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Irregular 'Backdoor' Migration

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IRREGULAR 'BACKDOOR' MIGRATION

WHAT IS IRREGULAR 'BACKDOOR' MIGRATION?

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) a migrant has an irregular situation when one or more of the following circumstances apply:

- Irregular entrance in the country, for example by having false documents or by entering the country without crossing an official border point.
- Irregular residency in the country, eg. by overstaying visa or residence permit.
- Irregular employment in the country, for example by having right of residence but no right to work, or by having none of both rights.¹⁸

Of more than 258 million migrants worldwide, it is estimated that 50 million have an irregular status.¹⁹ Migrant smugglers, human traffickers, returnees 'Burger' and migrants abroad contribute to the widespread image of wrong perceptions of life in Europe, which gives an idealized and one-sided image of Europe, or is even shaped by misleading or false information. In this light, thousands of Africans leave their homelands for a dangerous journey, seeking to enter Europe irregularly in search of a better life.

According to IOM, of the 16,000 migrant women who arrived to Italy from Libya from 2016 to 2017, 80% were victims of trafficking and have been forced to work as sexual slaves in the streets and brothels of Europe.²⁰ However, since the country is considered a 'Safe Country of Origin' in EU refugee law, nationals of Ghana and Nigeria have some of the lowest success rates among Sub-Saharanans. When their asylum claim is rejected, many opt to go underground and desperately search for any means of survival.

Resistance to going home is often linked with strong feelings of shame and failure, the fear of disappointing their communities and being rejected, strengthened by the belief that they wouldn't have any better opportunities back home. Existence underground is linked with greater vulnerability to falling into a net of exploitation and harm, as irregular migrants lack legal residency and working papers, access to vital services such as education, healthcare, social benefits or legal protection are not granted.²¹



RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH IRREGULAR MIGRATION

CASE STUDY: DANGERS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION VIA MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Ghanaian youths who embark on these dangerous routes at great personal risk talk of the difficulties and exploitations they encounter on this long and expensive journey. Irregular migrants are usually undocumented upon arrival in a host country, and then have to learn the language, try to find work and rapidly adapt to an unfamiliar culture and navigate the complexities of a new social environment. They

face serious challenges in accessing legal residence status, medical, housing and other social services and if they survive the journey, have a very high risk of being deported to their countries of origin.

Mr. Burger 1 comes from a rural community in Greater Accra Region.

After his Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) he couldn't get family support to finance his secondary and vocational school education and was unable to find any alternative source of income. He worked very hard to get some money and borrowed from family and friends to raise a total of 1000 Euro to embark on his voyage to Europe. He explains that numerous times he was abused and exploited by smugglers and traffickers. He did manage to cross the Mediterranean through Spain and arrived in Germany in January, 2017. His asylum application was rejected and he was deported to Ghana in the end as the country is designated "safe" in 2018.

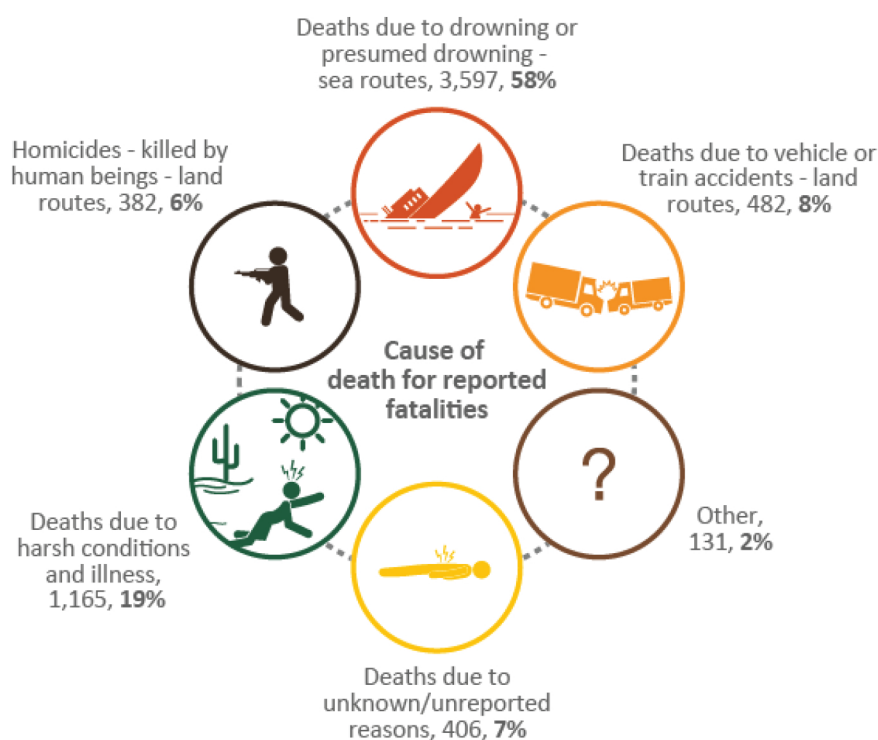
Mr. Burger 2 couldn't pass his West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination and out of frustration decided to pursue his childhood dreams of travelling to Germany. He worked hard on his father's farm and moved to Accra to look for additional funds to embark on his journey by road to Germany. His journey to Libya took three weeks. The biggest struggles of his life started in Libya as he had to work as a houseboy for several families every day under the watchful eye of his smugglers. In the end, he arrived in Germany across the sea via Italy. Since he had no family or acquaintances in Germany, he was homeless for several months on arrival, and became very sick due to the cold weather conditions and no access to any social services. He had very limited opportunities and started working without proper documentation. He was finally deported to Ghana after all these life threatening challenges he had faced.



