kin and socio-economic circumstances (ibid., Sørensen and Alpes 2015). This does not mean that the migrants do not need information: migrants in Gao, Mali, and Agadez, Niger, stated that they needed better information on the security situation and risks in the region, as well as where to find humanitarian aid and means of subsistence (such as financial support, water, food and medical aid), but also practical information on the logistics of their journey, such as travelling and crossing borders safely (Internews 2018a, 2018b). Such information would make the migrants less vulnerable and capable of making safer decisions on whether to retreat, stay put or move on.

In fact, once in Agadez, migrants found a lack of information from humanitarian organisations, local communities and local authorities regarding these matters. Moreover, they had little trust in the latter, did not know who the authorities were or, when they did, were afraid of them. More generally, migrants are often critical of campaigns launched by actors with vested interests, such as European countries with tough stands on irregular migration. This, in combination with the lack of existing legal channels to achieve mobility or other alternatives to migration, jeopardises the campaign's trustworthiness in their eyes (Schans and Optekamp 2016, Sørensen and Alpes 2015).

While some actors earn money from migrants' movements, others try to persuade them to stay home, rather than prioritising life-saving information. This does not mean that migrants have access to reliable information all the time, but rather that they take calculated risks depending on the information available to them, evaluating the risks involved in not moving or returning and their available social and economic resources. Nevertheless, it is often precarious and sometimes violent circumstances rather than deliberate calculations that push them to move.

Assistance humanitaire aux personnes migrantes
Humanitarian Assistance to Migrants

CROIX-ROUGE BURKINABE

I am a migrant, I have rights too! I have the right to medical and psychological assistance. I also have the right to communicate with my family. If necessary, I can contact the Red Cross or Red Crescent wherever I am!

Vous êtes une personne migrante et vous avez besoin d'une assistance...
Contactez la Croix-Rouge ou le Croissant-Rouge partout où vous vous trouvez pour de plus amples informations.

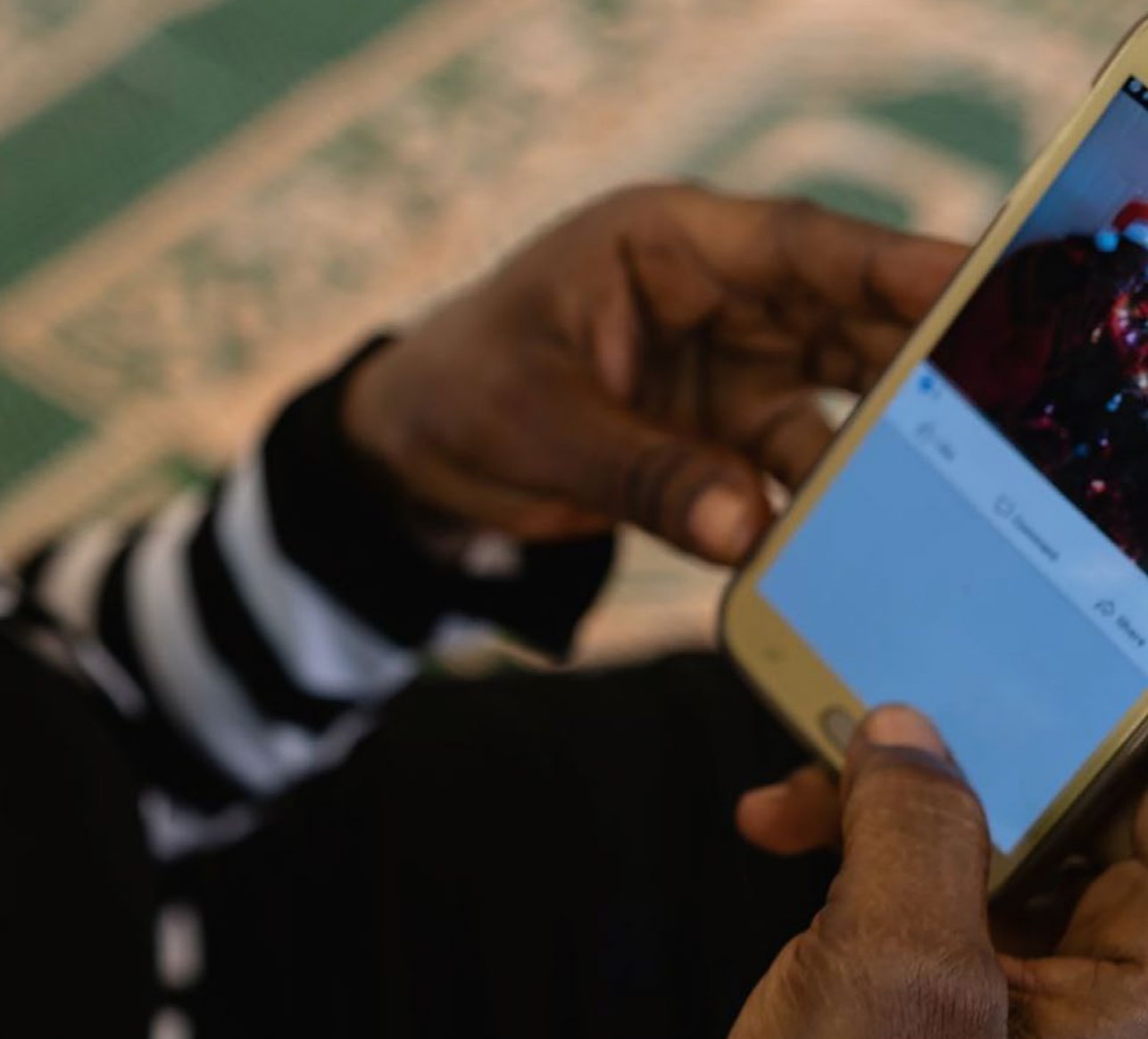
Le Croix-Rouge et le Croissant-Rouge s'efforcent, en toute impartialité et neutralité, d'apporter une assistance humanitaire aux migrants en plus vulnérables quel que soit leur statut.
The Red Cross and Red Crescent strive impartially and neutrally to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable migrants regardless of their status.

