

# A GUIDE ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT MIGRANTS AS MESSENGERS



# Introduction

Migration is a relatively new field for behavioural science but it's a field with a great deal of potential. People all over the world make choices every day about migration – deciding whether to travel, where to go, how to go and so on. Behavioural science can improve the outcomes of people choosing to travel or pursue local opportunities instead and ensure that the decisions they make are informed by accurate information. Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) is a multidisciplinary approach that uses communication strategies that are based on behavioural science to positively influence knowledge, attitudes and social norms among individuals, institutions and communities. It involves understanding people, their beliefs and values, and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives. It involves engaging communities and listening to audiences as they identify problems, propose solutions and act upon them.

Migrants as Messengers (MaM) is a peer-to-peer awareness raising campaign that empowers young people in West Africa to make informed decisions about migration. It's carried out by returnee migrants (also known as MaM Volunteers) who share honest accounts of their migration experiences through authentic storytelling, peer-to-peer interactions, community activities, social media and influencer engagement, and radio and tv platforms. The multi-channel approach makes these stories accessible to wider audiences, including local decision-makers, community leaders, religious leaders and young people with a desire to migrate in the future. In parallel to sharing these real-life experiences, MaM Volunteers help guide young people to resources that provide information on regular migration and local opportunities. The campaign first started in 2017 in Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal, and in 2019 expanded to four more countries: Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

This booklet provides an overview of the Migrants as Messengers campaign and is a guide for other practitioners interested in replicating the campaign approach. The booklet includes a summary of achievements, a description of the different pillars of the campaign and how to implement those pillars, as well as a combined summary of the research conducted in MaM. The different sections of this booklet are:

1. Migrants as Messengers: 2019-2022 achievements
2. Mainstreaming Gender and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
3. Recruiting MaM Volunteers
4. Training Volunteers
5. Training Partners
6. Community Engagement and Youth Outreach
7. Digital Engagement
8. Content Production
9. Supporting Volunteer-led Associations
10. Media and Partner Engagement
11. Monitoring and Research
12. What was the impact of MaM?
13. Conclusion

# 01 Achievements

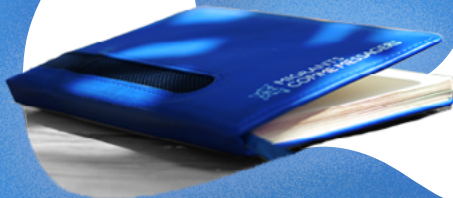


**401**  
VOLUNTEERS  
139 females



TRAINING OF  
NEWLY  
RECRUITED  
VOLUNTEERS

**45** sessions  
**616** participants  
227 females



TRAINING OF  
TRAINERS

**14** sessions  
**140** participants  
56 females



COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH  
ACTIVITIES

**624** number of events  
**147 855** participants  
69171 females



SPECIFIC SKILLS  
TRAINING

**200** sessions  
**2171** participants  
1172 females



COMMUNITY  
OUTREACH  
ACTIVITIES

**1080**  
Number of Videos published  
**147 855**  
Number of digital engagements



MEDIA

**976** mentions  
**71** partners



TRAINING FOR  
JOURNALISTS  
& CSO

**58** sessions  
**1616** participants  
659 females



# 02 Mainstreaming gender and mental health and psychosocial support

To ensure the project supports gender equality and the well-being of MaM Volunteers', gender and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) were mainstreamed in the project.

## GENDER

Migration in West Africa is often represented as a phenomenon that mostly impacts men. However, for many women, migration is a way to increase access to productive assets and economic opportunities. Migration can provide women the opportunity to escape patriarchal social structures and to improve their autonomy and status. When they migrate, women may be more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse along dangerous irregular routes. When it comes to return to the country of origin very often women experience high social stigmatization due to hardship such as sexual abuse or having to raise children as single mothers.

Migration impacts both men and women to equal degrees, thus it extremely important that women are equally involved in initiatives about migration, such as in Migrants as Messengers. Their participation to the migration discourse is a way to promote positive change in society, strengthen IOM's mandate, and to promote gender equality.

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO MAINSTREAM GENDER

- **Nominate a gender focal point** – a staff member with relevant experience.
- **Create Gender Working Group** within the team to promote inclusive dialogues on gender related topics.
- **Assess gender equality needs** and potentialities within the project.
- **Develop a gender mainstreaming strategy** which considers gender in each pillar of the project.
- **Identify specific indicators for female engagement** and design initiatives to achieve them.
- **Share lessons learned** after implementing gender-targeted activities to help inform the implementation process.
- **Produce and share briefs about gender** with colleagues and project Volunteers with relevant data and information about gender equality challenges and evolution in the region.
- **Use monitoring tools** (quantitative and qualitative) to continuously assess performance and address challenges along project implementation.



Photo: Amanda Nero/IOM 2021



## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

Digital Campaign “The Road to Equality”: For International Women’s Day in March 2022, a digital campaign was created to raise awareness on the impact of gender equality on migration, which included content produced by MaM Volunteers (such as 19 videos, seven podcasts, a blog and a short film). The campaign focused on sharing stories of people that inspired Volunteers and youth in their communities.



Photo: Mohamed Aly Diabaté / OIM Côte d'Ivoire 2022

*“Women often do not have the right to education. Women do not speak. A woman is meant to listen even if what she is told affects her; she is to accept it, digest it and live by it. This has made many women stay low for all their lives. This is why I decided to start a women’s migrant returnees’ association called the Female Returnee Forum. Its aim is to support girls and women to be less vulnerable to violence and exploitation. The organization helps their process of healing. - Chylian Azuh, MaM Volunteer, Nigeria*

## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

- **Create a gender strategy!** It is not enough to disaggregate data between male and female. Create indicators and activities that are gender transformative and allocate a specific budget and resources to enable positive change.
- **Invest in regular gender equality trainings** for program staff, partners and Volunteers.
- **Support female leadership:** MaM Volunteers created 20 returnee-migrant led associations including four female-led of which three have a dedicated mission related to gender equality.
- **Celebrate international initiatives** such as International Women’s Day and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based violence. It generates visibility and encourage engagement in gender equality that can be sustained through follow up activities.
- **Create synergies with NGOs, CSOs and other projects within IOM** as this can help scale up initiatives and contribute to sustainability.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is the foundation for well-being. It is the ability to think, learn, and understand one’s emotions and reactions of others. Migration provokes big changes and affects an individual’s welfare, sometimes positively and/or negatively. Along an irregular journey, people are exposed to many risks. Upon return, more challenges can be experienced in creating new livelihoods. There are uncertainties and often they have feelings of shame, guilt, low self-esteem, sense of failure, sense of loss. The psychosocial well-being and needs of returned migrants remain a top consideration, and the mainstreaming of a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) strategy into a peer-to-peer campaign like MaM was crucial.

