

REPORT ON THE LAUNCH OF THE MIGRATION MEDIA NETWORK - #MMN THE GAMBIA CHAPTER:

Introduction

A three day induction training was organized during the launch of the Migration Media Network (#MMN) The Gambia chapter. Beside the launch, a training workshop was organised for the #MMN trainers (known as the #MMN Local Coordinators) whose work is to coordinate the #MMN activities in communities of the selected Regions. The training was held from the 29th April to the 1st of May 2021 at the NaNA conference center in the Cape Point region of Bakau, The Gambia. The event was part of the #MMN activities of r0g agency for cultural and critical transformation an NGO based in Germany Berlin. The Migrant Media Network project is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office that seeks to provide access for the public to information on migration and thus contribute to minimizing irregular migration. The training of trainers was to equip participants with requisite expertise, knowledge and skills to efficiently and effectively engage with the community in curbing all forms of irregular migrations and dangers associated with it.

The training was attended by a cross section of participants including some prominent guests from the government of The Gambia and some stakeholders in the migration sector etc. These include a representative of the Minister of Youths and Sports of The Gambia, the Chairperson of the Gambian National Youths Council (NYC), Mr. Ousman Fatty, Ms. Blöchl, Chargée d'Affaires of the Liaison Office for The Gambia of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Director of West Africa Radio, Ms. Agnes E. J. Thomasi, the #MMN Ghana Country Coordinator Mr. Peter Narh, and a Regional #MMN Coordinator in Ghana, Ms. Rhoda Wedam. Also fifteen young trainees/Participants were drawn from the various regions of The Gambia. Cognizant of the youthful diversity of the Gambia, the training targeted ten influential youth leaders across four administrative regions in the Gambia. The selected youth leaders were taken through an intensive three days session on irregular migration and its related issues.



Group photo of participants with invited guests

Speeches

Various speakers took the podium to deliberate on issues related to irregular migration including the country coordinator of The Gambia Mr. Dembo Kambi who started by welcoming guests and participants to what he described as an all-pertinent training. Kambi dilated on issues relating to funding of the project, selections of regions and expectations of participation during the training. He further highlighted that the Regions of North Bank (NBR), Upper River (URR), West Coast (WCR) and Lower River (LRR) were chosen because they are believed to be the most affected in terms of irregular migration.

In his remarks, the Deputy Executive Director of the Gambian National Youth Council who represented the Minister of Youths and Sports stressed and assured the #MMN project and its officials of his government support in any way practicable. Mr. Ceesay who also officially opened the workshop and thus launched the #MMN project in the Gambia, implored participants to take the training seriously. He stressed the significance of this project as irregular migration is a major concern that the government of The Gambia is very particular about. He noted further that a project of this nature is timely as it would contribute meaningfully to efforts aimed at curbing and minimising misconceptions about irregular migration.

Speaking further, Mr. Ceesay lamented that some of the few migrants that safely made it to their destination are finding life challenging, contradicting their pre-departure beliefs about life in those countries. This he said has led many of them (migrants) to become criminals in those countries. He further urged participants to remain steadfast and take the training with a sense of patriotism and ensure the right information gets to the right people and at the right time. This Ceesay concludes would not only save The Gambia huge resources to control the menace of irregular migrations but also save families and the country that lose precious lives.

Other speakers like Ms. Blöchl, the Chargée d'Affaires of the German Embassy aligned to the words of Mr. Ceesay. She also urged participants to take the training seriously and ensure that information and skills acquired be rightfully and exhaustively shared with the targeted people.

Training

The workshop officially kicked-off right after the lunch of the training by the minister's representative, the workshop was meant to orient participants on the purpose of the training especially on the #MMN Field kit that serves as a manual to engage communities in free and open discussions. These kits include the Field Guide Handout, a Migration Game, and the Hyrac Box.



Pictures of the Training kits at the workshop

Moreover, subsequent topics of the Field Guide Handout were also treated at length. Dembo Kambi, Rhoda Wedam, and Peter Narh took turns to explain various components of these topics to the fifteen young participants. The contents of the Field Guide Handout include community entry, monthly reporting, and monthly accounting for funds,

Field Guide Handout

Trainees/Participants were thoroughly taken through the four main topics in the Field Guide Handout: these include (Plan Before You Pack; Migration Decisions; Human Trafficking; and Resources and Information). Rhoda Wedam, who led this part of the training, emphasized that the local coordinators need to own these topics to ensure appreciation on issues at hand. Each of the chapters were extensively treated to the understanding of the participants. In view of their already high experiences the local coordinators having been trained before this workshop in other programmes quickly immersed themselves in the topics discussed.