Ouagadougou : (+226) 54 62 00 09 / 54 62 00 15	Siège national de la Croix-Rouge Burkinabé à Ouagadougou : (+226) 23 36 13 40
Bobo-Dioulasso : (+226) 54 62 00 10 / 54 62 00 16	
Tenkodogo : (+226) 54 62 00 11 / 54 62 00 17	
Fada : (+226) 54 62 00 13 / 54 62 00 18	Pour toute suggestion ou plainte : (+226) 53 27 38 33
Dori : (+226) 54 62 00 12 / 54 62 00 19	


Information leaflet for migrants made by Burkinabé Red Cross.



MIGRANTS USE INFORMATION THEY TRUST



Most migrants included in the study decided to leave due to unstable economic conditions, poor job opportunities and disillusionment with future livelihood possibilities at home. Conflict and political instability were also pivotal forces behind the decision to migrate. Some took inspiration from peers and relatives already abroad, while pressure and high expectations on the part of the family were the main drivers for some young men migrating. Yet others wished for greater independence from their family or migrated to generate the resources needed for a future marriage.



An apparent lack of preparation is often related to situations of personal or socio-political emergency that require immediate departure.

Most migrants prepare and plan their travel in various ways, both financially and logistically. They may draw on personal savings collected through work or the sale of personal and family properties, economic contributions from family members or money borrowed from acquaintances to start the journey. This points to the fact that planning and preparation often engage more people than the individual migrants. Migrant women from Nigeria commonly rely on debt-bonded migration offered by the Madams, women who organise their journeys, being already in Europe, but they may also rely on family contributions. Information about the journey ahead is seen as a crucial part of the planning, especially when trying to identify the safest and fastest routes and where to find the most effective and/or trustworthy smugglers. To access this information, people use their social networks to connect with friends or family members with knowledge or experience of migration, both within their local communities and beyond. In the words of one male migrant:

‘ I had a destination and I relied on the geographical map to plot my route. I did research and met people who returned to the country after an attempted migration and consulted those settling in different countries that I was going to cross for information on crossing borders and exchanging money. ’

(M, 30, Ivory Coast)

Information about the risk and dangers, the challenges of border crossings, the locations of checkpoints and more practical obstacles (such as the struggles encountered when crossing the desert) are seen as important and therefore much sought-after information. But knowing where to find work en route is also crucial, especially for migrants with limited financial resources. While some migrants spend months and years preparing and saving money for the journey, others leave with little or no preparation before their departure. However, an apparent lack of preparation is often related to situations of personal or socio-political emergency that require immediate departure. This was the case for a young man from Guinea, who is now in Spain:

‘ I did not plan anything like “I am going to Algeria and then Europe”. No. I was running away, and I passed to Mali, and when I arrived in Mali, I asked for a visa to go to Algeria for work because they told me there is work. I stayed there for six months. In August, it was very hot. The police were constantly trying to detain and deport clandestine migrants. Then, I crossed to Morocco and was in the desert for five days. In Morocco, somebody helped me with money to cross, but I stayed there for ten months and had to beg. ’

(M, 20, Guinea)

Migrants are aware that information, the right preparations and economic resources alone cannot ensure a safe and fast journey: luck and courage also play a vital role when embarking on a risky and potentially dangerous endeavour. In addition to luck and courage, several migrants emphasise the importance of faith when trying to avoid or overcome challenges along the route and when pursuing one’s goals further afield:

‘ It is just luck. I knew it was going to be dangerous, because in Mali, there are many robbers, Tuaregs, who mistreat people. I already knew it and God helped me not to meet with them. I cannot say to someone to come or not to come. If you decide you are coming, I wish you luck. And have courage and strength. It is not just money: even if you have a lot, you can get robbed. ’

(M, 26, Guinea Bissau)

While a few of the migrants included in the study managed to travel by air to North Africa, the vast majority had to embark on long overland journeys. A few said that they had initially tried to get a visa to Europe but had given up on the idea due to the high cost and difficult administrative requirements. Most said that they wanted to go to Europe, with Italy, France and Germany as particularly favoured destinations, but North African countries were also considered good options for labour migration. People's ideas about possible destinations are often not fixed but adapt to how their journeys evolve. Some only decided to cross the sea to Europe after working and residing in North Africa, while others had to return home after precarious experiences in Algeria, Morocco or Libya. From the outset, they tried to find information on how to avoid armed groups, border controls, detention and deportation. Our data indicate a slight gender difference, with women expressing more interest in the safety of the travel, while male migrants tend to look for the fastest and cheapest ways to travel. This difference is reflected in their identification of trustworthy smugglers, prices and their strategies for avoiding the security forces and detention.

The migrants used local means of transportation when leaving their home cities but came to rely more on smugglers to take them on from Niger towards Libya, or when trying to enter Algeria and Morocco, as well as later, when attempting to cross to Europe overland to the Spanish enclaves or by sea from Libya to Italy or from Morocco to Spain. In Senegal, the Wolof term *dem reek* ('going straight') is often used by migrants to describe their ideal trajectory, where they can move as fast as possible without being stopped by the police and border guards, but also without being delayed by interventions from humanitarian actors. Similarly, Nigerian female returnees connect the idea of a safe journey with going straight and fast through the desert. On average, the migrants in this study have spent two years en route, although the lengths of the journeys vary from one to two days to fifteen years. In other words, in practice their journeys are far from fast and linear. This also indicates that initial plans change over time according to the experiences they have en route. Many migrants therefore describe how it makes more sense for them to plan along the way and readapt their original plans to the conditions and new alliances with migrants and smugglers they encounter as they move.