## MHPSS MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY

- Capacity-building
  - Community-based MHPSS training provided for Volunteers and civil society stakeholders.
  - E-learning on Mental Health & Migration Awareness Raising.
- Community engagement :
  - MHPSS service mapping and strengthening referral mechanisms.
  - Case studies of community-based psychosocial support activities.
- Content Production
  - Interview guide on psychosocial aspects of migration experience share with Volunteers.
  - Volunteers created creative content on MHPSS.
- Digital and media engagement
  - Access to MHPSS service mapping across West Africa on WakaWell.info.
  - Digital campaigns for celebrating World Mental Health Day (10 October).
- Psychosocial support for Volunteers
  - Regular focus group discussions facilitated by a mental health professional.
- Research
  - A pilot study on the mental health and psychosocial well-being effects of being a MaM Volunteers.

*“Although the return was marked by stigmatization from some relatives because of what they called failure, expressing ourselves about our experience allowed us to feel it as a strength by informing about the real dangers of the migration journey”*  
- Diarrassouba Maimouna, MaM Volunteer from Côte d’Ivoire

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### **Tales around the fire (Senegal)**

Storytelling is deeply embedded in West African culture. In this activity, professional storytellers performed migration stories for a group of returned migrants in the traditional setting around the fire. A professional MHPSS facilitator animated the debate with returnees after the performance.

### **Body acceptance (Côte d’Ivoire)**

Body acceptance is a self-acceptance workshop for women through dance. What the participating women had in common was that their body is, or has been, the object of suffering and judgment. Dance was a way to get out of the daily routine. It allowed them to access the emotional sphere through non-verbal expression.

### **Capoeira for well-being (The Gambia)**

As an art form, Capoeira combines elements of storytelling, singing, dancing and martial arts. The movements and symbolism invite a greater awareness of oneself, one’s strengths and weaknesses, and leads the practitioner to more confidence in one’s own resources. In The Gambia, Capoeira sessions were organized for returned migrants followed by talking sessions facilitated by a MHPSS professional.



Photo: Mohamed Aly Diabaté / OIM Côte d’Ivoire 2022





Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021



# 03

## Recruiting MaM Volunteers

In the MaM peer-to-peer approach, returned migrants play a central role as Volunteers in the development, planning, and implementation and evaluation of the project. Thus, it is important to build a dynamic Volunteer network.

### STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

1. Conduct a country wide mapping to identify key intervention areas (e.g. high migration areas). These will be the areas where Volunteers will be recruited. It is important to find synergies with other programs working in the areas of protection, assistance, and reintegration of return migrants, youth capacity building, and awareness raising.
2. Create a Volunteer recruitment plan. Criteria and skills are important, but motivation is even more - so remember to be flexible!
  - Think about the skills required for a Volunteer
    - Passionate about advocacy around migration-related issues.
    - Good communication skills.
    - Active on social media.
    - Fluent in English or French.
    - Knows how to use a computer.
    - Can create creative content.
    - Experience in civic engagement, live arts (theatre, music, dance), and so on.
  - Other Volunteer criteria to keep in mind:
    - Volunteers should be returned migrants.
    - Being an IOM beneficiary is not a condition but recommended that at least half of MaM Volunteers have participated in IOM voluntary return and reintegration programmes.
3. Conduct interviews with potential Volunteers. To ensure transparency and gender balance, make sure there is at least one man and one woman on the interview panel.
  - Think about languages: English and French speakers can help with translation and subtitling of interviews and support video editing, while knowledge of local languages can strengthen awareness-raising activities on-the-ground
  - Ensure there is a good balance of men and women in the network.
4. Hold information sessions for recruited Volunteers so they understand:
  - Partners :
  - Think about how leaders or civil society organizations can support facilitation and/ or management of the Volunteer network, and how they can share new skills with the Volunteers.
5. Manage the Volunteer network in a fair and transparent way. Once Volunteers have been recruited, it is time to manage the network. Plan monthly meetings with the network to discuss how Volunteers can participate in different activities (such as content production, trainings, community engagement activities, and so on.) To ensure equal participation in activities, discuss with the Volunteers as a group to determine what is a fair system to select which Volunteers will participate in which activities.
  - About the project.
  - The meaning of a participatory approach and peer-to-peer communication.
  - The role of a MaM Volunteer.
  - Compensation for MaM Volunteers.
  - Training opportunities within the project.
  - Types of activities will be conducted in the project.

## TIP FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Develop a “Volunteer” job description** based on the criteria identified and disseminate it to youth, women and returnee associations, colleagues, civil society organizations and other partners.
- If it is difficult to build a network of returnee migrants only, **consider expanding the criteria** to include others who can support the network - such as members of youth associations.
- **Involve colleagues from other projects** in the recruitment process.
- **Ask existing Volunteers to be part of the recruitment process** – such as participating in the design of the recruitment strategy, being part of the interviews or asking them for their recommendations for other Volunteers.
- **Consider recruiting Volunteers as consultants** (with determined number of hours/month) or having compensation of Volunteers be managed by a partner.

*“When I compare my life before joining the MaM Project to now, I can boldly say that the project has transformed me positively. It has given me a new perception about migration and life in general. I now see myself as a man on a mission to save lives.” Liyon, MaM Volunteer, Liberia*



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021

# 04 Training Volunteers

The most effective ideas and messages for organizing events and promoting regular migration were born out of Volunteer interactions. That's why returnees are at the heart of content production and community engagement. By becoming active community members, the Volunteers have the power to transform dominant narratives of failure, to empowering stories of success or overcoming challenges. Leading activities helps returnees reconnect with their home communities and be recognized as role models.

A set of capacity-building opportunities are crucial to support Volunteers' empowerment. Different trainings should focus on the key concepts of participatory and peer-to-peer approaches. This will not only empower the participants to collectively shape the campaign and its content throughout the project, but also contribute to building a dynamic and autonomous community of returnees.