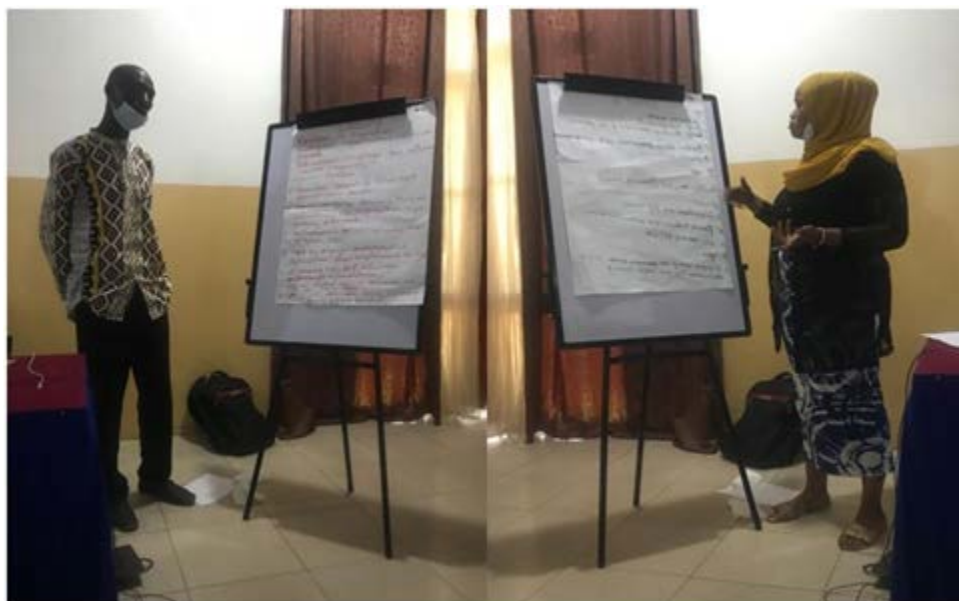


Coordinator Rhoda listening to an opinion from a participant during the training

At the end of the deliberations, participants organized themselves in groups and were requested to discuss contents 2 and 3 of the Field Guide Handout. These contents are a group discussion that made the participants discuss issues about migration and human trafficking. With predefined questions from the Field Guide Handout, the groups made presentations on their discussions of the questions. The following were some key points from their presentations:

- Major reasons people migrate from The Gambia are poverty, education, marriage and unemployment.
- Many people imagine life is always much better in destination countries. This is a pull factor for all sorts of migration.
- There are numerous potentials and opportunities available in The Gambia that youth can access like Agriculture, IT, commerce, and industrial or agribusiness manufacturing; but the said above are just few of the opportunities currently available, these when emphasized in

the #MMN activities can deliver the desired impact on informed migration especially with regards to the dangers involved in travelling illegally, meanwhile stories and reports on social media and TV are indeed scary.



Presentations by group leaders

Suggestions to Field Guide Handout

During group presentations participants demonstrated satisfactory understanding of the various chapters. Discussions on the group presentations also highlighted issues in the Field Guide that participants identified could be carefully handled within the Gambian context. These include the following:

- The importance for Local Coordinators in discussing the topics to probe narratives of the community. To this end, sub-questions could be included with key discussion points across the Field Guide Handout. In this way, more insights and knowledge of migration dynamics from the perspectives of communities could be unearthed.
- Focus should be placed as well on discussing the various topics in the Field Guide Handout not only as individual decisions on migration but also as family decisions. For instance, the topic on Migration Decisions, should include questions that can be addressed in a family setting. This is because social relations in Africa are mostly communal and often the individual does not take decisions alone.

Community Activities

After the normal process of revisiting chapters covered in the previous day (Day one) and other necessary formalities, day two kicked-off with participants being introduced to the set of activities that Local coordinators typically engage the community with, also activities normally conducted in communities were introduced. Participants were also enlightened on the use of the 'Think carefully, move safely game', info poster and rumour cards in exchanging information with people about irregular migration.

In her Training session Ms. Rhoda took Participants through activities with examples of the Local Coordinators in Ghana. Rhoda comprehensively explained how Local Coordinators should document and report major experiences in their work, including photography, the use of the #MMN social media handles, and awareness creation with the USSD code.

Participants at the workshop shared their own experiences on community entry. Speaking from experiences Participants noted that community entry is crucial for good reception by communities. It is significant to note that all the participants were already engaged in youth-based activities in their various regions and communities. To this end, they emphasized that these activities they were already engaged with would serve as a very good entry points for their #MMN work.

'Think carefully, move safely' Migration Game (Day Three)

Day three which was also the final day of the three-day workshop commenced with a quick recap of the points/areas discussed during the previous days. Subsequently, Participants organized themselves into groups and were introduced to the Migration Game. As a key part of the community activities, the Migration Game is aimed at promoting active participation of people in the community and the discussions around migration. To this end, the game is termed as an effective method to solicit the interests and insights of the people in discussing issues surrounding irregular migration. Participants later played the game with attention and enthusiasm and further emphasised that the game was not only educative but also interesting.



Gambia's regional Coordinator Kambi watched while Trainer Rhoda explained to participants on how to play the Migration Game!

According to Participants the game is highly appreciated and further indicated that its intended goal to promote participatory discussion in the communities would be achieved.

Closing and conclusion

At the end of the three day training workshop participants underscored the importance of both the Ghanaian and Gambian #MMN projects to continue to learn from, share with, and encourage each other towards raising more visibility and an even higher name profile of #MMN project for both The Gambia and Ghana, as one of the most relevant and successful migration projects in West Africa.

In a symbolic show of a successful workshop, the #MMN team from Ghana led by Rhoda Wedam presented to the Gambia #MMN team led by their Country Coordinator Dembo Kambi, a Field Guide Kit.



Handover of the Field Guide Kit to the Gambian #MMN team