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Social Media & Truthful Storytelling

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#DEFYHATENOW | CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL MEDIA & TRUTHFUL STORYTELLING

An introduction to the use of social media and storytelling in the migration context.

Information on ethical ways to use social media; narratives from migrants and returnees about their journeys and experiences abroad because of shame; how to campaign on Social Media to help other migrants in their journey; advice on digital security online.

SOCIAL MEDIA & MIGRATION NARRATIVES

· Expectations of life in Europe are largely shaped by the Facebook posts and WhatsApp messages of friends and relatives who had previously emigrated.

· Prospective migrants see photos on social media posted from trusted friends living in Europe – in them, they have trendy haircuts and designer jackets smile next to luxury cars on clean, orderly German streets.

· They have friends in Europe that tell them how great life in Europe is, how they were making lots of money, and downplayed the dangers of the journey.

· Experiences of friends in Europe as conveyed on social media speak much more directly to prospective migrants than news footage of capsized boats and the dire advertising campaigns created by the national and foreign governments to dissuade potential migrants.

· The reality of irregular migrants once they arrive in Germany is there is no easy living and luxury cars; their friends live in cramped apartments, struggling to find work and integrate into a new and confusing culture.

· Because their families had invested so much to help them reach Europe, the men feel enormous pressure to show that they were happy and successful.

· Thus it is essential to take into account the substantial influencing capacity of social media and the centrality of personal connections. These platforms, which have become an element of daily life in nearly every part of the world, have the ability to both put people in harm's way and to help keep them safe.

· **http://globalmedia.mit.edu/2019/01/28/migrant-social-medias-influence-on-migration/**

RUMORS ABOUT EUROPE

GAME: True or False?

Which of these rumors do you believe are true and which are false?

· The ship for the crossing is very big, it even has a pool and a cinema.

· Every refugee receives a welcome payment of €2,000.

· If you don't like it in Germany, they'll just give you a visa for Canada

· Germany has reserved 800,000 slots for Afghan refugees alone.

· We have 25 years of experience, and your transport to Europe is 100 percent legal and achievable.

· Germany grants a house of their own to every refugee.

· German corporations need new workforce, Germany takes 5,000 migrants daily.

"Will your life in Europe be easy – true or false?" Life is difficult in an expensive country like Germany if you don't speak German or have the right education to get a job."

https://rumoursaboutgermany.info/

STORY-TELLING MIGRATION: THE TRUTH

Migration narratives for truth on social media

· Workshop participants discuss stories migrants or returnees tell back home; examples of realistic or misleading stories they heard about migration experiences; how on Social Media they share stories about their experiences.

· Reflect on why people lie about their journeys and life abroad on social media.

· Tools to post and share truthful, informative and ethical content on Social Media.

MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES – INFORMED CHOICES

What kind of steps people should take to make informed choices?

"I think people should seek information. Speak to the right people.
There are so many people that will talk to you, but you need to be disciplined to find out which information is consistent out of the many that you have spoken to.

Go online

· Not look at people who only post about the good.

· Ask and critique whatever you see.

· Find out if they are saying this is what is happening.

· What are the bad and good aspects?

· Make sure that you consistently get these answers to these questions and then you can actually decide if you have to travel.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON MIGRATION EXERCISE

DISCUSSION ON THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MIGRATION NARRATIVES

Group Discussion:

· Invite everyone in the group to share their experiences of social media and migration.

· Ask someone to write down key points of knowledge and stories as they are shared on a flipchart, post-it notes or whiteboard to give the group a visual showing the impact of social media.

· What messages have you seen on social media & migration?

· Have you seen misleading stories or information about regular or irregular migration?

· Do you believe these stories, images or messages are truthful and reflect reality?

· What effect do these have on your own decisions and aspirations towards migration?

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON MIGRATION ⟶ HOW TO COUNTER SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVES

REGULAR MIGRATION

· Good standard of living

· Cultural exploration

· Activism (gay rights/ politics)

· Education

· Career opportunities

· Family reunion

· Aggressive recruitment efforts by universities on Social media:

· Education = Success

· A degree from a European/American University it gives you a good chance of employment.

· Social media could also be used by migrants to express their frustrations and difficulties.

· Social media for awareness creation on genuine opportunities and requirements.