TRUST IS KEY WHEN SOCIAL NETWORKS FACILITATE INFORMATION ABOUT MIGRATION

Migrants not only rely on close or extended social networks when planning their journeys. Both prior to departure and while travelling, such networks remain key sources of information that the migrants trust. Social networks may consist of friends, family and neighbours, or extended networks located in the country or abroad (whether in Europe or North Africa). The important thing is that the members of one's networks have migration experience or possess particular knowledge about migration. Knowing a source personally or having it recommended by someone within one's network creates the basis for establishing trust in the information shared. Information-gathering is often a collective endeavour, especially in areas with a long history of migration, where the stories and networks of previous migrants can be revisited and reactivated. These networks of family and kin seem to remain a reliable source of information throughout the journey, but the network also expands en route. The following quote is telling:

‘ I always talked to people who were passing by and people who were already in Morocco, and I would always listen to people's stories, because many of us end up getting to know each other. And we ask people who are leaving to another city, and they also know many people who have already crossed. ’

(M, 26, Guinea Bissau)

Trust is crucial when planning the journey, as it can affect the migrant's safety. Deciding which information is reliable determines not only the way migrants travel, but also how and with whom they decide to go and interact. While language, ethnicity and, to a lesser degree, religion may be important in the initial phases of building trust en route, the act of sharing the same experience, information and resources is also stressed as highly important. This is not to suggest that migrants immediately generate trust with fellow migrants: some migrants clearly state that you must not trust anybody, but nevertheless they have to rely on information shared by others they meet en route. Relying on certain pieces of information rather than on others does not necessarily mean having a relationship of trust. Fellow migrants are often mentioned as trusted because they are or have been in the same

situation and do not have any interest in lying. Furthermore, smugglers remain the most trusted sources, despite also being considered biased and self-interested. The vast majority of migrants use several smugglers for particular parts of their journey:

‘ You need a broker to do the trip, but they also give you a lot of false information. In the beginning, they tell you that in Libya, once you reach there, you are almost there – and for me that was when all my problems started. When I left Senegal, I did not know any migration broker, but I left anyway, confident that I will see people on the way who will have contacts. On the route, I met a Senegalese man, and he had contacts. And in Agadez, we joined a Gambian broker. I left alone, but I met many people in the bus or at the bus station. I did not talk a lot during the trip, but I listened a lot. ’

(M, 33, Senegal)

The migrants also state that they are aware that smugglers can lie for personal gain or may collaborate with the authorities or armed groups that extort from migrants or kidnap them for ransom (especially in Libya and Niger). Yet, they still depend on them and see them as reliable sources due to their supposed expertise, the financial aspect of their relationships with them, their reputations and/or the recommendations from their extended networks.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION EN ROUTE

Most of the migrants started their journeys with a smartphone or mobile phone, while those who could not afford one or lost it en route managed to stay in contact with their family and networks by borrowing a phone from friends or accessing cybercafés. Phone calls and applications like WhatsApp and Messenger are indicated as the primary method of communication with migrants’ extended networks of family, friends and travel facilitators. Other than a tool for connection, phones are also used to gather real-time practical information in a fast-changing environment, especially regarding border crossings. As one young man explains:

‘ There are too many police checkpoints. If you do not have the information about what is going on there, you will not cross easily. ’

(M, 20, Mali)

The interviewees have different levels of ‘technological literacy’ when it comes to accessing online migration information. While many are proficient users, others mainly use the phone for personal communications. In Morocco, online media platforms are considered especially crucial and migrants seem particularly internet savvy, using a variety of online channels to organise, communicate and share information: YouTube is used to assess the situation at borders and to decide when to attack the fence or cross by boat, whereas Facebook groups are used to seek information about border crossings, networks for jobs and finding rental opportunities. Many of the informants in Morocco had the financial and technical resources to book plane tickets. Contrary to the Moroccan experience, social media apps are rarely used for migration-planning purposes by female Nigerian migrants. Although most agreed that the phone facilitates information-sharing and travel en route, and at times even generates a sense of safety, mobile devices are also lost, stolen or taken away. In addition, connection problems are extremely common along the route (in particular in the desert), as is finding somewhere to recharge one’s phone. Finally, phones may be used for purposes of extortion. Several Nigerian women and Senegalese migrants mention that, while in Libya, they were forced to make phone calls to their relatives and close relatives to get the ransom to free them from captivity or pay their travel debts.

INFORMATION GAPS AND RISK-AWARENESS

‘ Before I left, I knew about the violence of law enforcement and border guards, being hungry and thirsty in the heat of the desert without finding anything to eat, the violence of smugglers, the arrests of border forces. ’


(M, 29, Burkina Faso)

Altogether, migrants often display comprehensive knowledge of the logistics and risks of their travel, whether acquired before their departure or from sources en route. Gaps in knowledge nevertheless exist in other areas.

This is especially the case regarding the presence of detention centres in Algeria, migrants’ rights en route, details about armed groups and their modus operandi, and the harsh conditions for migrants in camp sites like the Nador forest in Morocco, where migrants live, wait and prepare to attempt to jump the high barbed-wire fence

to cross over into the Spanish enclave of Melilla. However, migrants also express a lack of knowledge about the realities of the sea crossings from Morocco to Spain or from Libya to Italy. Despite being aware of the dangers and risks en route, many state that they did not pay too much attention to the warnings of other migrants and family members: 'When you want to go, you only want to see the road ahead and not all the problems. It is only when you have tasted it yourself that you know how hard the journey is', as one Senegalese interlocutor, aged 28, stated, underscoring the existence of a confirmation bias, as well as the differences between knowledge gained from other people and personal experience.