Most refugees who flee from Ghana to Europe usually try to do so through Libya, after traveling through Burkina Faso and Agadez, Niger, along the way.

- It is from Agadez that they join others trying to reach Europe. While many of these Ghanaians travel to Europe in search of better economic opportunities, they end up applying for asylum since they've entered irregularly.
- Of 28,223 child arrivals in Italy in 2016, 92% were unaccompanied children.

- 92% of those unaccompanied and separated children arrivals in Italy were between the ages of 15-17.
- Smuggling in Ghana is a significant problem.
- The US Department of State (USDS) reports that Ghana has been a known source, transit and destination country for migrant smuggling and trafficking over the past five years, and Ghanaian children within the country are at the greatest risk for exploitation, particularly in the form of forced labour and sex trafficking.
- Ghana is a transit point for West Africans in sex trafficking to Europe, i.e. Italy and Germany
- Sex trafficking is predominantly prevalent within the Volta region of the country and is starting to grow in other areas in the nation such as in the western regions that are known for producing oil.
- Ghanaian women and children are recruited and sent into the Middle East, West Africa, and Europe for sex trafficking.
- Migrants in transit in Libya are particularly vulnerable to poor living conditions, lack of access to health and education services, and negative coping mechanisms that come from a shortage in activities for youth, i.e. survival sex.
- IOM estimated that about 22,400 migrants and asylum seekers died since 2000 in their attempt to reach Europe - boat capsizing or crossing the Sahara desert.
- The Ghanaian migrants who make it to Europe, but do not receive asylum status and remain in their country of destination face the risks of undocumented status.



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

HOW AWARE ARE YOU OF THE DANGERS LINKED TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION?

What are
the risks?

What effect do
they have?

How will you
decide ?

- Do you know the risks of irregular 'backdoor' migration?
- What effect do these dangers have your choice of migration routes?
- How would you decide to migrate now - regularly or irregularly?

- 1 Ask everyone in the group to share their level of knowledge on dangers related to irregular migration. Have they heard of, seen or experienced any of these dangers or other risks related to irregular migration? Appoint someone to write down key points of the knowledge and stories shared on a flipchart, post-it notes or whiteboard as they are being given, to give the group a visual.
- 2 Discuss with your group, school or workshop participants the impact these dangers might have on the life of a migrant, for instance: inability to return home because they might feel ashamed of the experiences they had or feel like they are a failure.
- 3 Introduce your experiences and understanding of irregular migration linked dangers. Jot down notes and terms on flip chart or post-its or chalkboard as they arise.



MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES - IRREGULAR ROUTES

Where does the migration journey start from Ghana to Europe?

People move from rural areas to the city centers and then get information about who can help them through this illegal migration journey. We recently heard about the Volta regional case where they are known to traffic a lot of women for the slavery trade."