· Social media skills training online, IT Skills

· Provide mentors, online coaches for people via social media

· Do you fact check or confirm details of social media posts, stories and messages?

· How would you counter these with more truthful and realistic messages?

· What kinds of stories, images and information would you like to see about migration?

Jot down notes and terms on flip chart or post-its or chalkboard as they arise.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON MIGRATION → HOW TO COUNTER SOCIAL MEDIA NARRATIVES

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

· Images of good living

· Ability to travel around the world easily

· Connection Man Scam*

· Travel to Europe & a job is granted

· If you are a sports person, you can easily become a football star

· #one can become a star

· Once you get to Europe you become a citizen "Noa waram mu-woa Wuramu"(Ghanaian saying "once you are in you are in")

· Get married to European citizens and you have permanent stay + cash

· Leaving the home country via connection man = arriving alive

· Ability to give a wrong perception of luxurious living Eg. Cars, houses

· Wrong impression about clothing food

· People show-off with money

Be Truthful And Realistic About Challenges

· Images of real-life struggle

· Information graphics of people who died in the process

· Statistics about asylum and refugee refusal Posting pictures about people who die trying to reach the West

· Personal stories from individuals who used the irregular migration paths

· Provide a good source of information for travelers

· Give an adequate account of real-life experience abroad via social media

· Show the consequence of irregular migrations and living without proper documents.

· Images/videos come with a real description.

· Real stories must be told

CAMPAIGNING FOR A SAFER JOURNEY

Learn to use your competence in Social Media to campaign to help other migrants with truthful, informative and ethical content related to migration.

PR Strategy Canvas on Migration
Workshop participants PR for Social Media on regular and irregular migration issues.

Core Messages:

· There are many legal ways to migrate to Europe

· Opportunities back home are numerous

· Back door may be your bad luck

· You can make it in Ghana.

· You too can make it like "Despite"(Despite is a guy who used to be shoe shiner who is now a famous

Millionaire in Ghana). Sharing stories of people like him who succeed doing business in Ghana.

· #Thinkb4umigrate

· #homegrownopportunities

Channels to reach out to your Audiences?

· Radio stations (FMs) & Ghana TV stations (GTV)

· Workshops

· Blogs and newsletters

· Website

· Facebook & WhatsApp

· Schools

· Webinar

· Post & Photos on Facebook and twitter

How will you maintain & engage your Audience?

· Create a regional network for the migrant media network

· Constant update on social media

· Use the DAAD platform

· To pass information & maintain relationships with schools

Core objectives to leverage through the PR strategy?

· Create Awareness and to discuss migration ideas with young people

· Develop local opportunities as alternatives

· Equip people on facts & figures on survival rate

· Dangers & challenges with irregular migration

· Opportunities existing in Ghana

· Videos of individuals stories about migration

· Guide/mentor online community for MMN

· Publish statistics on people who die using irregular routes

· Asylum & refugee refusals

· Funding opportunities for further studies.

COMMUNICATION MEDIUMS USED IN GHANA

· Cybercafes are phased out in Ghana.

· Most people use smartphones, as long as the phone has internet and WhatsApp.

· When people buy phones, the first question is; "does it have WhatsApp?"

· Older people also use WhatsApp to make calls.

· The second most popular platform is Facebook.

· Twitter and Instagram are not popular outside school. Most students I'm sure use Instagram.

DIGITAL SAFETY

Basic knowledge on digital safety, special focus on safety by using Social Media.

SECURITY IN A BOX – DIGITAL SECURITY TOOLS AND TACTICS
The Tactics Guides in this toolkit cover basic principles, including advice on how to use social media and mobile phones more safely. The Tool Guides offer step-by-step instructions to help you install, configure and use some essential digital security software and services. The Community Toolkits focus on specific groups of people — sometimes in specific regions — who face significant digital security threats. Security in-a-Box developed by Front Line Defenders and Tactical Technology Collective, with a global network of thousands of activists, trainers and digital security experts.
https://securityinabox.org/en/
https://tacticaltech.org/#/
https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/

TACTICAL TECH: DATA, TRAVEL & ACTIVISM
Whether a non-governmental organisation or a human rights defender, in today's society, our data is collected, stored and analysed every step of the way. From visa applications to social media profiles, from attending a conference to meal choices on a flight, sharing a photo from a protest or simply walking past a CCTV camera – we are rendered into data which is quantified, cross referenced and compiled to form profiles about us as individuals and social graphs about us as groups.