When comparing the different country cases included in this study, no specific discernible geographical or online locations stand out as key information hubs. Respondents generally stress that their sources of information were 'all around them'. Makeshift camps, border areas and transportation hubs are often mentioned as particular places to find people with information, because they constitute key transportation hubs for migrants travelling along different routes. Other secondary information hubs mentioned are refugee camps, mosques, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and churches.



Altogether, migrants often display comprehensive knowledge of the logistics and risks of their travel, whether acquired before their departure or from sources en route. Gaps in knowledge nevertheless exist in other areas.

Although information and awareness campaigns have been widespread throughout West Africa for many years, far from all migrants have been exposed to such campaigns. None of the migrants who were interviewed had seen any online information campaigns, whereas those who were exposed to campaigns encountered them through radio, television or at community events. In Tunisia, however, half of the interviewed migrants had come across information campaigns. In general, the migrants felt that the campaigns focus on trying to dissuade them from travelling irregularly and informing them about the dangers. While some migrants found them useful, they also stress that they did not take the advice offered seriously, noting that their drive to leave was stronger than any possible effort to dissuade them from doing so. Returnee migrants in Senegal and Nigeria who, after returning, have become involved in such campaigns emphasise

that people locally are generally sceptical of information shared about irregular migration, and only a 'few are ready to listen'. When asked if they would have listened and been influenced by such campaigns before leaving, many interviewees stated that knowing more about the risks and dangers would not have stopped them, as they were determined to go, even if it meant 'go or die trying.'

This suggests that information and awareness campaigns are not very likely to make people reconsider their migration plans, although, if they are properly informed about the concrete dangers and challenges en route, they may be better prepared to face them.





**EVERYDAY VULNERABILITIES EN ROUTE
AND DURING COVID-19**

‘ I was scared when I left, especially in Burkina, where many of us were beaten by the gendarmerie, and in the desert when meeting robbers, but at the same time I focus on the journey ahead. ’ (M, 33, Senegal)

‘ I encountered lots of difficulties with food and water in Mali. I encountered sexual violence and no shelter in Algeria. ’ (F, Guinea)

‘ When we left from Agadez to Tripoli, the one we paid was in touch with bandits, so when we reached we were caught and sold. You have to pay 450,000 CFA to get freed – if not, they will keep you there. I was kept for nine months by the bandits – they have their own jails. You wake up, and they have killed five migrants, and they lie them next to the toilet, so you have to go over them one by one. And it happens that you sleep and wake up and you can hear people scream. And they will tell you today you have to pay the money, and if you do not have [it], you will be killed too. After a while, I stopped believing that I would get out alive. ’

(M, 25, Senegal)

Like other recent studies, this report documents the harsh and precarious conditions migrants trying to reach North Africa and Europe have to live through, in which a lack of food, water and shelter, abuse, violence, robbery, racism, detention and even death form part of the migrant experience (MMC 2020b, Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2016). Most migrants have experienced a combination of such vulnerabilities. According to the interviews, the reported violence and abuse are attributed to human smugglers, local authorities, locals and other migrants.



MAIN VULNERABILITIES

- Extortion, robbery and violence by smugglers, local authorities and other migrants
- Lack of food, water and shelter
- Lack of medical care
- Lack of money and work
- Sexual violence from all actors
- Racism
- Death
- Imprisonment and kidnapping
- Deportation and return by state actors, sometimes aided by humanitarian actors (e.g. IOM). Unwanted deportation is often perceived by migrants as causing them the greatest harm

MIGRATION, TRANSIT AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Covid-19 pandemic has amplified migrants' existing vulnerabilities. For migrants on the move, the pandemic has resulted in border closures and a reshuffling of migration routes. Many migrants now take dangerous routes along the Sahara Desert to enter southern Morocco. Migrants stuck in cities in the north of the country pay inflated prices to smugglers to take them to cities in the south from where they can take the sea route that has reopened this year to the Spanish Canary Islands. The exponential increase in the number of arrivals in the Canary Islands can partly be explained by these developments.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the economy and job possibilities, causing further problems for migrants in transit. Beyond the limited access to health services and livelihoods, migrants also highlight the various ways in which xenophobia has increased in the wake of the pandemic. One NGO worker from Alarmphone Sahara in Niger explained the situation from his perspective: 'Covid-19 has developed hatred from local communities who pretend that migrants brought that illness. The consequence of that is that, despite the migrants' skills, they cannot get jobs. We now see many migrants beg for food or clothes or asking for help to communicate with their parents and relatives.'

The precarious situation and reduced flow of migrants due to Covid-19 border closures have further gender-specific effects on female migrants: 'The women who work in prostitution are in a situation in which they cannot go out, and how can you work if you do not have clients? Some of them have children, also, and this makes their life very, very difficult. They do not have any other opportunity to work here.' (Danish Red Cross employee, Niger)

GENDERED VULNERABILITIES


Some of the vulnerabilities and abuse along the routes are highly gendered. All the 26 women we interviewed experienced or witnessed sexual violence, either at the Moroccan-Algerian border, in transit in Tunisia, across the desert to Niger and/or in Libyan detention centres:

‘ We passed through Agadez in Niger, where we spent a week waiting for the departure to Algeria. After a tiring day of travelling in a truck packed with migrants, sexual harassment began. I have been sexually abused several times. All this under the eyes of other migrants. There was no mercy. Because of this, I got pregnant. I was in great need of urgent medical care. There was no one to protect me. My rapists also snatched my things and my money. They do this to women because we have no one to defend us. ’

(F, 30, Nigeria)

These abuses were experienced at the hands of smugglers, local authorities and local people. This is an not unusual pattern: a range of studies indicate that undocumented migrant women face a number of vulnerabilities en route, including rape, high levels of maternal and infant mortality, limited access to contraception and pregnancy termination, and generally heightened levels of gender-based violence (MMC 2020b, Tyszler 2019, Grotti et al. 2018, Wolff et al. 2008). A recent study shows that overall West African female migrants experience or witness more protection incidents than male migrants when it comes to detention and kidnapping. Furthermore, physical and sexual abuse are reported four times more frequently by female migrants than by male migrants (MMC 2020b). Donors and stakeholders supporting humanitarian interventions sometimes subscribe to a gender-specific narrative of vulnerability and victimisation. The male migrants in the study recognise

that the humanitarian actors they meet cater more to female migrants and in general agree with this prioritisation, as female migrants are perceived as more vulnerable, especially when they travel with children. But as some of the men emphasise, this does not mean that they do not experience vulnerable situations as well: they too starve, live on the street, get sick and have to beg to survive.