"People migrate from everywhere, but if you look at the irregular one, anybody who gets that chance and information. If they can raise money and be 'brave enough' - or sometimes it is not about bravery, it is the fact that they don't know the full picture. They know it is a difficult journey, but they don't know that it is dangerous, that 'I can die'. Some of them know but they say if I stay here, I will die anyway. We have a saying in Ghana "Every death is a death", whether I die in the sea or I die in my bedroom. They will still take a chance and go.

What would you tell a younger brother or sister who was thinking of migrating to consider before they make the journey?

"There is a right way to come. The headache and difficulty of living here illegally, as a person I cannot handle that. So, if you are going to come here, then you have to do it legally. Regardless of the situation back home, I wouldn't encourage anybody to take the illegal route."



PROFILE OF GHANAIAN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

Single, young & male in precarious circumstances:

Young and seeking to gain symbolic capital, i.e., social recognition and prestige.

Majority have no children, are not married and unattached, which may make the real or desired journey to Europe easier because they have no family ties.

Age of most irregular migrants: youth 18 - 35.

Gender breakdown: ~ 90% to 95% male

Town/region of origin: Brong-Ahafo Region; Ashanti Region; Greater Accra Region; Western & Northern Regions. The Volta region is known as a major sex trafficking and child trafficking hub.

Education: Majority completed Junior High, some are school dropouts and few have tertiary education.

Socio-economic Background: Migrants tend to work in the informal sector - farmers, taxi drivers, informal business/shop owners. To finance their journey which costs an estimated \$2,000 - \$5,000 paid to smugglers, they save money from their informal jobs, some receive money from family members, take out loans from Banks and/or sell their cars if they are taxi drivers etc.

EU destination countries of irregular migrants: Italy and Germany.

Conscious of the dangers of the journey to Europe:

- High levels of information are shared amongst migrants, and most have heard stories of migrants drowning, being stranded, or mistreated.
- Still need to "try their luck," belief that it will be different for them, that it is somehow their destiny to migrate.
- The desire to attempt the journey remains strong.
- Stories of migrants who have succeeded in their attempts to reach Europe tend to override all the stories of failed attempts.

RUMOURS & (MIS)PERCEPTIONS:

Dangers: 50/50 potential migrants are aware of the dangers of traveling through the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe, the other half are not aware of the dangers ahead.

Perception - In order to elevate one's social status and have ones local communities/ family support and approval, the irregular migrants who've succeeded in making it to Europe only share information on the opportunities there but not the dangers and difficulties in the journey they've experienced.

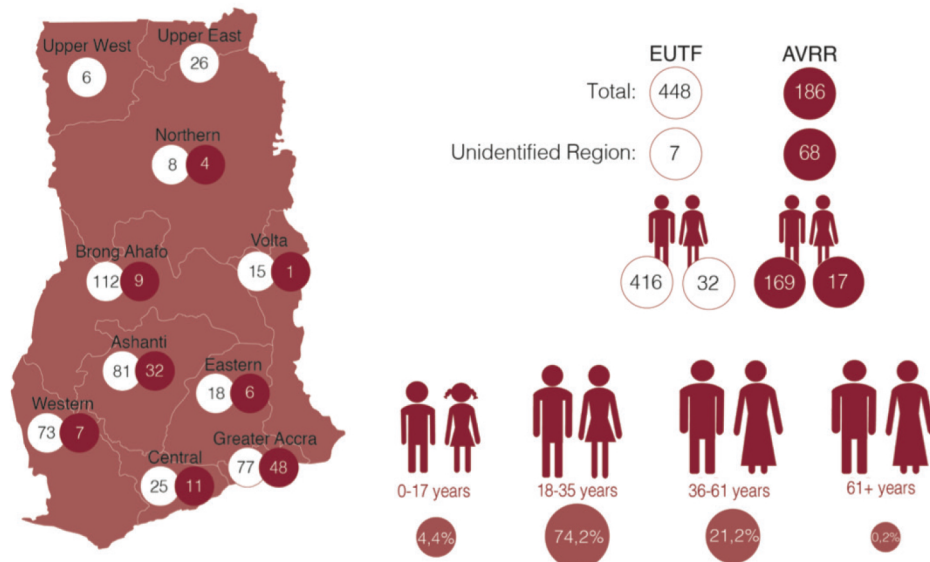
Smugglers - Able to persuade potential migrants by giving them specific quotes on how much money they can make in Libya and then Europe. Smugglers tell these young people they have secured jobs for them where they will make \$500 - \$700 a month, and even bonuses as well. Unskilled Ghanaians make

\$100 - \$150 a month in Ghana.