Within the blurred lines between corporations and governments; and the elevated threats against the work of human rights defenders in many countries; these profiles take a different dimension beyond corporate interests, and can become at times, the center of the threat model. Under this project, the Data and Activism team aims to trace how this process happens, raise awareness on its different implications; and – where possible – explore protection strategies and creative responses.
https://tacticaltech.org/#/projects/toolkits-guides/

TAKE BACK THE TECH – SAFETY TOOLKIT
Four tips for better smartphone privacy and security

1.Password-protect your phone and use encryption. If someone gets their hands on your phone, you can prevent them from reading its stored data by putting a strong password on the phone and encrypting its contents.

2.Choose encrypted apps for calls and texting. Phone calls and text messages are easily tracked or intercepted. Use encrypted conversation apps like Android's TextSecure/Telegram or Apple's FaceTime/iMessage.

3.Always update your Android or iOS system. Hackers and spies take advantage of newly discovered loopholes and backdoors, so always update your mobile's operating system.

4.Use a second phone for maximum security. Phones are designed to be locatable, and many apps are designed to share data even when you don't realise it. More apps on your phone equals more risk. If you are concerned about your privacy, keep one phone for essential communication only.
https://www.takebackthetech.net/be-safe/safety-toolkit

DIGITAL PRIVACY & SECURITY RESOURCES
Protect your data and privacy with these software and tools
https://medium.com/coinmonks/an-insight-to-digital-privacy-and-security-resources-401ded4a5ad6

ONONYMOUS ONLINE SAFETY OVERVIEW
https://ononymous.org/

MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES – REALITIES OF LIFE IN EUROPE

ARE THERE PARTICULAR STORIES PEOPLE TELL BACK HOME?

"People shares stories about good and bad. The ones I think are bad dominate. They are not bad in that they paint a bad picture of Europe. No, they are bad as they paint too good a picture of Europe. How you can easily be transformed to become rich, without showing how the person can become rich. Mostly this is stories people tell and make in movies. But it is not real life, that alone gave me a lot of bad influence by making me think that Europe is a paradise where things just happened that you don't have to work. Most of the time young people will look at the flashy aspect of people who have been to places. They also want to live a life that is kind of fictional. They don't really know in reality; they just look at images. These images are very addictive and influential. So, they want to look and be like somebody. But they are ignorant in the sense that they don't really know what they need to do to be like such a person and they don't know if what they are seeing is even real."

MITIGATING FALSE INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

I just tell people that cheap things are not real. Anything that you didn't work for, when you receive a message and it looks too good to be true, you just know that it is not true. Because there are a lot of people who struggle to get those opportunities and they never get it. Besides, what did you do to deserve it?

You don't have a formula to tell people, you will know depending on the context of people you meet, and their education level. I show videos on the struggle on the sea when young people are crossing borders, the mistreatment of people who work as house help and I try to connect it with how people get themselves into such situations.

FACT CHECKING FAKE NEWS & LINKS

Offline tips for areas without internet access: One thing that could be done is to tell the person if you know someone who is knowledgeable in these things or who in your society knows about these things, cross-check with that person.
Let the person check it for you, cross-check with others whether this is true or fake.

We have to look for some stories to tell from the individuals who have hustled very hard and either have failed or succeeded in Europe; listing to both stories, there is always a tough struggle and no cheap way of making it. You have to work hard towards it.

SMUGGLERS AND TRAFFICKERS

UNDERSTANDING ONLINE MANIPULATION

Traffickers and smugglers provide wrong information and promise migration services to Ghanaian unemployed youth, with the aim to trap them into their fake deals. These services include guiding and escorting during the journey, connections via their established networks along the route and providing fake travel documents (Passports, I.D cards, Visas and Stamps) that could easily assist them in the host country. This proactive recruitment and misinformation increases the number of migrants who are willing to buy smuggling services.