Donors and stakeholders supporting humanitarian interventions sometimes subscribe to a gender-specific narrative of vulnerability and victimisation.

Unwanted pregnancies are linked to the heightened levels of sexual violence and rape along the routes. Some of the interviewed women had become pregnant en route or in transit in North Africa and had subsequently given birth. Migrant women with irregular immigration status are often excluded from maternal health-care and stress their need for assistance and information on reproductive health-care, access to contraceptives, birth control, sanitary pads and the need for safe spaces:

‘ All women need menstrual pads, treatment for sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases because women often find themselves forced into prostitution, and many have unwanted pregnancies. Some of them are later forced to abort under inhumane conditions, causing acute health problems. This is especially the plight of migrant and helpless women and underage girls. Added to this are the poor hygienic conditions, which entail that migrant women are inevitably exposed to sexually transmitted diseases. This creates a great need for intense medical assistance. ’

(F, 27, Senegal)

Women from Nigeria are often considered a specifically vulnerable migrant group due to the involvement of some of them in debt-bonded human trafficking to the sex industry in Europe. Yet paradoxically, and echoing the findings of studies, being trafficked or travelling as debt-bonded can sometimes result in smoother journeys than being 'merely' smuggled, at least en route, as the traffickers, Madams, sponsors and migration facilitators have an interest in ensuring that the migrant woman reaches her destination in Europe in order to be able to start working and repaying her debts (Plambech 2017, RMMS and DRC 2015). This was the case for three of the Nigerian migrant women who were interviewed, who were financed by a Madam. Others got help from family members who had borrowed or sold properties to raise the money to pay for a pre-arranged journey.





**THE PROBLEMATIC ONE-SIDED FOCUS
ON SMUGGLERS AS PERPETRATORS**

There is generally a high degree of trust in the information received from smugglers, despite the mixed experiences, which migrants do not necessarily blame smugglers for but rather ascribe to the circumstances en route. Some migrants state they want more information on how to find the 'real' smugglers, indicating that some individuals may pose as smugglers but in fact are not smugglers but people who exploit those in already vulnerable situations. Many migrants report experiencing abuse, extortion, abandonment and even torture from smugglers en route. Yet, the one-sided focus on smugglers in current European policy debates and border control measures tends to overshadow how other actors conduct violent abuse en route, something which from a migrant perspective is often seen as just as harmful and dangerous. Furthermore, new research shows how the majority of the money spent on smuggling is often used to bribe the authorities, thus indirectly contributing to migrant insecurity (Sanchez 2020). Apart from the smugglers, migrants point to abuse by a variety of local and national authorities, including security forces, the police, border control officials and the military:

‘ All the borders had a lot of control, but you know, money can fix any problem, so we paid our way through and were allowed to go. So, we paid a lot of money, maybe 15,000-20,000 CFA each time, and if you cannot pay, they take you aside and double check if you have something of value that they can take instead. And these are the policemen who are supposed to protect people, but it is a big business, and everybody is involved. Like, they go with their motorbikes away from the border and then charge you money. They have many, many checkpoints, and you have to pay. ’

(M, 33, Senegal)

Abuse by local authority actors was reported frequently across the sites, whether in the form of extortion, physical violence, racism, detention or forced return and deportation. It is also evident that the differences between the various local state actors and smugglers are often blurred for migrants, especially in Libya and Niger, where they experience how they collaborate closely.

One Nigerian female migrant recalls that, when they got to the Kano-Niger border, they were asked whose passengers they were. They answered 'Bogo', and the security agents confirmed this with a phone call to 'Bogo' before allowing them to pass, indicating that the border guards were in collaboration with this smuggler. A sensitive dilemma for humanitarian actors who want to assist and protect migrants along the African routes is whether to collaborate with local and national authorities that, on the ground, are often part of the business of irregular migration and that are persistently responsible for human rights violations against migrants, while at the same time acting as key gatekeepers for successful humanitarian interventions.



THE HUMANITARIAN-MIGRANT ENCOUNTER

Humanitarian organisations have in recent years embarked on a range of route-based initiatives to assist and protect vulnerable migrants. Along the routes, about half of the interviewed migrants say they received assistance from humanitarian organisations, such as The Red Cross, The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Caritas, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the IOM, but also local NGOs and churches and mosques in Tunisia and Morocco are involved in providing e.g. basic assistance, health and WASH facilities and cash cards to the migrants. The other half report not receiving any assistance:

‘ Nobody helped me, I did not see any humanitarians. There were people along the route sometimes that would give us food and water, but it was people like me. ’

(M, 20, Guinea Conakry)



Humanitarian organisations are increasingly perceived as migrant facilitators by some local authorities and European governments, a development linked to the increasing criminalisation of migration within the ECOWAS zone. As this NGO worker in Niger observed, 'The current situation on the routes is harder and harder. The routes are under the strict control of men in uniform. In the cities, the police are always trying to discover any driver trying to start a trip through the desert. Compounds where migrants live are frequently checked, and those who control them hide to avoid arrest.'

