



Project funded by the European Union
Project implemented by IOM



PROMOTING **SAFE MIGRATION IN 2021**

West and Central Africa

Promoting Safe Migration in 2021

Dear reader,

I present to you the second edition of IOM's Promoting Safe Migration magazine, which covers learning on awareness raising under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative. While our focus is on West and Central Africa and migration, the takeaways apply globally and across topics.

It's impossible not to mention the pandemic when referring to our work in 2020/2021. It had devastating effects on people, communities, and economies, but at the same time opened doors to new ways of thinking. Physical distancing tested our ability to stay close to the people we serve. And with rising digitalisation, our activities needed to remain inclusive and reach those in the digital gap. This meant continually testing ideas as we grew our collective knowledge and understanding of our new reality day by day.

IOM awareness raising teams across the region mainstreamed COVID-19 messaging into community outreach actions. We were able to rely on the strong experience and networks built during the first years of the Joint Initiative, and quickly generate activities to support the most vulnerable. IOM staff played an essential role in regional and national interagency taskforces, supporting other organisations and facilitating coordination on the ground (p. 27).

In this edition, you'll read about how adaptive mindsets had a positive impact beyond crisis management. How avoiding closed spaces with poor ventilation pushes you to explore the full potential of [public, outdoor spaces](#) (p. 7). And how the closing of international borders generated [local solutions](#) (p. 13), allowing us to further connect with migrants and communities. And finally, how the need to act fast contributed to [rapid prototyping, testing and reiteration](#) (p. 19).

"Knowledge not shared is wasted" is the philosophy behind this magazine and our online learning platform Yenna.org. Not just focusing on positive results but embracing our learning journey and inviting others along the way.

Feel free to join.

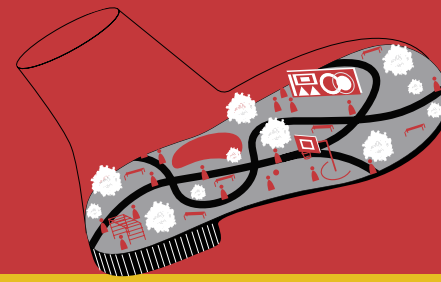
Christopher Gascon
IOM Regional Director for
West and Central Africa

Finishing touches on a Garden Sculpture for MIC Soma-Pakalinding, The Gambia.

Photo: IOM/State of MIC

Open & Accessible

Why we love activities in public space



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Think local, be sustainable

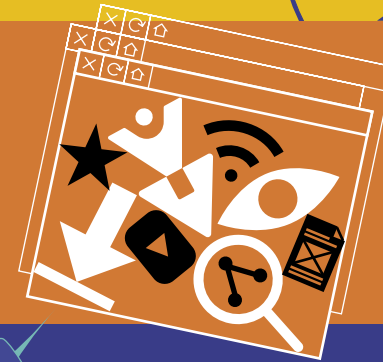
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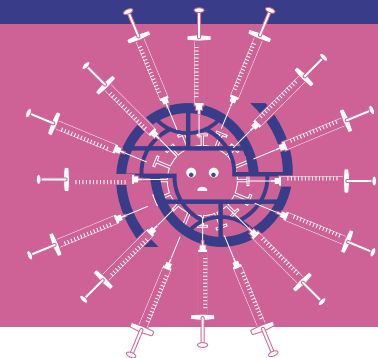
How tiny interventions can bring about big changes