Traffickers and smugglers advertise their business where migrants can be easily reached in schools, churches, neighbourhoods home to diaspora communities and various social media outlets online. They

target youth who are unemployed and lack aspirations in their communities mostly due to limited socio-economic opportunities.
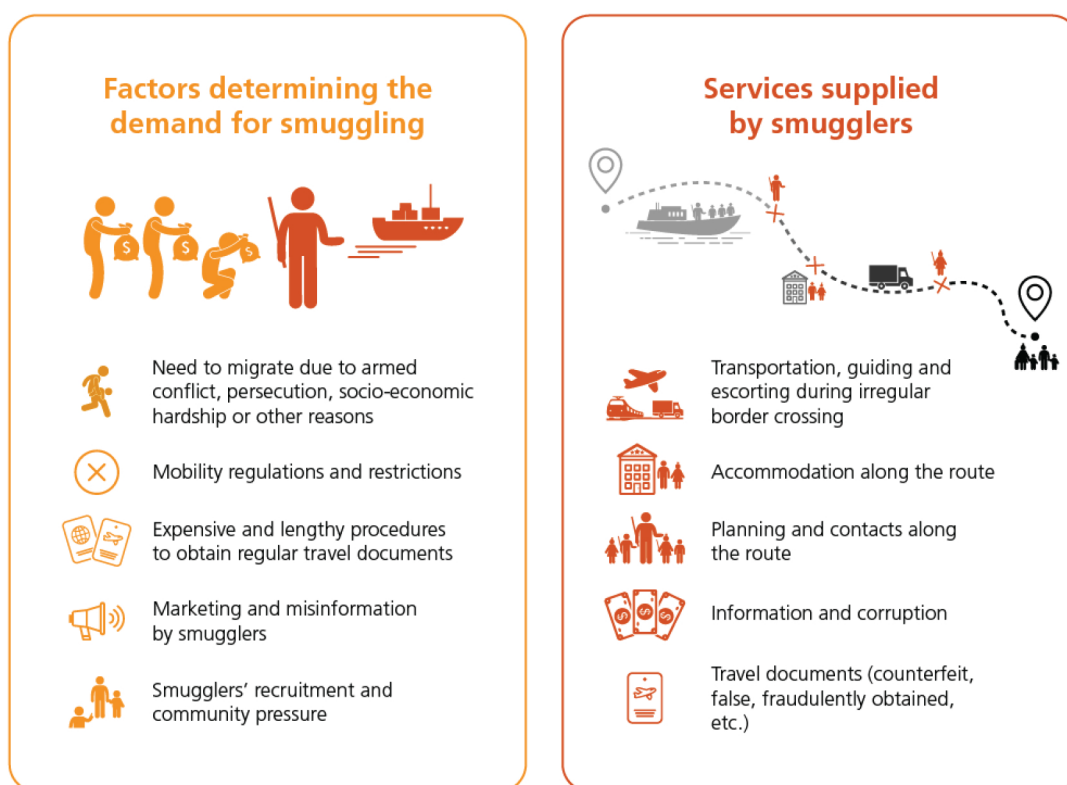
Migrants are subject to lies from smugglers and human traffickers. Social media channels have become more widespread as a tool for smugglers both to contact migrants and to spread false information and lies about migration and Europe.

The media and researchers are starting to talk about the "**digital refugees**," because smart-phones, the internet and social media are becoming key tools used by migrants during their journeys, and central to have besides food, water and shelter.

Irregular migrants who fall prey to smugglers are highly likely to be exploited and become victims of violence, rape, theft, kidnapping, extortion and trafficking in persons. There are evidence of mass killings, systematic torture and sexual violence by unscrupulous smugglers and traffickers.

These migrants are vulnerable and face numerous human rights violations along all the smuggling routes. Smugglers' quest for financial gains leads them to neglect the safety of migrants during journeys. For example, smugglers may set off without sufficient food and drink, the vehicles they use might be faulty, and migrants who fall ill or are injured along the way might not receive any care, be abandoned and left to fend for themselves.

Gaining awareness of the way smugglers operate and being aware of the red flags that indicate manipulation, can improve the chances to protect themselves from this trap.

Factors determining the demand for smuggling

- Need to migrate due to armed conflict, persecution, socio-economic hardship or other reasons
- Mobility regulations and restrictions
- Expensive and lengthy procedures to obtain regular travel documents
- Marketing and misinformation by smugglers
- Smugglers' recruitment and community pressure

Services supplied by smugglers

- Transportation, guiding and escorting during irregular border crossing
- Accommodation along the route
- Planning and contacts along the route
- Information and corruption
- Travel documents (counterfeit, false, fraudulently obtained, etc.)