There are various reasons why migrants cannot access the services provided by humanitarian actors: some migrants described how they simply did not encounter them or know they existed, while a few others mentioned language barriers. But migrants in our study also said that state actors at borders prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching migrants in dire need. When migrants engage with humanitarian actors, it is at various points along the routes in Mali, Cameroon, Niger, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, mainly in cities, but also on the Tunisian-Libyan border and the Algerian border, where the Algerian authorities push migrants into the desert in Niger:

‘ I remember that I was too tired when I arrived in Algeria and I was lying on the sand in the desert and that this NGO helped me to stand up and they gave me medicine and food. That is how I regained my strength. ’

(M, 29, Burkina Faso)

In general, the migrants trust humanitarian actors and do not find reasons not to trust them. However, both some of the migrants who have been assisted and those who have not, stated that they and the people they travelled with largely distrusted humanitarian actors while trying to reach North Africa and Europe.⁸ How, therefore, can we better understand their distrust and strategic avoidance of those who want to help them?

Most often, those migrants who express distrust in humanitarian organisations have been warned off them by other migrants and migration brokers, who associate NGOs and international organisations with detention, deportation and discouragement, both because local authorities can be present at sites where humanitarian

actors operate, but also due to specific return agendas that intersect with humanitarian interventions in the Sahel and North Africa. However, they may also justify their avoidance of such organisations by citing concrete experiences. The following three quotes are telling:

‘ In Algeria, whenever there is an intervention on the part of a humanitarian organisation, border forces may intervene immediately afterwards. The border guards carry out the expulsions, which take place completely illegally, without any respect for the rights of migrants and refugees, who are abandoned and left to fend for themselves. ’

(M, 29, Burkina Faso)

‘ I would never be close to the NGOs and humanitarians. My friend in Libya had told me never to be close to them. At that time, we could not trust anyone, we just wanted to dem reek (‘go straight’) because we think that maybe they want to take you back home. And at the time, IOM was returning a lot of people. ’

(M, 33, Senegal)

It is not surprising that migrants become distrustful and develop avoidance strategies when intensified migration control make use of humanitarian sites of delivery to round migrants up for later expulsion. But another explanation may be found in a lack of clarity regarding who is who among the various humanitarian organisations that are present in the borderlands, often with different agendas. This local NGO worker in Niger observed the following:

‘ The main challenges for migrants and humanitarian actors that try to assist them consist in a loss of trust. Most migrants think that all actors act to discourage them from moving forward. They assume that, like the IOM, all humanitarians link their assistance to the only condition of voluntary home return. ’

According to the migrants, as well as some of the humanitarian actors working along the routes, the IOM's involvement in assisting voluntary return contributes to creating distrust of and confusion about humanitarian agendas. Under the EU-IOM joint Initiative on Migration Protection and Reintegration, funded by the EU Trust Fund for Africa, between March 2017 and November 2019 the IOM returned more than 60,000 migrants from Libya, Niger and Mali to West Africa (Alpes 2020). This rapid reverse movement creates a contested space that is not transparent to the migrants in this study:

Some humanitarians helped us with water and clothes, but at a certain time, when you see the logo of the IOM, you run away because, when you see the road and want to go and those kinds of NGOs will take you back to your country, you try to avoid them. We did not know they could also help us. When we saw them, we just went away because we just wanted to seek the road ahead. This is common knowledge, but already in Senegal the passeur (migration broker) told us to try to avoid the NGOs – they will only discourage you. But when we reached Mali, we really started to feel tired. It was here that the IOM and other NGOs that bring food and new clothes tried to give some speeches, saying: “We are here to help” and “We bring cars so you can go back safely”. But there, you do not want to hear this and be discouraged; you just want to go. ■

(M, 25, Senegal).

Although the IOM and European donors frame the returns as humanitarian acts and stress that they should be voluntary, humane and dignified, it appears from the interviews that some migrants en route perceive their assistance as acts of discouragement and, ultimately, deportation, rather than as rescue and assistance (see also Alpes 2020). As such, they collide with the migrants' goals of eventually reaching North Africa or Europe. For the interviewed migrants, it seems as if humanitarian organisations' particular brands and agendas are not always easy to identify or to know, which also might make distrust in one organisation trickle down and influence perceptions of humanitarian actors in general.

MIGRANTS' HARM-REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Accessing help and assistance in the vast Sahelian borderlands can be a challenge for migrants, who often report being supported by others along the route only to a limited extent. But when they are given assistance, it is most often from other migrants and at times the residents of local transit communities, who reach out and help migrants with water, food and shelter. Economic assistance from family and relatives in the country of origin, North Africa or Europe also comes to play an important role when migrants are stuck en route, need to get out of detention or face situations of kidnapping and extortion, but not all families have the resources to help.

Migrants navigate their vulnerabilities and abuses through a range of harm-reduction strategies. Several migrants explain that they often do not seek professional medical assistance or other types of humanitarian assistance and deliberately avoid humanitarian actors as a harm-reduction strategy, mainly due to their lack of trust in state actors and their fears of arrest, detention and deportation. Avoidance as a harm-reduction strategy is mainly important on the outbound journey, as this interviewee explained:

‘ There are many NGOs like the IOM that welcome migrants for help and advice. Many of those who come back and who are tired are assisted by the NGOs. But when we are going, we do not want to see them. When we are going, we have money and food, and that is why we do not need them. It is only when we do not have a solution that we go there. ’

(M, 24, Senegal).

The fear of deportation also deters women from reporting sexual abuse and rape to the local authorities. In general, hiding from the authorities is recommended as a way of avoiding abuse and staying safe, but it is also important to have access to money to pay bribes. Some find that engaging with smugglers increases their safety, while others prefer to rely on the people around them. Nevertheless, many migrants also state that there is not much they can do to feel safe. In sum, migrants face horrific abuse and conditions, but seem to have very few coping strategies for their self-protection.