Social media: plays a huge role because of the pictures and videos potential migrants see on others living the life in Europe. Friends send them videos of the city centers, apartments, life etc.

Lack of awareness / information: Opportunities on how to study abroad is made available to people in Ghana once they are in University so not in primary, junior high school or secondary school - this is why most potential migrants drop out.

Returns by Regions in Ghana under the EUTF and AVRR programmes: 634



Source: Missing Migrants Project (IOM), 2017. Creative Commons (CC)



CASE STUDY: SECRET SPECTACLES, THE STORY OF A MIGRANT SPY

LISTEN: [The Undercover Migrant](#)

AUDIO FILE ON USB DRIVE

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p07b0snz>

The extraordinary story of an undercover migrant and his 'secret spectacles'. When Azeteng, a young man from rural Ghana, heard stories on the radio of West African migrants dying on their way to Europe, he felt compelled to act. He took what little savings he had and bought glasses with a hidden camera - his 'secret spectacles'.

'Then he put himself in the hands of people smugglers and travelled 3,000 miles on the desert migrant trail north, aiming to document the crimes of the traffickers. Along the way he saw extortion, slavery, and death in the vast stretches of the Sahara. For Assignment, reporter Joel Gunter tells the story of his journey - a journey that thousands of young Africans like him attempt each year. Producer, Josephine Casserly

Secret Spectacles, The Story of a Migrant Spy

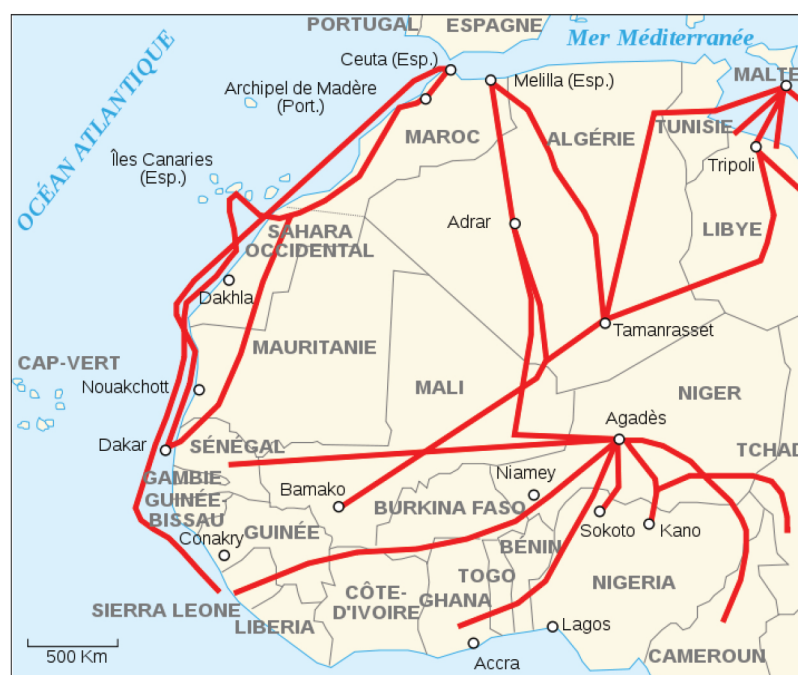
Joel Gunter, BBC Africa Eye May 2019

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/1dt-sh/secret_spectacles_migrant_spy

"It was close to midnight when the young man crawled into the desert. All around him was darkness. A hundred metres away, a handful of Tuareg rebels and people smugglers, who worked together ferrying migrants through this unforgiving stretch of the Sahara, were gathered around three trucks, drumming and dancing and letting off long bursts of gunfire that rattled the night sky. The young man, who had given himself the name Azeteng, was somewhere in northern Mali near the border with Algeria. Behind him lay El-Khalil, a bleak and brutal waystation on the West African migrant route to Europe. Ahead of him, sand stretched for miles in every direction. He was a speck on the dark sea of the Sahara. Slowly, painfully, he pushed his body on, trying to keep as low as possible to the ground..."