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO MAINSTREAM GENDER

1. Develop a capacity building strategy that includes experienced Volunteers training new Volunteers; skills trainings that are tailored to the needs and interests of the Volunteers; and a curriculum that empowers and equips participants to take ownership of the MaM Volunteer title.
2. Conduct a needs assessment with Volunteers to identify skill training needs and interest.
3. Organize trainings and ensure all Volunteers have the opportunity to participate. Enable female participation and be mindful of local dynamics to include minorities or disadvantaged groups.
4. Organize refresher trainings to ensure knowledge gained is top of mind or to do a deeper dive into specific aspects of a subject.
5. Organize specific skills trainings for different groups of Volunteers.
6. Conduct pre and post training surveys to assess the knowledge gained during the training as well as to get feedback on the training (in order to improve the next one).





## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### **Training of Trainers:**

Experienced MaM Volunteers (from Phase 1) received a multi-day training of trainers (TOT) on how to become trainers for new incoming Volunteers.

### **Training of new Volunteers:**

New MaM Volunteers were trained by existing Volunteers, IOM staff and other experts where they learned about the project, and gained skills and experience on community engagement, digital storytelling and digital engagement.

### **Skills training workshops**

Tailored to the needs and interest of the returnees and the campaign, Volunteers participated in a variety of skills training ranging from public speaking to video editing, fundraising to project management, social theatre to creative writing, and so on.

### **Mental health and psychosocial support training**

Built into the ToTs, a one-day mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) workshop introduced experienced Volunteers to peer support, communication skills and Psychological First Aid (PFA).



Photo: Amanda Nero/IOM 2021

## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- Organize trainings with smaller groups to provide more individual attention (when possible).
- Newly trained trainers should be overseen by an experienced trainer when facilitating their first sessions to make sure that the information shared is accurate. It is best when Volunteers co-facilitate trainings in pairs and with the supervision/support from IOM staff.
- Volunteer talents and passions should be identified, and they should be encouraged to develop their skills on that specific subject.
- Engage subject matter experts and/or universities to run trainings and skills workshops.
- Be mindful of the needs of specific sub-groups in order to be inclusive when outlining the schedule of your trainings

*“Before joining MaM, I knew I had talent and passion for a lot of things. With my participation in MaM capacity building trainings like article writing, public speaking, content creation and speaking through arts, I have transformed my passion into skills which has helped me get tremendous results.” – Therietta, MaM Volunteer, Nigeria*

# 05

# Training Partners

Migrants as Messengers messages are intended for many audiences. In addition to primary and secondary audiences (young people with a desire to migrate, and their friends and family) – messages are also created for tertiary audiences which are the media, governments, civil society organizations, community and religious leaders, and more. These groups shape and influence the environment in which primary and secondary target audiences gain knowledge, shape attitudes and practice certain behaviours. One way that partners can be involved in MaM are training. Trainings support collaborations with partners to disseminate campaign content and create sustainable synergies between the Volunteers and local civil society.

For journalists specifically – providing trainings on migration reporting so as to ensure that accurate information is being shared in the media can help communities and families to support migrants in making knowledgeable choices. Moreover, fair stories contribute to upholding the dignity of migrants worldwide.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

1. **Organize a meeting** with existing and potential partners to introduce the project and discuss trainings needs and interests.
2. **Develop a training plan and training materials** (this can include engaging experts to support with upcoming trainings) based on needs and interests.
3. **Find out as much as possible about the participants** and what they hope to learn before the training, so that the training can be tailored to their interests.
4. **Use the Journalist Toolkit** (available on [yenna.org](http://yenna.org)) to help facilitate trainings. This Toolkit includes a set of creative and engaging educational tools that can be tailored for different audiences. The tools include:
  - **Online course** – A 60-minute course that introduces migration terms and trends, and best practices for fair and ethical reporting.
  - **An online game** - This choice-based game draws on the real-life experiences of migrants. It highlights the many difficult decisions people face in irregular migration situations and encourages further learning.
  - **Journalist Handbook** - This handbook provides guidance on the complexities of migration and provides advice on finding and publishing migration-related stories, in an ethical manner.
  - **In-class Journalist Training** - This fully tailorable, nine-module course can be conducted in person. The course provides students with a complete picture of migration, and the role of journalists in telling migration-related stories
5. **Have participants fill out pre- and post-training surveys** to assess knowledge gained during the training as well as receive feedback on the training to be able to improve future trainings.

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### **C4D Training for partners in The Gambia**

In June 2022, IOM staff with the help of MaM Volunteers facilitated a training on migration and Communication for Development (C4D) for the newly established Network Against Irregular Migration (NETAIM). The training supported the association learn about migration concepts and how to develop awareness raising campaigns on migration in a participatory way.

### **Media master class in Guinea**

In July 2021, IOM along with MaM Volunteers organized a media master class for professional and student journalists as well as bloggers. The course aimed to encourage balanced and diverse reporting on migration issues. The course covered the following elements:

- Understanding the complexities of migration
- Reporting migration as human-interest stories using a rights-based approach
- Finding ideas and facts on migration-related topics
- Understanding the importance of the media's role in reporting on migration
- Understanding migration laws and procedures
- Applying ethical considerations in reporting
- Adopting a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to reporting

### **Media dialogue on migration in Nigeria**

In July 2021, 24 media editors in Nigeria participated in a training by IOM and MaM Volunteers on the fundamentals of reporting migration stories including protection of the rights of migrants, terminology, mental health and the media, gender balance in reportage, migration and climate change and effective storytelling. As an outcome of the training, the editors agreed to set up migration desks and to have migration reporters dedicated to cover migration stories. The participants also identified how they can ensure journalists in their newsrooms report migration more ethically.

## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

- **There is a need to promote migration** as a public issue in West Africa's media environment. Journalists are interested in the topic but not very knowledgeable about the issue nor where to source information.
- **Trainings for partners should be part of the broader strategy** of engaging with media and establishing partnerships. They are an excellent way to keep potential partners engaged with the project.
- **Training sessions should be linked with journalists' competitions**, encouraging trained participants to use their skills for a regional audience.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021



# 06 Community engagement and youth outreach

A key component of MaM is its peer-to-peer approach and the organic creation of returnee networks who lead community engagement and youth outreach activities. Such activities are powerful drivers for social cohesion, reconnecting returnees with their communities and contributing to an important transformation in the narrative of migration and return.

Community engagement activities and youth outreach activities are tools that engage communities to raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration, the safe alternatives to irregular migration and helps improve social recognition for returnees. Examples of community engagement activities include townhalls, movie screenings, community theatre, focus groups, caravans and more! Examples of youth outreach include street art, student outreach, live arts events and career fairs.



## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

1. **Train Volunteers** on how to run community engagement and/or youth outreach activities.
2. **Organize a brainstorming session** with MaM Volunteers to discuss:
  - What is the objective of the activity? (Such as to raise awareness about regular migration information points for people from Community X.)
  - Who is the target audience? (Are they students? Whole communities? Women only?)
  - What activity will work best? (Based on the target audience, what activity will be best to engage them?)
  - Key messages and content to create.
3. **Mapping of potential partners and/or local events** that can support future Volunteer activities.
4. **Invite Volunteers to prepare an activity plan** which IOM can review and validate.
5. **Assist MaM Volunteers in drafting invitation letters** to targeted partners. Start administrative procedures for the implementation of activities as early as possible.
6. **Assist MaM Volunteers** in the distribution of tasks and ensure a good gender balance.
7. **Prepare Volunteers to facilitate the activity and create content** (video, photo, and/or articles) about the activity.
8. **Let the Volunteers lead the activities** and intervene only when necessary.
9. **Ask Volunteers to draft an event report on the implemented activities** and the lessons learned.

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### Community theatre

In Thies, Senegal, MaM Volunteers conducted a caravan where they visited 30 communities in Thies and included a musical and theatrical performance, sharing of testimonies from returnee migrants, community discussions and a film screening. MaM Volunteers and local theatre troupe participated in a month-long creative residency to create a play about migration for the caravan. Social theatre is an approach widely used in West Africa. It stimulates debates on social issues, develops critical thinking and encourages social cohesion.

### Street Art Together

Street Art Together is an activity designed to strengthen community engagement and social cohesion through creative workshops in public spaces. This activity was led by MaM Volunteers in six countries.

### Bantabas

In The Gambia, a bantaba is a place around a big tree where elderly people of a community meet and discuss issues concerning their community and other relevant issues. The bantabas are very important in the local society and they were used in MaM as entry points to reach out to young adults to raise awareness about irregular migration and the local opportunities.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021

## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- Instead of planning one-off activities, **plan activities in cycles**. A cycle of activities means to provide the necessary capacity building and participation spaces to Volunteers followed by a consistent action that includes production of different pieces of content, follow up sessions.
- **Pre-test activities with samples of the target audience**. Testing the activity allows one to see if the activity, as well as the content and messages shared during the activity, resonate with the target audience. If necessary, adjustments can be made.
- **If your country is featured on WAKAwell.info**, train Volunteers beforehand on what information can be found on the website and then promote it during the activities. (WAKAwell.info is an online platform to learn more about migration procedures and local training, jobs and education in communities in West Africa.)
- **Organize briefing sessions before and after the activities**. Before, to ensure everyone is clear on their tasks. And after, to quickly reflect on what worked well (or not well), and to be able to adjust for next time. It is also an opportunity to check in with the Volunteers to see if they feel good about the activity. Key partners can be invited to briefing sessions as well.

*“For me, the caravan and Global Migration Film Festival events were the most memorable. Seeing how much people appreciated our messages from their statements and other young people confessing to us that they were about to travel irregularly but have reconsidered their intention, convinced me that we were doing something very important for our country. I dreamt of a life with knowledge and to inspire others to greatness, MaM project has given me more than what I asked for.” Abdul, MaM Volunteer, Sierra Leone*

# 07 Digital engagement

A central component of MaM's peer-to-peer messaging strategy is the creation and dissemination of video testimonials distributed through social media channels. Through digital communication, young people, even those in the most remote areas can be engaged online by sharing content on social media and through the MaM website. Having a strong digital strategy increases engagement, which is a crucial part of the project as it allows Volunteers to share their experiences directly with their peers. Social media also plays an integral role in disseminating information to counter misinformation about irregular migration. Human trafficking and smuggling networks in West Africa use different social media platforms to peddle false narratives about the fortunes that await anyone who is willing to make the journey through the desert and sea.

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

Here are the steps to writing a strong digital strategy to ensure the success of the project:

1. **Lay down the objectives of the strategy** (what do you want to achieve?)
2. **Define the audience** based on the objectives (age, gender, location, habits).
3. **Select the appropriate social media channels** to communicate from, in order to reach a specific audience.
4. **Define the type of content that would have the most impact** on the targeted audience.
5. **Write a plan on how to disseminate that content** online (frequency, campaigns, promotions).
6. **Monitor the evolution of the data** (reach, engagement, views) through social media management tools.
7. **Regularly adapt the strategy** based on the results.

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES

### Social media workshops

Social media workshops were key to the success of the project. More than 400 Volunteers were involved with sharing and disseminating messages online. Through these workshops, Volunteers learned to use social media platforms to share their content, to create posts (including captions, tags and hashtags) and to boost the posts for more visibility.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021



## International Women’s Day “ROAD TO EQUALITY” campaign



Digital campaigns are used to improve engagement rates. In a month dedicated to women in many parts of the world (March 2022), Migrants as Messengers collaborated with other IOM projects to celebrate the achievements of women, while giving attention to the remaining roadblocks on the journey to gender equality. MaM Volunteers created testimonies (videos and podcasts) and a short film for the campaign.

## TV series production in collaboration with actress and influencer Khalima Gadji



Photo: IOM Senegal / IOM 2021

Senegalese actress, model and activist Khalima Gadji was featured in “Loumey wakh wa cogne ba” (What to say to the people in the neighborhood?), a series produced in collaboration with the MaM Volunteers, for a migration campaign for which Khalima was the ambassador. The influencer and star of the popular series “Maitresse d’un homme marié” used her to raise awareness about the risks of irregular

### TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- Think mobile.
- Promote your posts (such as through Facebook ads).
- Collaborate with influencers.
- Know your audience.
- Pick the right digital channels.