Sources: UNODC, Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants 2018 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18.IV.9).

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION
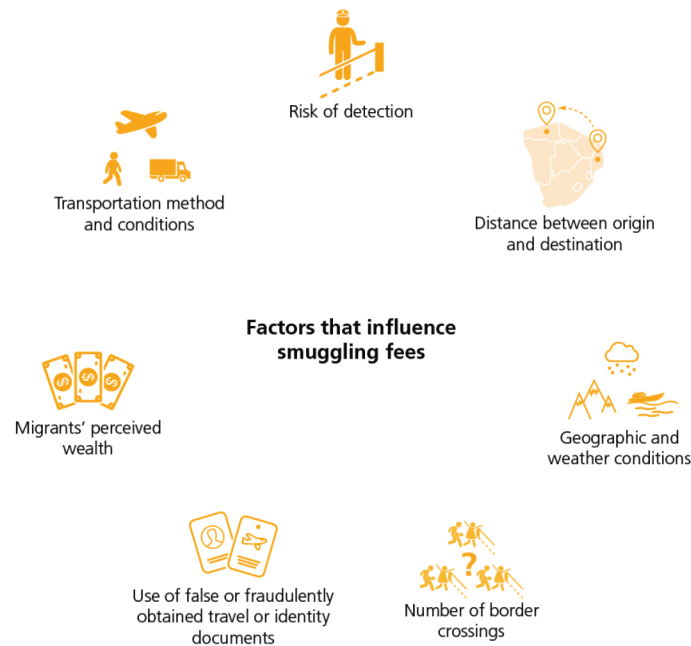# MANIPULATION & HUMAN TRAFFICKERS

What is human trafficking?

What strategies are used by traffickers?

How to escape

- How does human trafficking operate?
- What strategies are used by traffickers?
- Does social media influence your decision to migrate?
- What is human trafficking?
- What strategies do human traffickers use to attract their victims?
- Examples and case studies of human trafficking.
- What can you do to escape if you are trapped by a human trafficker?

HUMAN TRAFFICKING & MIGRANTS

- 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.
- Smugglers tell these young people that they have secured jobs for them in Libya where they will make $500 - $700 a month, and bonuses as well.
- Human traffickers and smugglers intentionally circulate misinformation, half-truths and avoid discussing unpleasant possibilities, danger or risks.
- Economic migrants send (mis)information home to influence others' decision to migrate, strategically 'editing' difficult experiences to appear more successful
- Social media plays a huge role because of the pictures and videos potential migrants see of others living the life in Europe.

Factors that influence smuggling fees

Risk of detection

Transportation method and conditions

Distance between origin and destination

Migrants' perceived wealth

Geographic and weather conditions

Use of false or fraudulently obtained travel or identity documents

Number of border crossings

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

CASE STUDY: HOW SMUGGLERS USE FACEBOOK TO ADVERTISE

People smugglers using Facebook to lure migrants into 'Italy trips'
Patrick Kingsley, migration correspondent, The Guardian

Using phrases more suited to tourist magazines and images of luxury yachts, smugglers based in Egypt and Turkey openly advertise services on social media. It reads like the website of a travel agency. "A trip to Italy next week in a big fast tourist yacht," says the Facebook post beneath a picture of a luxury ocean liner. "Two floors, air-conditioned, prepared for tourists. Recommended for families."

But a package holiday this is not. It is the Facebook page of a Turkey-based people smuggler, one of dozens if not hundreds of smugglers using the social network to advertise their services in plain sight. Smugglers along the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean are openly publicising their phone numbers, prices and schedules on social media to drum up business. The names of their pages euphemistically conjure images of tourism companies or advocacy groups, rather than smuggling routes that are bearing record numbers of migrants across the Mediterranean.

"Asylum and immigration to all of Europe – helping people in immigration and asylum" is the tagline for a second Turkish network. A third group, "Travel aid", offers fake visas and passports, while a fourth smuggler, based in Egypt, calls his group "The way to Europe", and illustrates its page with an image of Moses parting the Red Sea.

