

Can Information and Alternatives to Irregular Migration Reduce “Backway” Migration from the Gambia?¹

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BREAD-IGC Virtual PhD Course

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Motivation

- While migration has large potential benefits to individual migrants, irregular migration is particularly risky.
- Between 2009 and 2022, about 4 million irregular migrants reached Europe (FRONTEX).
- The Central Mediterranean Route has brought many migrants from West Africa to Libya through the Sahara desert, and from there to Italy by the sea:
 - Substantial death risks crossing the desert and in Libya;
 - Crossing the Mediterranean carries considerable death risks;
 - Since 2014, about 23,568 lost their lives in the Mediterranean route (Missing Migrants, 2022)
 - Upon arrival to Italy, low probability of getting a legal residence permit.

- **Research Question:** How can we change irregular migration decisions?
 - What is the impact of informational campaigns on irregular migration?
 - Does vocational training deter irregular migration?
 - Does facilitating regional migration provide an alternative to irregular international migration?
- **Challenge** – migration is a rare and difficult to measure.
- **Our strategy:**
 - Focus on country/regions with highest incidence of irregular migration
 - Different strategies of eliciting outcomes (proxy reporting (elder, household head), Phone and WhatsApp)

Context and Study Setting – The Gambia

- **Population:** 2.3 million people (World Bank, 2020)
- **GDP per capita:** \$2,319 PPP (10th poorest country in the world - World Bank, 2020)
- **Migration context:**
 - International remittances account for 14% of GDP in 2019 (World Bank, 2020).
 - Massive irregular emigration: 47,413 Gambians recorded as having reached Europe through the sea between 2000 and 2021 (FRONTEX)

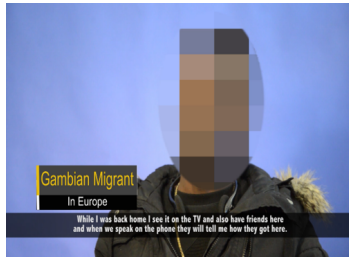
Experimental Design

Randomized Impact Evaluation with four different groups:

- ① Treatment 1: Information Treatment Group:
Information deterrence intervention
- ② Treatment 2: Information and Dakar Treatment Group:
Treatment 1 + Facilitating regional migration to Dakar intervention
- ③ Treatment 3: Information and Vocational Training Treatment Group:
Treatment 1 + Vocational training intervention
- ④ Control:
Placebo Video

Treatment 1: Information and deterrence video documentary

- Testimonies of Gambian failed irregular migrants to Italy who created the YAIM NGO. They provide reasons for migrating, how they obtained information about the trip, duration of the trip, experience during the trip - including witnessing accidents, deaths, kidnapping and general advice to prospective migrants.
- Testimonies of irregular Gambian migrants residing in Italy in local languages.



Treatment 2: Facilitating regional migration to Dakar

Video documentary including testimonies of Gambian migrants residing in Dakar: convey information on migration experience to Dakar, the cost of migrating, type of job opportunities and earnings, and general advice to prospective Gambian migrants.



Treatment 2: Facilitating regional migration to Dakar

- **Cash provided to pay for transportation costs** to Dakar (1200 GMD)
- **Additional financial support and connection with the Dakar Gambian immigrant association.** Cash for initial settling costs (10,000 CFA) and personal advice provided upon arrival to Dakar
- **Theory of change:** in addition to information deterring irregular migration to Europe, this intervention provides a **viable alternative** to improving prospective migrant lives – **new information**, increased **salience and role models**, and also **lower cost of experimentation**.

Treatment 3: Information and Vocational Training

Opportunity to enroll in a tuition-free vocational skill training program.

Leaflets with registration instructions and list of available courses. Training provided locally by the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), with a planned duration of six months.

TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS
Venue: GTTI (Julangel Branch)

1. Obtain a TRAINING VOUCHER from your interviewer
2. Send a REGISTRATION TEXT MESSAGE to [REDACTED]. For Example;
Name: Sheriff Sabally
Issue Number: 0002213
Interested Course: Plumbing and Gas Fitting
3. A receipt notification message will be sent upon receipt of the registration message.
4. You will be notified in September if your application was successful or not and the date on which the course will commence.

NOTE:

- ❖ Training Voucher ONLY covers TUITION FEES, that is all other expenses away from tuition should be handled by the beneficiary
- ❖ Registration is open until 31st August, 2019

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TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS
Venue: GTTI (Julangel Branch)

LIST OF COURSES TO BE OFFERED

1. Welding and Fabrication
2. Small Engines Maintenance and Repairs
3. Electrical Installation
4. Refrigeration and Air Conditioning
5. Carpentry and Joinery
6. Basic Certificate in Plumbing and Gas Fitting
7. Basic Certificate in Building Construction (Blockwork)
8. Basic Certificate in Plastering and Tiling

For more information please call: [REDACTED]

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Sampling and Randomization Strategies

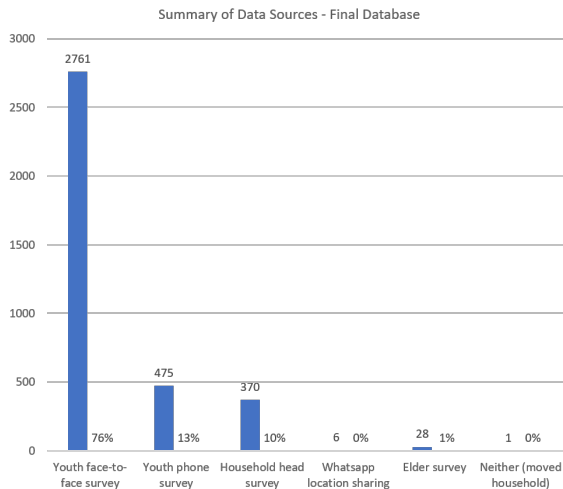
- Regions – URR & CRR with population of 226,000 and highest irregular migration rates – 5% and 3% (LFS, 2018).
- Settlements – 404 out of 580 eligible settlements (with 30 males aged 18-30).
- Listing of all eligible households and survey village elder.
- Final sample is 3641 youths/households from 391 settlements in 15 districts.
- Treatment assignment – In each district, settlements sorted by number of households with migrants and migration intentions – 98 strata.