WATCH: Undercover Migrant - Short Video clip

<https://www.facebook.com/bbcworldservice/videos/435277873938945/>



Map of African immigration to Europe. Source: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung CC-BY-SA 3.0



DANGERS OF 'IRREGULAR' / BACKDOOR MIGRATION

DEATH - DROWNING AT SEA



In 2015 amongst the 1,015,877 people who arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean sea, 3,771 deaths were registered. In 2018, the number of arrivals dropped to 116,647, however, 2,275 people died in the Mediterranean. The average of six deaths per day shows that even while the number of arrivals was dropping - due to stronger border controls in Africa, interceptions in Libya and changing routes - the journey across the sea was becoming deadlier. Most deaths (more than 1,100) took place after departure from Libya. NGOs who rescued migrants at sea faced further restrictions on their activities and Italy no longer allowed migrant vessels to disembark in Italian harbors. Along the sea route to Spain, deaths during 2018 almost quadrupled as more people tried to cross the sea using unsafe vessels.²²

DETENTION CENTRE WAIT & LOW SUCCESS RATE

During the first quarter of 2019, the recognition rate - people granted refugee status - in the 28 countries of the European Union was 36 %.²³ In Germany, the overall recognition rate in 2018 was 50.2%. However, “an exceptionally high number of asylum procedures were abandoned without an examination of the substance of the case (either because the application was considered ‘inadmissible’ or because the procedure was discontinued for other reasons)”.²⁴ Ghana is considered a “Safe Country of Origin” in European law, the recognition rate of Ghanaian applicants is extremely low. From 3,920 applicants in the EU in 2018, 5,7 were granted asylum at the end.²⁵ During the wait for their asylum process, many migrants are held in detention centres in Europe.²⁶

HUMAN TRAFFICKING & SMUGGLERS

Irregular migrants are subject to lies from smugglers and human traffickers. Some 80% of irregular migration to Europe is “facilitated” by smugglers or criminal groups who are paid to provide services such as transportation, fraudulent identification, corruption of border officials and settlement services. Social media channels are increasingly used as a tool for smugglers to contact migrants and spread false information about migration and Europe.²⁷ Some migrant smugglers engage in violent acts, such as rape, beatings, forced labour, kidnapping, extortion, or abandonment of the migrants.²⁸

SAHARA - DEATH - IMPRISONMENT - VIOLENCE

Estimates show that at least as many migrants have died in the Sahara as in the Mediterranean in the last years.²⁹ The Global Migration Data Analysis Centre shows the number of migrants who died during the journey from Agadez to southern Libya or southern Algeria rose from 71 in 2015, to 95 in 2016, and to 427 in 2017.³⁰ For those who make it into Europe, the sea crossing is just the final step of a very dangerous journey, which might involve crossing unstable or armed conflict regions, going through the desert, being robbed and tortured, trafficked for labor or sexual exploitation, imprisoned or having suffered hunger. Over 400 migrants interviewed for a study reported witnessing a combined total of 2,600 deaths during their journeys.³¹

SEXUAL VIOLENCE - RAPE - TRAFFICKING

According to IOM, of the 16,000 migrant women who arrived in Italy from Libya from 2016 to 2017, 80% were victims of trafficking and have been forced to work as sexual slaves in the streets and brothels of Europe.³² A 2018 UN report found out that of 1,300 migrant women and teenage girls interviewed in Libya, the “overwhelmingly majority” have either been victims of gang rape or have witnessed other women and girls suffering sexual violence.³³ Although women are more vulnerable to suffer sexual violence during their journey and in the host country, men and boys aren't exempt. The impacts of sexual violence on the victim, relatives and community are severe and long-term. Survivors remain psychologically troubled and many kill themselves.³⁴

EXPLOITATION - FORCED LABOUR - SLAVERY



Trafficking is a process of enslaving people to exploit them. There are many forms of exploitation, such as forced prostitution, forced labour, forced begging, forced criminality, domestic servitude, forced marriage and organ harvesting.³⁵ 40 million people are estimated to be slaves worldwide.³⁶ According to the IOM, 7 out of 10 migrants crossing from North-Africa to Europe had experienced some kind of exploitation during their journey, for instance illegal detention, sexual violence, forced labour or kidnapping. Moreover, with the rising of anti-migration politics and discourses around Europe, many migrants in Europe are feeling forced to go underground, which makes them more vulnerable to exploitation.³⁷

* Dangers of Irregular migration - Icons Attributions (All Creative Commons):