Migrants in transit in the southern Moroccan borderlands. Some are waiting to cross the Atlantic to the Canary Islands, others to move north into Europe. Many migrants have not been able to work amid the Covid-19-lockdowns, but have only been able to find short-term jobs cleaning or sweeping the streets. From her informal shop a woman sells food, cosmetic products and sub-Saharan delicacies to migrants passing by.

MIGRANTS' ADVICE FOR SAFER MIGRATION

The migrants who were interviewed were asked to give concrete advice to humanitarian organisations and other migrants in how to migrate more safely.

Below, we list their recommendations:

- Do not travel with a lot of money, as you risk being robbed
- Take water into the desert
- Avoid and do not trust the IOM and the other NGOs because you cannot know if they will repatriate you
- Obtaining information along the way is very important or you will get lost
- Try to go the legal way
- More information about where to find humanitarian actors
- Better access to basic services, such as food, water, shelter and cash cards
- Special units that can rescue migrants in urgent need
- Provide access to health-care services and psychosocial support
- Special health kits, reproductive care and access to abortion for women that can be assessed without the involvement of local authorities
- Create safe spaces: a need for spaces where the migrants can find safety from violence and sexual harassment
- Information about dangers, but not discouragement
- Help to find jobs, as well as legal pathways to documents and residence





CONCLUSION

The aim of this report has been to acquire a better understanding of how West African migrants utilise and select available information when planning their journeys to North Africa and Europe, both before departure and as they move along the ever-shifting routes. We show how migrants mainly rely on and trust those in their social networks of family and relatives who have experience or knowledge of migration and other migrants they meet on the journey, both when planning their migration and when migration decisions have to be taken en route. The degree to which people prepare varies from a lot of preparation to none at all. On the journey, migrants' social networks expand to include fellow migrants. Though people tend to trust fellow nationals or people with the same ethnic or language background more, sharing the same experiences and resources en route seems to generate bonds of trust beyond narrow social networks.

When accessing information about migration, potential migrants mainly use face-to-face interactions or telephone calls, but social media, especially WhatsApp and Facebook, are other popular ways of making calls and sharing voice and text messages. Only rarely do migrants search for information about migration from online websites. The extent to which migrants can afford, know of, and use phones and the internet varies with access to financial resources and social and educational backgrounds.

Not all migrants encounter humanitarians and receive assistance from them en route. Those who have been assisted largely trust the actors they have been assisted by, although some migrants deliberately try to avoid them. Throughout our interviews, issues of trust and distrust have emerged as key factors in explaining migrants' reasons for accepting or declining and avoiding available assistance. Migrants often fear that accepting assistance might lead to them ending up in migration enforcement, detention and deportation, a fear that builds on information shared by smugglers, social networks or personal experiences with local authorities en route. Many migrants associate humanitarian actors along the route with encouragement to return home and discouragement from continuing with the migration journey.

When humanitarians collaborate with local authorities in the delivery of crucial assistance, it is therefore recommended that they insist on separating humanitarian interventions from migration control and deportation measures. When providing basic services, such as health care and shelter, it is also important that humanitarians negotiate with state officials and local authorities to make sure that migrants do not have to prove their identities or rely on having them registered. This is likely to enhance migrants' trust in humanitarian interventions.

In current European policy debates, migrant smugglers are often portrayed as cruel mafia-like criminals who put migrants' lives at risk for profit. This report questions this one-sided policy narrative of the 'unscrupulous violent smuggler' when in fact the migrants also use smugglers to avoid the abuses of local authorities. This figure plays a crucial role in legitimising harsher border controls and the withdrawal of search and rescue operations at sea. As the report has highlighted, this leads to increased criminalisation of migrants seeking safe routes and poses severe consequences for their mobility and safety without addressing the root cause of the smuggling, namely the reduction in regular paths to migration, which increases the demand for smuggling services en route. Furthermore, the political context of the increased criminalisation of irregular migration in the borderlands creates an uncertain context in which humanitarian assistance can be perceived as facilitating migration by state and local authorities.

Finally, will targeted information contribute to saving migrants' lives and reduce their vulnerabilities en route? An overall conclusion of this report is that, while the EU and European states have invested in information campaigns aimed at discouraging migration for more than two decades, migrants generally do not consider them useful when they encounter them. This is mainly because they do not give people on the move what they consider to be concrete, useful and risk-reducing information. Moreover, already well aware of the risks and dangers associated with migration, they do not want to be discouraged from making their journeys. Migration from West African countries is an intrinsic part of many families' livelihood strategies, and it is therefore not surprising that migrants trust and rely on sources that confirm their initially positive views of migration, despite the struggles that might face them both en route and upon arrival. It is therefore vital to recognise that irregular migrants' self-perceptions and sense of agency often differ radically from the language of victimisation used by some humanitarians and in most information material. Working with the 'strengths' rather than the 'vulnerabilities' of migrants en route is therefore key when assisting and providing them with information. Information alone does not reduce harm and vulnerabilities. This report has highlighted the very real need for governments to address the violence and human rights abuses committed against migrants en route and to provide safe assistance, health-care and a genuine ability to report abuses and exploitation without fear of being deported, persecuted or further abused. Finally, safe legal migration, safe paths to asylum and workers' rights both within and beyond Africa are needed to stop the negative spiral of brutal border enforcement that makes migrants' journeys longer and more dependent on smugglers.