# 08 Content Production

MaM Volunteers are the main content creators of the project. To create emotive, creative and quality content it is necessary to build their capacity in audiovisual content creation through repeated trainings, practical exercises and professional work experience programs. This allows Volunteers to not only create engaging content to support the campaign, but also supports their own professional development and reintegration. The content created by the Volunteers can range from testimonies to documentaries, from dramas to educational videos about the dangers of irregular migration, local opportunities, gender issues, mental health, climate change, discrimination, and so on.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2022

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

1. **Purchase smartphone kits** which will be used to create videos. (The kits should include a phone with a good camera, a microphone, a tripod, and a battery pack.)
2. **Identify Volunteers** who have an interest or talent for audiovisual content creation to be selected to participate in the content production trainings.
3. **Develop a series of practical trainings** on content creation, including filming, video-editing and more.
4. **Test the trainings with small groups** of Volunteers and make the necessary adjustments.
5. **Conduct out the trainings frequently.** It takes time and consistency to build capacity in audiovisual content creation – practice makes perfect! One group should ideally have access to at least six content training courses per year.
6. **Create a structure to keep Volunteers engaged** and producing content regularly (such as calls for content around international days).
7. **Identify a focal point in the team** with professional experience on audiovisual content production or hire a consultant to provide constant technical guidance to Volunteers and to support in creating and revising subtitles.
8. **Establish partnerships** with media outlets and educational institutions to arrange external trainings, internships and co-productions with Volunteers.
9. **Publish and share the videos created.** The Volunteers have worked hard on these videos so be sure to distribute these videos online, on the ground and on air!

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### Content Creation Workshops

A five-day hands-on content creation workshop was delivered to selected Volunteers in all participating countries. The workshop included a community event where the Volunteers presented the content they produced during the workshop.

### Global Migration Film Festival – Volunteer Film Category

During the 2021 Global Migration Film Festival, a contest was launched for films produced by the Volunteers. More than 15 films were created by the Volunteers and these were screened at more than 100 community screenings in the region. The contest stimulated Volunteers' creativity and it allowed them to put into practice all the skills they have been learning.

### Volunteer Internship with Africa Radio



Partnerships were established with different media outlets and educational institutions across the region to provide Volunteers opportunities to study or do an internship related to content creation which simultaneously supported their professional development. For example, in Cote d'Ivoire, a partnership was established with Africa Radio where four Volunteers were interns and helped produce podcasts, record testimonies, and participated in live shows. At the end of the partnership, two of the interns were offered permanent jobs at the station, thanks to all the skills developed throughout the MaM project.

### Photobook collaboration between Volunteers and professional photographers

A partnership with a world-renowned media outlet, Magnum Photos, allowed Volunteers to co-create a photobook under the guidance of professional photographers. The initiative supported their capacity-building process and had positive impacts on their mental health. In addition, the book is a good product supporting the visibility of the project and the work that Volunteers and associations can do.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Create a content creation strategy**, including a calendar with relevant international days, the different types of content, languages, target audiences, etc.
- **Create WhatsApp groups with Volunteers** (or other messaging groups) to keep them engaged and stay in regular contact.
- **Organize regular trainings and practical exercises** to continuously build capacity and engagement. The more confident someone feels about content they are creating the more likely they will want to share the content with their networks.
- **Pre-test content** in focus groups with target audiences.
- **Make sure that there is someone in the country office team that is an expert in content creation** that can accompany the Volunteers in their content creation initiatives. It's always helpful to have someone they can share draft versions of their content with for feedback before they finalize content.
- **Create a strategy to store, organize and distribute content from the very beginning of the project** and be consistent about it with Volunteers and country offices.

# 09

# Supporting Volunteer-led associations

Organic growth of the Volunteer network and long-term sustainability are essential. To ensure the sustainability of the Migrants as Messengers peer-to-peer approach, Volunteers should be supported to create their own associations that can continue to operate in the migration and awareness-raising sector. Trainings (both online and in-person) in association management, project development, content creation, and digital marketing, and more are important for developing associations. Beyond this, contributions and donations of materials (such as purchasing audio visual and/or office equipment, etc.) are helpful for associations that are just at the beginning phases. These returnee-led associations are a major asset for IOM because of the trainings and skills that the Volunteers have gained in migration awareness raising through MaM.

*“Returned migrants are now empowered [because of MaM] with different useful skills which has built their capacity in their activities. MaM has also helped the Volunteers to replicate and take ownership of what was learnt under the project in their returned migrant associations and businesses.” – Toye, MaM Volunteer, Nigeria*

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

- 1. Support Volunteers to create their own associations.** Volunteers should think about the skills they have and the services they can provide to partners.
- 2. Provide capacity building opportunities** for the associations, such as:
- 3. How to create an association** (e.g. how to create a mission and vision statement)
- 4. Management of an association** (e.g. objectives, member roles, services)
- 5. Digital marketing** (e.g. campaigns, tools, social networks)
- 6. Support associations in the creation of a visual identity and a website.**
- 7. Give visibility to associations** through the organization of promotional events.
- 8. Support associations to formally register their association.**
- 9. IOM staff should be available to provide tailored support to associations** based on their needs and requests.
- 10. Provide logistical support to fund association-designed activities,** office rental, internet subscription, printing of visibility items, office furniture/equipment, and so on.
- 11. Promote the association to other IOM projects** so that associations can continue to work with IOM.



## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### Promotional events



Promotional events were organized in the different countries for the Volunteer-led associations, such as the event for ASMI in October 2022. This event was an opportunity to officially present ASMI to different authorities, NGOs and international organizations, as well as stakeholders working on migration.

### Capacity Building



Volunteer-led associations were offered support in the form of branding and a website. Elements such as a logo, an email address or a business card are essential to have a professional representation of their association. The website allows them not only to increase their visibility but also to interact with interested parties and to offer their services. All MaM Volunteer-led associations are listed here: <https://www.migrantsasmessengers.org/volunteers>

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## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

- **Develop a strategy to support the development** of the associations and their sustainability.
- **Organize Volunteers into associations** after one year of project implementation to be able to give them time to familiarize themselves with the project as well as participate in trainings before they think about creating their own associations.
- **Present associations** to national and local governments, UN agencies, and international organizations at official events. This can help associations network with potential partners and funding opportunities.
- **Capacity-building** should focus both on individual skills as well as skills that can support association development. Associations can benefit from trainings in project development, social media use and management.
- **Develop training materials to guide Volunteers** through the development of an association, including the steps to create/register an association, creating a governance structure, creating a vision and mission statement, fundraising, etc.

# 10 Media and partners engagement

MaM Volunteers are the main content creators of the project. To create emotive, creative and quality content it is necessary to build their capacity in audiovisual content creation through repeated trainings, practical exercises and professional work experience programs. This allows Volunteers to not only create engaging content to support the campaign, but also supports their own professional development and reintegration. The content created by the Volunteers can range from testimonies to documentaries, from dramas to educational videos about the dangers of irregular migration, local opportunities, gender issues, mental health, climate change, discrimination, and so on.