Endline Survey

- Endline began on 23rd September and ended on October 20th, 2020.
- Project covers **10 months before the pandemic hit**, as well as about **6 months of the pandemic period**.
- Main outcomes come from (by order of priority):
 - ① face-to-face youth survey;
 - ② phone youth survey;
 - ③ face-to-face household head survey;
 - ④ WhatsApp shared location;
 - ⑤ face-to-face village elder survey.

Endline Survey

- About 89 percent of youths were surveyed (76% face-to-face, 13% over the phone), with the remaining outcomes coming mostly from proxy reporting.
- Only 1 youth out of 3641 not accounted for - teacher with moved household.



Outcome Variables Measured at Endline

- Primary Outcomes

- ① Steps towards and acts of backway migration
- ② Migration to Senegal and internal migration
- ③ Well-being

- Secondary Outcomes

- ① Knowledge about migrating the backway and about migrating to Senegal
- ② Beliefs about the riskiness of migrating the backway
- ③ Intentions to migrate the backway
- ④ Over-optimism on chance of getting asylum or refugee status

Long term impacts: Primary Outcomes

	Steps towards migrating Backway		Attempted backway		Migrated to Europe	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Information	0.014 (0.071)	-0.007 (0.066)	0.004 (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)
Info + Dakar	0.058 (0.070)	0.047 (0.067)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.004)	0.000 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)
Info + Vocational Training	-0.142** (0.069)	-0.151** (0.065)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.004 (0.003)
Sample Size	3613	3613	3611	3611	3633	3633
Control mean	0.995	0.995	0.011	0.011	0.006	0.006
P-value	0.025	0.017	0.411	0.396	0.341	0.165
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

- Steps taken towards backway migration decreased slightly due to vocational training
- No other effects on attempted backway or actual migration to Europe

Long term impacts: Primary Outcomes

	Migrated to Senegal (1)	Migrated to Dakar (2)	Currently in Senegal (3)	Migrated internally (4)	Currently internal migrant (5)
Information	-0.019 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.005)	0.014** (0.006)	-0.023 (0.023)	0.004 (0.012)
Info + Dakar	0.017 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.025*** (0.007)	-0.072*** (0.022)	-0.003 (0.013)
Info + Vocational Training	0.023* (0.014)	0.002 (0.005)	0.024*** (0.008)	-0.042** (0.022)	-0.011 (0.013)
Sample Size	3640	3640	3640	3640	3640
Control mean	0.110	0.017	0.016	0.411	0.107
P-value	0.008	0.221	0.001	0.009	0.721
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

- Current migration to Senegal was increased by both the Dakar Treatment and the Vocational Training Treatment – seemingly (partially) crowding out internal migration.
- There were no significant effects when looking at the (more frequent short-term) migration to Senegal (for seasonal agricultural or construction work).

Long term impacts: Primary Outcomes

	Backway Questions (1)	Senegal Questions (2)	Surely Move Europe (3)	Likely/Surely Europe (4)	Considers Backway (5)	Surely Move Senegal (6)	Likely/Surely Senegal (7)	Index of Optimism (8)
Info	0.033 (0.039)	0.036 (0.054)	-0.022 (0.021)	-0.028 (0.023)	-0.060*** (0.022)	-0.001 (0.014)	0.004 (0.021)	0.031 (0.034)
Info/Dakar	-0.052 (0.041)	0.144*** (0.056)	-0.043* (0.022)	-0.044* (0.024)	-0.013 (0.024)	0.025* (0.015)	0.072*** (0.022)	0.033 (0.038)
Info/Vocational	0.019 (0.044)	0.020 (0.051)	-0.049** (0.021)	-0.072*** (0.023)	-0.092*** (0.024)	-0.013 (0.014)	0.008 (0.021)	-0.002 (0.036)
Sample Size	3233	3233	3233	3233	3233	3233	3233	3233
Control mean	2.860	3.643	0.277	0.520	0.416	0.115	0.222	-0.018
P-value	0.196	0.053	0.084	0.020	0.000	0.080	0.003	0.651
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

- No improvements in knowledge about backway migration, but improved knowledge about migration to Senegal due to Dakar treatment.
- Vocational training was particularly effective in reducing intentions for backway migration
- Dakar treatment was particularly effective increasing intentions of migration to Senegal.

Summary and Concluding Remarks

- **The Information Campaign** - decreased Backway intention, increased migration to Senegal, but no effect on steps and actual Europe migration
- **Regional migration support with information** - increased Senegal migration (and intention), reduced internal migration, improved knowledge about Senegal migration, but no effect effect on steps and actual Europe migration
- **Vocational training with information** - decreased steps towards backway migration, increased Senegal migration, reduced internal migration, intentions to migration to Europe, consideration of Backway migration
- **Consider the role of trust in the effectiveness of information campaigns**
- **Need to keep evaluating the impact of policies that provide alternatives to irregular migration**
- **Targeting of migrants (potential or those en route) remains crucial in evaluating policies**



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