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The year of adaptation



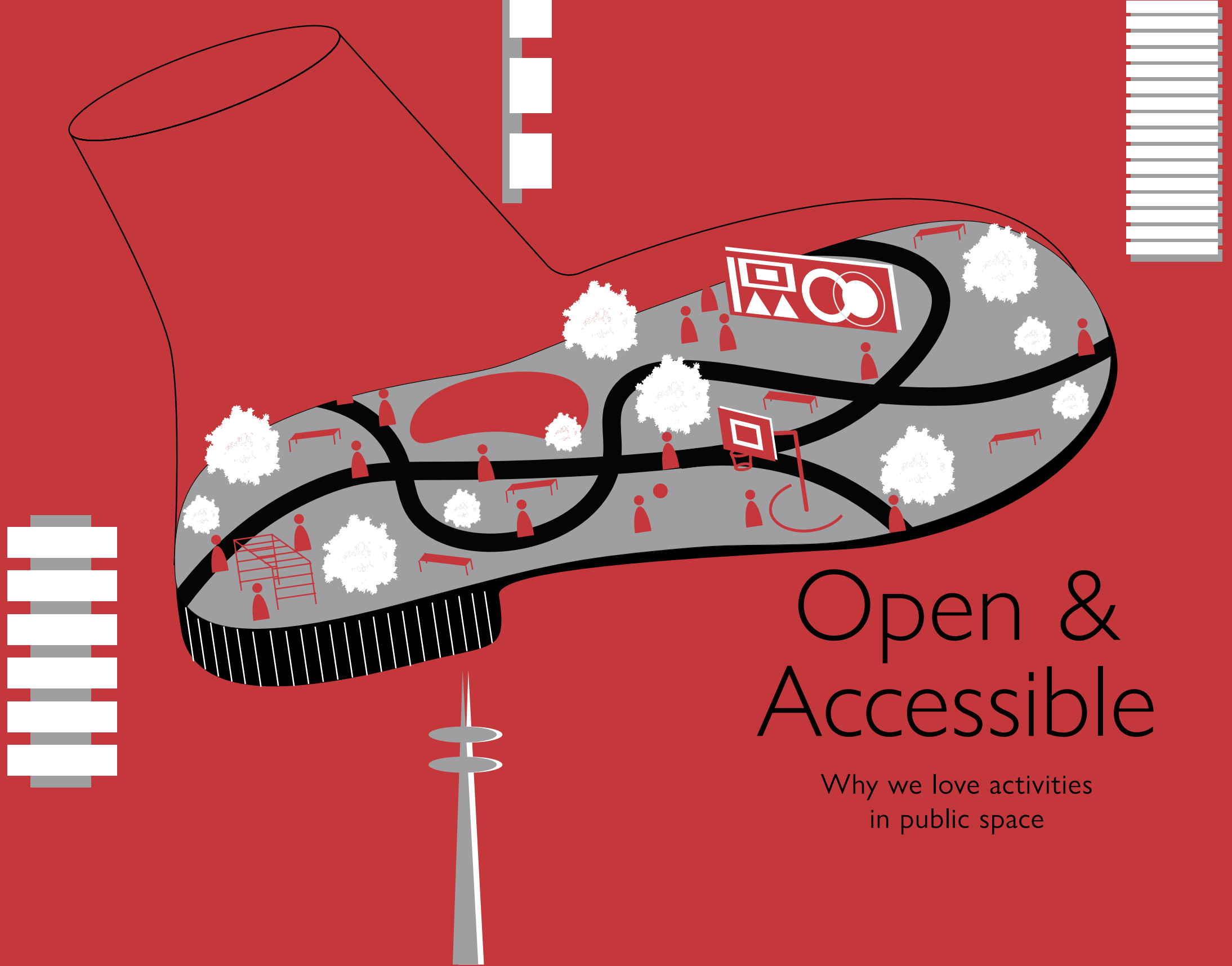
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This was their year

Celebrating our champions



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Open & Accessible

Why we love activities
in public space

Why we love activities in public space

Public space is the theater of many IOM interventions and awareness raising activities. We love the positive effects that creative activities in this setting have on community dynamics, and their inclusive power. Working in the open, on the streets, is a way to interact with many people at the same time, on a fully voluntary basis. You get direct feedback from your audience while excluding no one.

What do we understand by public space?

Public space can be defined as “an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level. These are public gathering spaces such as plazas, squares and parks. Connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and streets, are also public spaces. In the 21st century, some even consider the virtual spaces available through the internet as a new type of public space that develops interaction and social mixing.” UNESCO

Why does it matter?

Because they're accessible and open, public spaces can play an important role in improving social cohesion. And this can be a central element in the inclusion of migrants. Especially in dense urban areas, public space can make encounters and interaction possible. It's the place where different communities meet and interact.

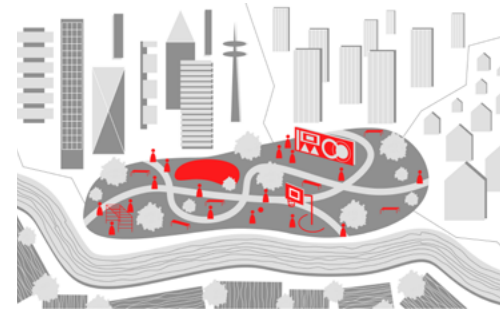
Public space can also give young people a chance to build something, meet and express themselves. Football or basketball courts, parks, skate-friendly lanes, and beaches are lively areas where these encounters happen. A great many ideas result from random interactions. Public areas are meeting grounds for like minds to connect.



Street Art Workshop in Abidjan
Photo: IOM/Mohamed Diabaté

What makes public space ideal for awareness raising?

Public space is...

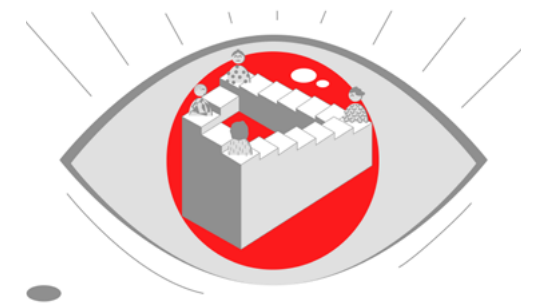


1 Open and accessible:
What's “public” is collective and thus, by nature, open and accessible to everyone. It takes down barriers and promotes inclusion regardless of income, gender, or social class. Conducting awareness raising activities in public space also favours visibility and arouses the curiosity of bystanders.



2 A neutral meeting point:
Interventions in public can create a safe and neutral ground for interaction between young migrants and host communities within a friendly environment.

3 A creative playground for learning:
Each person has unique abilities and skills. Public space is where these different talents can meet and inspire. You can learn from each other or be on the receiving end of appreciation for your skills.