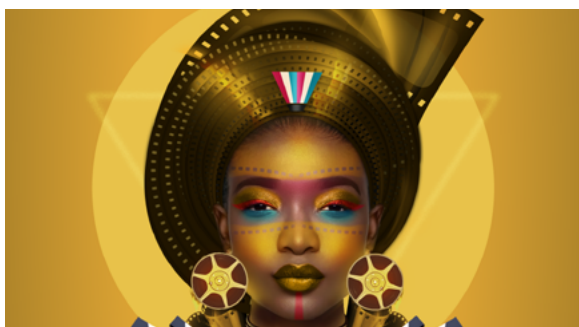
*“My most memorable experience is my internship at Africa Radio. In addition to the professional experience I am gaining, this opportunity allowed me to learn framing, video editing, and audio capsule production. I now have many more skills that can help me enter the working world more easily.”*  
– Charles, MaM Volunteer, Côte d’Ivoire

## STEP BY STEP ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THIS PILLAR:

1. **Make a list of all the relevant media and partners** at the national and regional level that are likely to increase the visibility of the project.
2. **Reach out to explain the purpose of the project** and see if they would be interested in being involved. If so, ask them how they would like to be involved.
3. **Define (together) the specificities of the partnership**, such as the type of content that will be produced or how it will be disseminated.
4. **Prepare Volunteers for upcoming media partnerships** (such as MaM Volunteers hosting weekly show at a local radio station) by providing trainings to build their capacity (such as trainings on how to speak in public, how to make podcasts, edit audio, etc.).
5. **Provide training opportunities** for partners for better understanding of the project, migration concepts and trends, awareness raising, and more.
6. **Organize partner meetups to share updates**, discuss ongoing partnerships as well as future partnerships that can benefit both the project and the partner.
7. **Collaborate with partners to create content** and share on the right channels.

## FEATURED ACTIVITIES:

### The Global Migration Film Festival – partnership with film directors



The Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF) marked IOM's fifth year presenting documentaries, features and short films that explore the themes of migration and human mobility. Among the over 800 films submitted for IOM's consideration were 15 short films from MaM Volunteers that were chosen and made accessible online. At the end of the competition the best films from the Volunteers were rewarded for their work and participation. The films are still available for viewing on MaM's YouTube channel. Throughout the competition, partners such as journalists were involved in the process from the launch of the festival to the final ceremony to help increase the project's and organizations' visibility.

### ADICOMDAYS – partnership with regional influencers

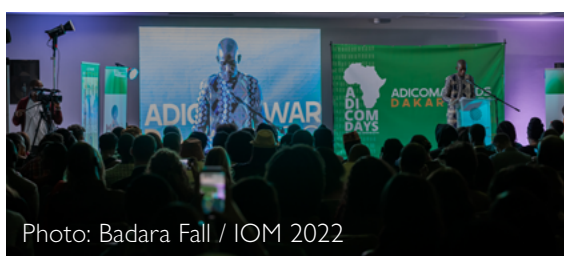


Photo: Badara Fall / IOM 2022

The annual ADICOMDAYS event brings together some of the biggest influencers in the African digital world; it was therefore a great opportunity to raise awareness about the realities of irregular migration. Migrants as Messengers were event partners in 2020 and 2021. Adama (Volunteer from Senegal) took the stage to share his experience as a returning migrant and his work as a MaM Volunteer, which earned him a standing ovation from the audience. Partnering with influencers is an important step as it gives access to an already engaged audience, which makes for a more targeted and efficient communication.

### Journalist Competition – partnership with African Press Organization (APO) and Radio France Internationale (RFI)



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021

In September 2021, IOM announced the first edition of the West and Central Africa Migration Journalism Competition. Over 200 entries were received from journalists around the region. The competition was organized in partnership with RFI and APO and a high-level jury of 16 members (which included two MaM Volunteers). Each of the winners received a prize and a plaque of recognition. This competition aimed to celebrate journalists who bring attention to the many facets of migration in West and Central Africa in both French and English language. In November 2021, the eight winners were announced during a virtual ceremony moderated by CNN journalist Eleni Giokos. Ibrahim Kargbo, a MaM Volunteer from Sierra Leone, was a guest speaker during the ceremony.

## TIPS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Tailored trainings for partners can support an efficient partnership.
2. Journalists can make great partners as they have access to large platforms and networks.
3. Be creative with partnerships to help amplify messages, like creating a podcast with a radio station or making short films for a global film festival.
4. Partner with online influencers via their online platforms.
5. Ensure partnerships are mutually beneficial for the project and for the partner.

# 11

# Monitoring and Research

MaM relied on multiple tools built-in into the project to monitor activities and assess progress, allowing it to adjust implementation to new emerging elements. In addition to monitoring activities, three key research activities – an Impact Evaluation, a pilot study on mental health and psychosocial support, and post-activity Surveys – provided information about the impact and effectiveness of different activities.

## MONITORING

The monitoring system compiled information from different data sources to report the project's progress. The primary data source was the Project Management (PM Tool), a custom-built web-based system where project teams completed specific reports on activities implemented, content produced, and media coverage received. The PM Tool also acted as a project library for all project information such as reports, case studies, guideline documents, and so on. The information gathered was compiled and reported to the different stakeholders through:

- Dashboard tracking progress toward the results matrix indicators.
- Country-specific monthly one-pagers.
- Monthly and yearly reports for the donor highlighting activities in the field, content shared on social media profiles, and Volunteers' initiatives.



## IMPACT EVALUATION:

- Purpose: To assess the impact of a peer-to-peer awareness raising campaign on young people's knowledge, attitude, intention and perception towards irregular migration and safe alternatives to irregular migration in West Africa.
- How was it implemented:
  - The research team created an experimental design with a cluster randomized control trial (cRCT) approach in which enumeration areas (EA) (clusters) in four countries – The Gambia, Guinea, Nigeria and Senegal - were randomly assigned to a treatment and control group. The treatment group received the intervention, i.e. MaM Volunteers held community outreach activities with them, while the control group did not. The study's data collection was scheduled before and after the implementation of activities.
  - The timeline of the study was the following:
- Baseline data collection in the treatment and control areas.
- Intervention, i.e. MaM community engagement activities in the treatment areas.
- Follow-up activities in the treatment areas
- Endline data collection in the treatment and control groups.