Icon 1: Freepik from www.flaticon.com

Icon 2: 'Mass deportation' by Matt Wasser from the Noun Project

Icon 3: 'Suspicious man' Freepik from www.flaticon.com

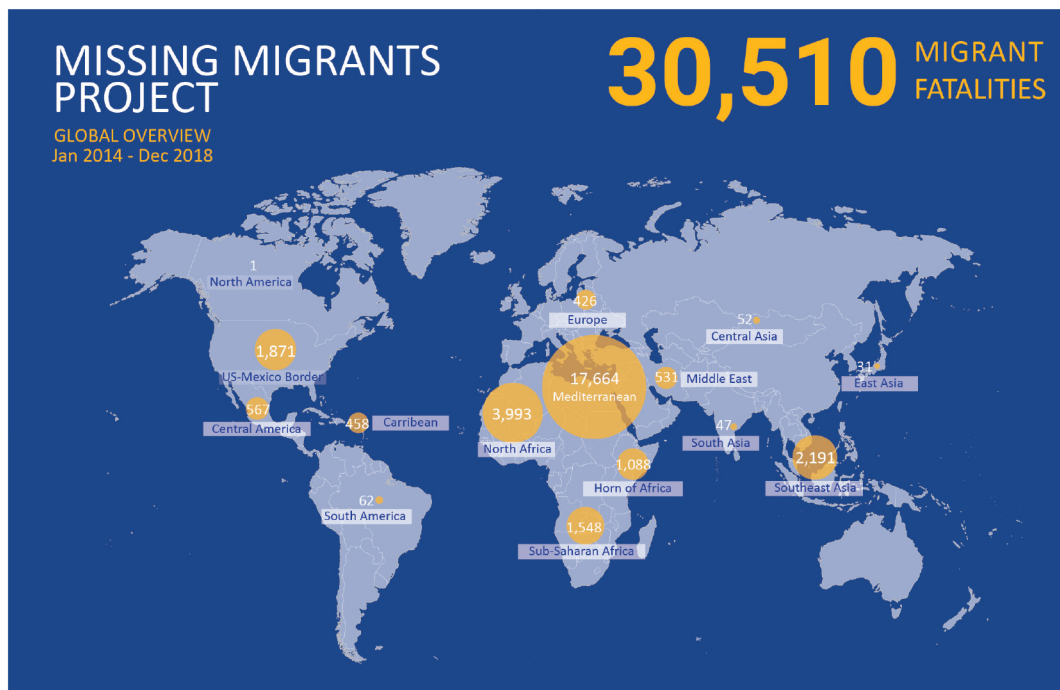
Icon 4: Death by Adrien Coquet from the Noun Project

Icon 5: 'Rape' by Cédric Villain from the Noun Project

Icon 6: 'Human trafficking' by Gan Khoon Lay from the Noun Project



MIGRANT DEATHS WORLDWIDE IN 2016



Source: Missing Migrants Project <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/>



MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES: THE RIGHT ROUTES

What are the right routes?

"What are the routes you need to take? Because if you don't take the right channels to travel out of your country, at the end of the day you would not be recognized. The worst of it is that when you are not recognized, you do not have control over your movement in another man's land. One thing that I have realized especially coming to Germany is that things are so different; in terms of health when you have a headache, it is not like our country that you walk into a pharmacy and get drugs or you go to a hospital you get someone treat you at minimum cost. Here things are so formalized, people registered themselves through insurance everywhere. If you come unapproved way, you wouldn't make it. You wouldn't have access to these systems, and you are left on your own."

What would you tell a younger brother or sister who was thinking of migrating to consider before they make the journey?

