

#MMN - Migrant Media Network Workshop

Launch of #MMN Field Guide Kit and Strengthening Partnerships for Safer Migration

June 23-24, 2021

Erata hotel, Accra, Ghana

Workshop Report

Introduction

Started in 2019 and active in the field for two years now, the #MMN - Migrant Media Network held a workshop to launch its new Field Guide Kit and strengthen existing partnerships with key stakeholders in the field of migration. The workshop was held at the Erata Hotel in Accra from June 23-24, 2021. The MMN Field Guide Kit is a set of open-source materials designed to foster engagement around the topics of regular and irregular migration.

The Migrant Media Network project is a community-based awareness campaign that aims to provide young people considering international migration with credible and reliable information and training on migration and social media issues. The goal is to enable people to make informed decisions and choices about migration and be aware of safer migration options to Europe. It also encourages young people to explore entrepreneurial opportunities in Ghana and fosters economic and social resilience within communities.

The project is funded by the German Federal Foreign Office and is a project of the r0g_agency, together with its partners in Ghana and The Gambia. In Ghana, the Youth Network for Human Rights and Democracy is the implementing partner for the project.

For the workshop, over 40 participants attended, consisting of #MMN coordinators in Ghana, people from six key stakeholder organizations, and the media. They discussed the current status of activities that the stakeholders are undertaking in order to stem the tide of irregular migration and benefit more from regular migration.

Those present included:

- The Migration Management Bureau of the Ghana Immigration Service
- German Consulate of the Embassy of Germany in Ghana
- The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Ghana
- International Organization for Migration, Ghana (IOM)
- Africa Focal Point, Migration Working Group of UN Major Group for Children and Youth
- Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration



Photo: Participants at the workshop.

One community representative was invited from each of the four regions (Volta, Bono East, Central, and Northern) in which #MMN coordinators currently work. These community representatives contributed valuable insights on the work of #MMN and management of migration in general. The participation of all regional representative reflects #MMN's emphasis on local community involvement and feedback.



Photo: Two community representatives (on the left) give a presentation at the workshop.

Opening

The opening remarks of the workshop were given by Susanne Bellinghausen, co-founder of the r0g_agency and head of the #MMN project. She briefly introduced the work of the r0g_agency and #MMN and discussed the important role #MMN plays in working together with the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany. In his remarks, Benedictus Agbelom, the Ghana country manager for #MMN, highlighted the relevance of the #MMN project, especially due to the increases in undocumented and irregular migration currently taking place in West Africa. Along with the risks irregular migration creates, it also means that young people are abandoning what could have been great opportunities to develop successful careers and livelihoods in Ghana. Challenges remain in harnessing opportunities in Ghana, yet the prospects for success are greater in Ghana than they are when taking the irregular migration path. Comments by Calvin Weber of the German Consulate in Ghana centered on the idea that Germany supports a flexible yet rigorous visa acquisition process in order to encourage regular instead of irregular migration.



Susanne Bellinghausen and Benedictus Agbelom participated virtually from Berlin, Germany.

Presentations and discussions

Pamela Cudjo of the Migration Management Bureau (MMB) of the Ghana Immigration Service reiterated that the Bureau is an open-door place for all residents in Ghana who are seeking information on migration dynamics and information about immigration and emigration in Ghana.



Pamela Cudjo of the Migration Management Bureau of the Ghana Immigration Service delivering her presentation.

She reminded the audience that in Ghana, migration in and of itself is not a negative thing; it is something that can offer many benefits. Yet what is crucial is how people migrate. She noted that irregular migration has always hampered the prosperity of the individual, family, community, and nation. Young people who migrate irregularly often find their lives ruined and their potential wasted. Ms. Cudjo emphasized that the Migration Management Bureau does not attempt to stop people from migrating. Rather, potential migrants should migrate correctly, with a valid visa and other genuine and required documents.

Contributing to the discussion, the representative of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Ghana explained that human capital development through educational support can significantly change the urge to migrate without proper documentation. Felix Barnes discussed the various educational scholarships that are available to Ghanaians for different levels of formal education in Germany or in Ghana, from a master to the post-doctoral levels.

He further noted that for DAAD scholarships, a bachelor degree is crucial to securing funding. What this implies is that people who have not reached this level of education have little chance

of securing funding from the DAAD. He acknowledged that this could limit educational opportunities for many potential migrants. However, these requirements do not less the significant contribution the DAAD makes in encouraging regular migration through educational funding.