## POST ACTIVITY SURVEYS

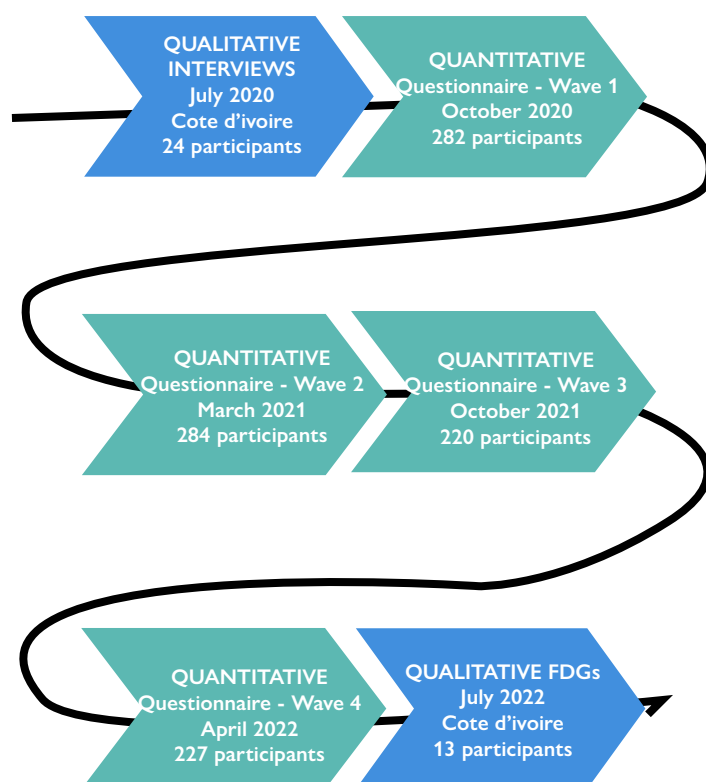
- Purpose: A monitoring activity that assessed the target audience's knowledge and intended behaviours of irregular migration following participation in a MaM on the ground activity.
- How was it implemented:
  - Developed a strategy that included 500 surveys per country (of which 200 are female respondents) to be conducted with young people (18-30) who participated in community outreach and youth engagement activities throughout the project.
  - Developed a French and English questionnaire uploaded on IOM's CRM App.
  - The country offices implemented the surveys according to the following guidelines:
    - BEFORE THE ACTIVITY: Select a variety of community engagement or youth outreach activities to conduct Post Activity Surveys. Focus on activities that communicate the risks of irregular migration and local opportunities.
    - DURING THE ACTIVITY: Select the respondents RANDOMLY and arrange appointments for interviews.
    - AFTER THE ACTIVITY: Conduct the survey at least 24 hours after the activity either in person or on the phone. IOM Staff, Volunteers or hired surveyors could conduct the surveys.

## TIPS ON FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION:

Involve MaM Volunteers in the design, implementation, analysis and dissemination of research activities. The earlier they are involved in the process, the more likely the research activity will be relevant to them and their peers.

## Pilot Study on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

- **Purpose: To explore and identify possible effects of involvement in MaM on Volunteers' mental health and psychosocial well-being.**
- **How was it implemented:**
  - Study was designed using a mixed-methods approach:
    - Quantitative:
      - 314 MaM Volunteers across seven countries participated in a questionnaire conducted four times over two years.
      - IOM staff or hired enumerators, who had been trained and briefed, administered the questionnaire.
    - Qualitative:
      - IOM staff facilitated 24 semi-structured in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions with Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire.



# 12

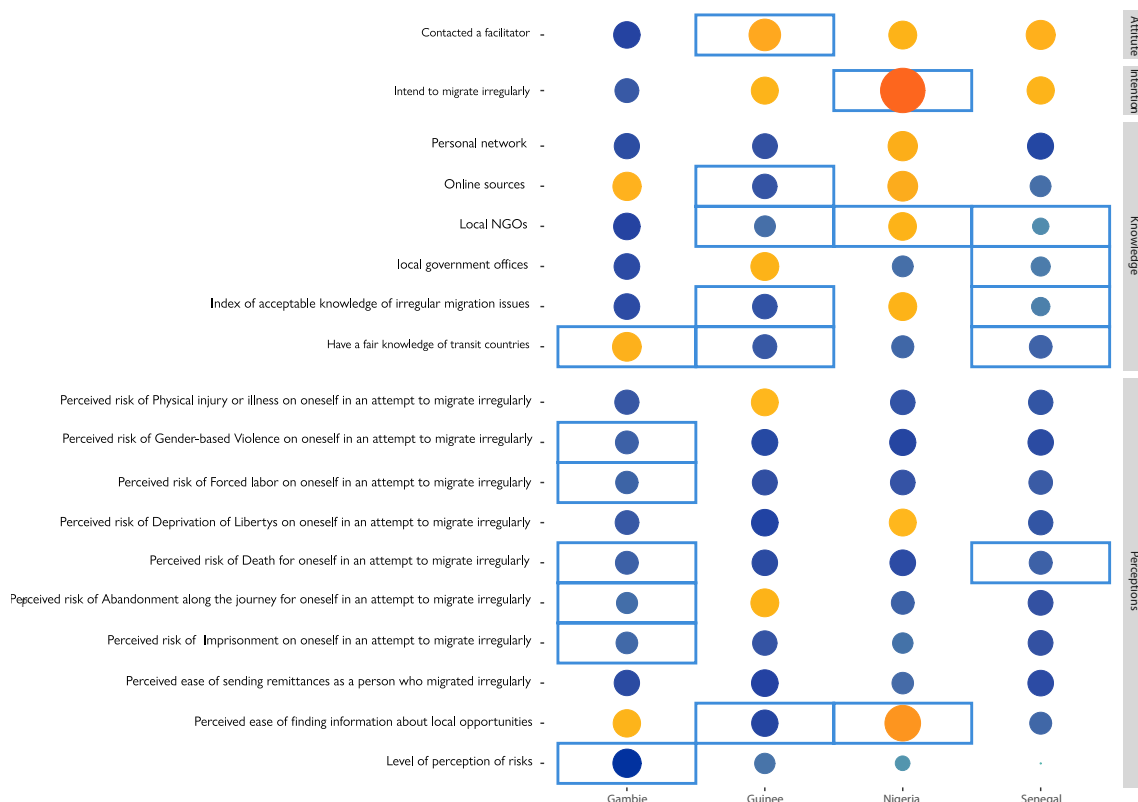
# What was the impact of MaM ?

Several studies explored the impact and effects of MaM's peer-to-peer approach: an impact evaluation, a pilot study on Mental Health and a non-experimental evaluation. Together, these studies shed light on the project's work with the Volunteers and the effect that peer-to-peer campaigns can have on empowering youth in making informed migration-related decisions in West Africa.