Different smugglers use their groups for slightly different purposes. Some simply advertise specific trips. Several smugglers use their pages to liveblog the progress of their clients across the sea. Other groups constitute a chatroom for migrants to share stories and advice. And many pages are used by smugglers to assuage concerns over migrant safety – with varying degrees of credibility.

In reality, migrants say they consume the propaganda with a pinch of salt. People largely use Facebook

to source smugglers' numbers, and often take a sceptical view of the smugglers' promises. "Not all of a smuggler's talk is believed," says Hashem, who found a range of smugglers' numbers online, ahead of a recent boat voyage to Italy. "Most people get their info about smugglers from relatives and friends." **https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/08/people-smugglers-using-facebook-to-lure-migrants-into-italy-trips**

MIGRANT PERSPECTIVES – RED FLAGS

· Offering to take you to Europe for a fixed sum of money

· Promises of work that will pay you $500 - 1000 per month

· Scholarships that don't ask for your academic qualifications

· Travel agency promises based on what fee you can pay

· Anything that sounds too good to be true, probably is a lie!

What red flags do you see in the context of Ghana and misleading information?

> " When I started using WhatsApp, I received quite a lot of information from friends who forward messages like…"we will take you abroad" … "there is work there for you". "

You try to trace the information and there are contacts attached to these messages.

When you call, they will tell you that the process is quite simple you pay this amount of money and they will take you. I never tried because I didn't have money to pay and the information is not satisfactory. Another form is scholarships. Agencies sent a lot of information to me about the scholarship that they have, and they are willing to offer. But once I start sending emails, then they ask me, do you have this amount of money? if you have, it is really simple. Instead of talking about what is your qualification and how qualified you are. I learned in school if you are going abroad via education is better, so they would be interested in knowing about your qualification. These fake scholarships don't talk about that but for a fee they will take you to Germany or Europe."

"There are other communities like a diaspora community and some political groups who advise how to travel here safely or how to stay longer here. They don't actually have a framework, they only give you advice, this is what you need to do to come. It is always like the connection man outside Europe or in-home countries who try to give you some advice to come here because they do it for a living, they get paid for it. It is like a profession for them. But they don't actually tell you the pros and cons, they don't give you a detailed plan on how you are going to come here or how things look like here."

Misleading information

Those who came by the back route, basically they try to project the idea that going through the Mediterranean to come to Europe is hard work, a tough trip. To some extent, I give them credit but sometimes the images they put out on social media about where they are living, this is not true… the car they are driving which is also not true.

They completely show a false image of the cities they are living to the rural folks. I know them, I also live here, and when we do meet or talk one on one. I ask them to consider "What kind of image you are putting out there on WhatsApp?"

"'Have you ever sat inside a Lamborghini?"

Just because you are allowed to enter the shop; stand next to the car and take pictures and post it on WhatsApp or Facebook… I tell them personally what they are doing is wrong. But I haven't been able to comment on their post on social media.

"Some messages will be sent saying that UNESCO, UN or AU is taking this number of people to this place. This government is taking this number of young people to this country for training or whatever, then word of mouth follows. If I read something like that, I'm always quick to read and a lot of people who are also enlightened are quick to read to set up the other (correct) version for it. You can receive a message many times. Once one person says "this is a wrong message" or "it's fake news" in a group, because people often belong to two or more whatsapp groups, it keeps forwarding like that. So, the next time it comes around you can see the correction."

"I think red flags depends on who is assimilating the information. Some people might not see it as a red flag. If a person is in a desperate situation, where someone says there is a job opportunity through the internet and they are asking for payment, this guy is to some extent educated but he still didn't think it was fake. He didn't even think it was a scam. Because he is unemployed and looking for a job. So, he still tends to believe this could be true. Perceiving it as a red flag will depend on the individual."

"I think it depends on the topic. In Canada there were a lot of WhatsApp messages distributed over the internet telling people that they need this number of young ladies between this age 15-30 to go to Canada. "There are jobs whether you have a certificate or not." Such messages are not a red flag or fake per se, indeed there is somebody who will take your money and manage to send some people to the place. They have people who can directly tell you that this is true because I will connect you with someone who has gone through the same thing to talk to you. They do have people who also live abroad and have a foreign number and chat with you and tells you "oh I pass through the same", but this person is an influencer. So, in that context, it is difficult for you to receive the message and understand that this is fake. Because there are people who give testimony."