NOTES

- 1 Most of the migrants who attempt to cross are from North African countries, but Sub-Saharan African, Middle Eastern and Asian migrants and asylum-seekers also move along the two routes (MMC 2020).
- 2 <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20201029/naufragio-cayuco-senegal-canarias-8180787>
- 3 For an analysis of the systemic implications of EU migration policy and the long-term consequences for conflict and instability, see Andersson and Keen (2019).
- 4 See list of interviews with migrants.
- 5 Conversely, ICTs can also be used for surveillance purposes by government authorities, tracking and verifying asylum cases, and intensifying the social pressure from migrant networks (see, for example, Leurs 2014, Awad and Tossell 2019, Frouws and Brenner 2019). For a review of the opportunities and risks related to refugees' use of mobile phones, see Manchini et al. 2019.
- 6 <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/thematic/improved-migration-management> (accessed 26/11/20).
- 7 Thereby creating a vast media production of TV and radio spots, soap operas, posters, print ads, songs, performances and cinema.
- 8 See also the IMREF 2020 study, which similarly highlights both the lack of knowledge about humanitarian assistance en route and the lack of trust.

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LIST OF INTERVIEWS WITH MIGRANTS

No.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Marital status	Actual location	Planned country of destination
1	F	26-30	Côte d'Ivoire	High school - completed	Divorced/ separated	Tunisia	Germany
2	M	26-30	Burkina Faso	Some high school	Single	Tunisia	France, Tunisia
3	F	26-30	Burkina Faso	Some high school	Divorced/ separated	Tunisia	Germany or Switzerland, North Africa
4	M	26-30	Niger	High school - completed	Single	Tunisia	Germany or Sweden
5	F	26-30	Nigerian	Some high school	Divorced/ separated	Tunisia	Germany or Sweden
6	F	26-30	Senegal	University education	Divorced/ separated	Tunisia	Germany
7	M	31-40	Mali	University education	Divorced/ separated	Tunisia	Sweden
8	F	26-30	Benin	Some high school	Single	Tunisia	Europe
9	M	26-30	Ivorian	High school/ secondary education completed	Single	Tunisia	Switzerland
10	M	26-30	Ivorian	University education	Single	Tunisia	Germany or France
11	M	15-20	Mali	Some high school	Single	Morocco	Germany or Eng-land
12	F	N/A	Senegal	N/A	Married	Morocco	Morocco
13	F	41 -50	Ghana	Secondary school	Divorced	Morocco	Europe, Morocco
14	F	15-20	Côte d'Ivoire	None	Engaged	Morocco	None in particular
15	M	26-30	Guinée Conakry	N/A	Single	Morocco	United States
16	F	26-30	Mali	Primary school	Married	Morocco	Spain
17	F	N/A	Côte d'Ivoire	Some high school	Married	Morocco	France
18	F	N/A	Côte d'Ivoire	Some high school	Married	Morocco	Morocco
19	F	N/A	Senegal	Secondary school	Single	Morocco	Morocco
20	M	31-40	Côte d'Ivoire	None	Married	Morocco	Germany
21	F	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Professional training	Single	Guinea Conakry	France
22	F	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Single	Guinea Conakry	France
23	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Professional training	Single	Guinea Conakry	Tunisia

No.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Marital status	Actual location	Planned country of destination
24	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Married	Guinea Conakry	France
25	M	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Algeria, Germany
26	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	University	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
27	M	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
28	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Married	Guinea Conakry	Europe
29	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	University	Married	Guinea Conakry	Europe
30	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Italy
31	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
32	M	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Single	Guinea Conakry	United States
33	M	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
34	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Married	Guinea Conakry	Italy
35	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	University	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
36	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	Secondary school	Married	Guinea Conakry	Europe
37	M	15-20	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Europe
38	F	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Divorced/separated	Guinea Conakry	Europe
39	M	21-25	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Single	Guinea Conakry	France
40	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	Secondary school	Married	Guinea Conakry	Europe
41	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Religious education	Single	Guinea Conakry	Italy
42	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some high school	Married	Guinea Conakry	Europe
43	M	26-30	Guinea Conakry	Some primary school	Single	Guinea Conakry	Germany
44	M	31-40	Guinea Conakry	Religious education	Married	Guinea Conakry	Spain
45	M	26-30	Guinea Bis-sau	Primary school completed	Single	Spain	Spain
46	M	15-20	Mali	Some primary school	Single	Spain	Spain
47	M	15-20	Guinea Conakry	None	Single	Spain	None in particular

No.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Education	Marital status	Actual location	Planned country of destination
48	M	15-20	Guinea Conakry	Some elementary school	Single	Spain	None in particular
49	M	26-30	Mali	Some secondary school	Single	Spain	Europe
50	M	21-25	Senegal	Some secondary school	Single	Senegal	Italy
51	M	21-25	Senegal	Primary school completed	Single	Senegal	Spain
52	M	21-25	Senegal	Primary school/ Religious education	Single	Senegal	Europe
53	M	26-30	Senegal	Primary school completed	Single	Senegal	Europe
54	M	15-20	Senegal	Some secondary school	Single	Senegal	Spain
55	M	31-40	Senegal	Some university	Single	Senegal	Italy
56	M	21-25	Senegal	Primary school completed	Single	Senegal	Italy
57	M	31-40	Senegal	Some university	Single	Senegal	Europe
58	M	26-30	Senegal	University com-pleted	Single	Senegal	Morocco, Europe
59	M	26-30	Senegal	Primary school completed	Single	Senegal	Mauritania, Europe
60	M	26-30	Senegal	Primary school completed	Single	Senegal	Libya, France
61	F	21-25	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe
62	F	21-25	Nigeria	N/A	In a relationship	Nigeria	Europe
63	F	26-30	Nigeria	N/A	In a relationship	Nigeria	Europe
64	F	N/A	Nigeria	University	Single	Nigeria	Europe
65	F	26-30	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe
66	F	26-30	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe
67	F	N/A	Nigeria	University	Single	Nigeria	Europe
68	F	N/A	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe
69	F	26-30	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe
70	F	N/A	Nigeria	Professional training	Single	Nigeria	Europe
71	F	21-25	Nigeria	N/A	Single	Nigeria	Europe

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Page 54: Nabil Ferdaoussi during field research in Laayoune, Morocco, Fall 2020

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