## IMPACT EVALUATION

This study assessed, through a rigorous experimental evaluation, various Volunteer-led community engagement activities on four irregular migration related outcomes: knowledge, intention, perceptions and attitudes. Some key findings are listed below.

- In Guinea, MaM activities reduced intention to migrate irregularly, and reduced the likelihood of young people contacting a smuggler, by 12 per cent. MaM activities also increased the likelihood that the participants have a better knowledge of transit countries (6%), and know that they can get information about local opportunities from online sources (5%) and local NGOs (12%)
- In Nigeria, MaM activities drastically reduced the probability of young participants intending to migrate irregularly (55%).
- In The Gambia, MaM activities changed the participant's perception of risks associated with irregular migration. They increased the chances that participants associate the following risks with irregular migration: gender-based violence (8%), forced labour (9%), death (8%), abandonment (12%), and imprisonment (14%).
- In Senegal, MaM activities increased participants' knowledge of where they can get information about local opportunities – such as from local NGOs (19%) and government offices (15%), and that they have a better knowledge of transit countries (9%).



## MHPSS PILOT STUDY

- This exploratory pilot study assessed the effects that the campaign had on Volunteers' mental health and psychosocial well-being.
- In this field, little research has been conducted on the links between social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) and community-based MHPSS, or the participation as a messenger in peer-to-peer awareness-raising campaigns and mental health and psychosocial well-being among returned migrants.
- This pilot study used quantitative data gathered through four rounds of data collection with more than 300 MaM Volunteers in seven countries and qualitative data collected through focus group discussions with Volunteers in Côte d'Ivoire.
- Key findings include:
  - Volunteers perceived or experienced peer interactions, peer-to-peer communication, and community engagement as sources or resources for mental health and psychosocial well-being.
  - Involvement in awareness-raising activities had small positive effects on Volunteers' mental health and psychosocial well-being.
  - Involvement in MaM activities had slight positive effects on distress intensity, peer support, and personal well-being.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REPORT INCLUDE:

- There is a need for leadership in MHPSS in the awareness raising and SBCC space.
- MHPSS mainstreaming is important for maximizing positive mental health and psychosocial well-being impact in peer-to-peer migration awareness-raising campaigns and preventing harm.
- Participation in a peer-to-peer migration awareness-raising campaign integrated with MHPSS had possible positive effects on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of returned migrant peer messengers.



Photo: Amanda Nero / IOM 2021



## POST ACTIVITY SURVEYS

A final evaluation on MaM was conducted by an external research agency, ARTIVAL Research & Evaluation. The evaluation assessed the project's efficiency, relevance, and sustainability. The scope of the evaluation covered all seven MaM countries and almost the entire implementation period, from April 2019 to April 2022 .

Key findings and recommendations from the evaluation include:

- **Relevance - findings:**
  - The content and timing of the trainings for Volunteers, journalists, and CSO were appropriate. The skills and knowledge acquired will be useful beyond the project.
  - The project adapted well to COVID-19 restrictions and mobilized Volunteers' in prevention efforts against the pandemic.
- **Relevance - recommendations:**
  - Link MaM Volunteers in parallel to separate livelihood support programs.
  - Strengthen the relationship with women's organizations and community and religious/traditional leaders.
  - Increase consistency in disseminating the project's key messages by strengthening communications strategies and campaign plans to ensure no messaging imbalance (e.g. focus on risks).
  - Add markers (e.g. the GRES scale) to identify and broaden the integration of gender issues.
- **Efficiency - findings:**
  - The project conveyed messages in the appropriate format and channels. Social media was generally better for reaching youth in urban areas, while radio and community engagement remain key channels for reaching more rural regions.
- **Efficiency - recommendations:**
  - Explore further techniques used during COVID-19, like online meetings and video capsules for trainings.
- **Sustainability - findings:**
  - Volunteers want to continue raising awareness in the future through associations. However, some associations lack solid management structures and funding capacity even after capacity-building and support was provided.
  - Implementation and messages were strengthened through partnerships with media outlets, civil society organizations (CSO), public authorities, and UN agencies.
- **Sustainability - recommendations:**
  - Strengthen partnerships between Volunteer-led associations and CSO, government officials, and UN agencies.
  - Continue strengthening Volunteer-led associations and further the collaboration between associations from different countries.

These research studies provide a thorough and overall positive portrait of Phase 2 of Migrants as Messengers. Together they provide valuable lessons for future awareness-raising activities in the region and help build the evidence base on "what works" in migration awareness raising. Full detailed reports of the above studies can be found on: <https://www.migrantsasmessengers.org/>

## CONCLUSION

MaM distinguishes itself in its migrant-centred participatory approach to awareness raising, supporting returnee migrants in the design, planning and implementation of the process.

After five years of implementation in West Africa, here are some key takeaways and lessons learned for future migration awareness raising campaign programming:

- **Practice makes perfect**, it takes time and regular engagement to develop capacity.
- **Mainstream MHPSS and create space for discussions on mental health.** The psychosocial well-being of the Volunteers is crucial. What they have endured is not easy and being able to recount what they experienced to others takes time, preparation and accompaniment.
- **Partnerships and networking are key for sustainability of the Volunteer network.** Creating visibility and networking opportunities for the Volunteers and the MaM approach can support its continuation.
- **Co-creation and participatory activities create space for dialogue on migration.** If messages are to impact a community, its members need to be part of the solution.
- **Leverage local cultures and traditions.** Using local languages and traditions ensures that messaging and activities are appropriate for participating communities. For example, community dialogue activities were called different names in each country: Bantabas in The Gambia, Migrant Room in Nigeria and Causeries in Senegal.
- **People need a concrete action to take.** Increasing knowledge about risks and dangers needs to be combined with information about safe alternatives to irregular migration and a clear action people can take to access information.

To use some of the community engagement tools used in MaM, head to [Yenna.org](http://Yenna.org) for step by step instructions and learning resources on the following:

- Street Art Together Toolkit
- Journalist Toolkit
- Social Theatre Toolkit
- E-learning on Mental Health and Migration Awareness Raising
- And much more!

The Migrants as Messengers Volunteers have left a lasting imprint of shared learning and experience in West Africa. In years to come, the MaM legacy will continue as the approach continues to be implemented and as Volunteer-led associations take the torch to raise awareness about migration and support returnee migrants in their communities.