Similar to the DAAD, but with an entrepreneurial focus, the Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration offers entrepreneurial support to returnees from Germany, as well as potential migrants with no travel experiences but zeal to develop their entrepreneurial capacities. Ernestina Adu, who presented on the center's activities, explained that they provide financial, technical, logistical, and entrepreneurial support to everyone, for free, in order to support job creation in Ghana.

Following the presentations, the audience asked many questions and offered comments. Many participants asked pertinent questions, requested more information, or expressed their divergent yet constructive views.

These presentations were attended by over thirty people from nine media houses, who covered and aired the presentations on their various news channels.



Media busy at their job during the workshop.

The engagement following the presentations, as well as high turnout of the media, suggests that discussions on migration are of high interest in Ghana. Yet there appears to be a disconnect between the high availability of information on migration on one hand and awareness among the public on where to access this information on the other hand. Organizations have and offer information, yet the majority of Ghanaians do not know to turn to these organizations for information. Thus workshops such as this current one should be a regular feature by more organizations in order to get the word out, much as #MMN works to do. #MMN's contribution to minimizing irregular migration is also felt beyond this workshop. Anecdotal evidence from various towns and villages in the regions where #MMN is active indicate that #MMN's campaign has been well received.

Launch of Field Guide Kit

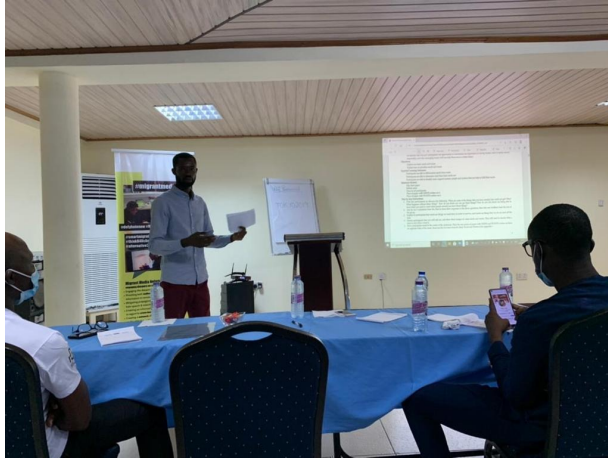
The highpoint of the first day of the workshop was the launch of the #MMN Field Guide Kit. Though in use since 2019, a formal launch of this kit was necessary to deepen awareness about the kit and the #MMN work approach. Moreover, the launch was an opportunity to explain how the various items in the kit are used. These items include the Field Guide, the #MMN Game, Cards on the #MMN USSD¹ and a pen-drive. The launch was done by the Ghana country MMN coordinator, Peter Narh.



MMN Field Guide Kit (left) and a news article about the launch of the kit (right).

Day two of the workshop was dedicated to training and internal discussions among #MMN coordinators and community representatives. Emmanuel Clifford, of Africa Focal Point Migration Working Group of the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, led the small group through the basics of how to run a small enterprise.

¹ The #MMN USSD code is *920*45# on all networks in Ghana.



Participants giving presentations during the entrepreneurial training session.

The training was aimed at equipping the coordinators and community representatives with basic skills on account keeping, growth strategies, and marketing for small enterprises that the #MMN coordinators can pass on to their community's through outreach programs.

The second day also included having the #MMN coordinators and community representatives get together with individuals from the Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration in order to explore possibilities of collaboration. The Ghanaian-German Centre was excited about #MMN's visit and gave the visitors a friendly welcome. An hour and a half of interaction ensued, during which both the Centre and #MMN agreed to develop a framework for possible collaboration, drawing on their respective strengths to complement efforts towards minimizing irregular migration.



#MMN team interacting with officials of the Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration.

Conclusion

Two main points emerged from the workshop. First, it was clear that there is a lot of potential to work together and that all stakeholders and communities would benefit from collaboration. All participants unanimously agreed that there are many benefits to communities and the nation derived from managing and minimizing irregular migration and promoting regular migration. To this end, #MMN endeavors to pursue formal collaborations with most of these organizations in due time. The visit to the Ghanaian-German Centre for Jobs, Migration, and Reintegration is a step in this direction. Second, #MMN proposed that networking among organizations should be strengthened by undertaking joint activities in communities. Joint efforts would strengthen results. Undoubtedly, each organization is already doing a lot to stem irregular migration. Yet even greater success could be had if organizations get to know more about each other and the work they do and work together.



The #MMN coordinators and community reps at the workshop.

Report compiled by Peter Narh, Ghana Country #MMN Coordinator