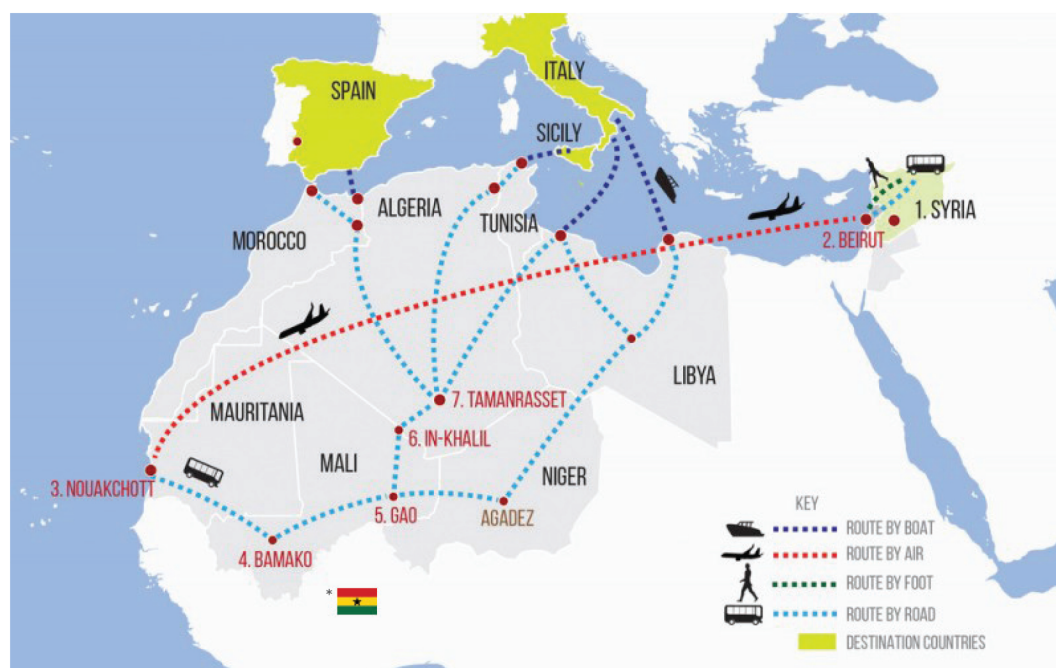
"You have to pick your career and your career path.

Then you have to align it where you are going into.

To get adequate information they need, you need to know what, where and why? It is like the SMART exercise on the workshop. ([#smart2migrate](#))

Use the right means, get your document right.

It is not all about abroad you can also set-up something in Ghana by creating services."



Source: Morocco's Triple Role in the Euro-African Migration System, Middle East Institute

<http://newirin.irinnews.org/global-refugee-crisis> *Ghana national flag added (not part of original art)

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

What are your expectations?

What are your reasons?

Is it attainable?

- What are the risks of irregular migration?
- Is 'backdoor' migration a viable option?
- What are your migration expectations?
- Having gained a deeper knowledge of the dangers related to irregular migration, would you still consider 'backdoor migration' as an option for a better life?
- Whether you answer Yes/No, can you explain the reasons for your choice?
- Did you have a realistic idea of what irregular migration can involve?
- Do you think your expectations are too optimistic?
- Do you think migrating regularly (work or study visa) could be an attainable option?
- Would you take steps to apply for a study or work visa in the near future?
- Would you consider joining young people in your community to start a business?

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INFORMATION ON 'IRREGULAR MIGRATION' ROUTES

InfoMigrants Personal Stories

<https://www.infomigrants.net/en/stories/>

A Deadly Journey for Children: The Central Mediterranean Migration Route

UNICEF Refugee and Migrant Crisis, NOVEMBER 2015

https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/EN_UNICEF_Central_Mediterranean_Migration.pdf

MIGRATION CONTROL, TAZ PROJECT

<https://migration-control.taz.de/#en>

"In order to make the road to Europe more difficult, many African borders are being equipped with high-tech infrastructure and fence systems. Fortress Europe is being expanded in Africa. Biometrics, fingerprint scanners, readers, monitoring systems, databases - Africa is thus becoming a market for European technology. This makes those borders increasingly impassable for many refugees and migrant workers towards Europe, but also for nomads and ethnic groups living on both sides of the borders. Free movement is limited. Europe is following the motto: Schengen for us, fences for Africa.

East and West Africa have guaranteed the free movement of labor and goods and want to introduce common passports. Integration rather than regulation could bring development for the continent - especially in a globalized world."



PLAY VIDEO [USB STICK]



EUROPE'S MOST FORTIFIED BORDER IS IN AFRICA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY_Yiu2U2Ts

The sixth and last Vox Borders episode deals with a border between Morocco and Spain. The journey to asylum is never easy. And perhaps no one knows this better than would-be African migrants to the European Union. In North Africa, on the border of Morocco, there's a Spanish town called Melilla. It's technically Europe. So undocumented migrants and refugees, asylum seekers, wait in limbo for a chance to scale the fence and apply for asylum in Europe.

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<http://www.vox.com>