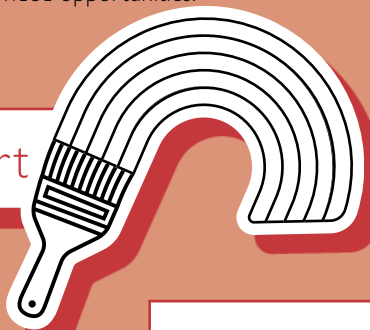
4 A perception changer:
To change your perception about someone, you need to meet that someone. To change an attitude about a practice, you need to try it. By creating activities in the open as opposed to behind closed doors, these unexpected encounters and new experiences become possible.

How does IOM use public space to promote safe migration?

Even during the pandemic, while the world went on lockdown, public space remained an important part of IOM's outreach strategy. Mobility restrictions posed challenges: families struggled to stay inside crowded homes; young people lost their energy release channels; sports courts were closed; and curfews restricted the chance to hang out with peers. However, the empty streets also provided opportunities.



Street Art



In **Burkina Faso**, designer Hamed Ouattara co-created with migrants and returnees an open-air exhibition called "The Box". Several boxes containing migration stories and memories were placed on top of each other. The public was invited to look inside the boxes, at the intimacy of individual migrants' lives.

During the pandemic, IOM's street art continued to empower young people and migrants. In the early months of the crisis, artists from **Ghana**, **Guinea Bissau**, **Niger**, and **Senegal** created giant murals with COVID-19 prevention messages. Their work was picked up by international media and generated a positive online reaction (see p. 28 for an overview of COVID-19 activities).

Playground

One thing we learned from Youth Take Over (see box above) is how important quality sport facilities are. Sports in open air, when done right, can be a true vector for social change. IOM started the renovation of public basketball courts in areas popular with youth in **The Gambia**, **Ghana** and **Senegal**, as a pilot project.

The physical construction is designed to be a steppingstone to form connections between young people and their communities. Through partnerships with local sport associations, youth can access safe, inclusive (girls and boys, nationals and migrants) and free sport activities. The courts then become meeting places where youth empowerment and positive interactions flourish.

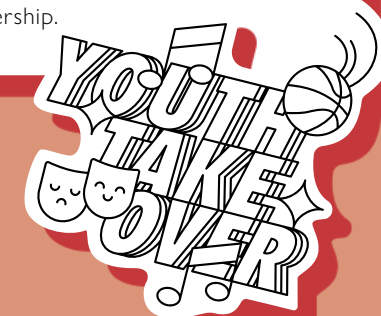


Youth Take Over

Youth centers can and should be considered as public space, open and accessible to all. IOM set up Migration Information Centers (MICs) in several youth centers across the region. However, a study in **The Gambia** revealed that actual participation of youth and their decision-making power within youth centers remained low.



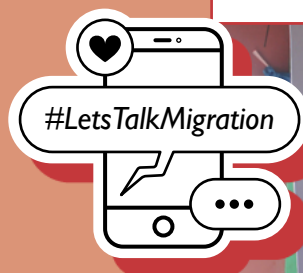
To address this, while keeping the MICs vibrant, IOM explored new activities adapted to the aspirations and needs of young people. The Youth Take Over approach challenges conventional community consultation processes. It's a method where teenagers and adolescents organize two days of activities within the centers by themselves. It empowers them, activates their creative potential and establishes a sense of ownership.



The Digital Space

With travel bans and other mobility restrictions in place, young West and Central Africans turned to the online world as a place to share, empathize and reflect. The best and the worst things happen on the Internet: from solidarity actions to the spread of fake news leading to stigmatization.

IOM leveraged the power of digital conversations from the start of the pandemic. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, **The Gambia**, **Mali**, and **Senegal** returnees were at the epicenter of online campaigns for solidarity and to counter stigma and myths. In response to COVID-19 restrictions, IOM **Ghana** successfully transformed its planned nationwide campaign #LetsTalkMigration into an online event, alongside adapted activities on the ground.



Complete how-to guides on organizing a Youth Take Over and a Street Art Together workshop are available on yenna.org.



Think local, be sustainable

A case for local sourcing

A case for local sourcing



West and Central Africa is a highly connected region, where goods, expertise, and ideas from outside enter easily. This can bring about misconceptions in the way “local” products and services are perceived, especially when it comes to the quality of what’s “local”. To address this when promoting safe migration, IOM aims to shift the gaze from global to local. Whenever we can, our teams search for local partners and solutions.

- Local businesses can generate income for a whole community
- Employing local knowledge and expertise creates jobs, which support families
- The materials and solutions are adapted to the local climate and context
- Maintenance and repair services
- There’s enormous talent and creativity in the local market

Buying local enables businesses to grow. Working with local partners and service providers provides a steady income for young people and thereby the chance to build their professional skills in the long run.

Why we buy local

Procuring local services and buying Made in Africa has a series of advantages, such as:

- Short transportation chains are good for the environment

Returnees at work

Another way of investing in a circular economy, is to engage returnees. As part of the reintegration programme, supported through the Joint Initiative, many returnees produce goods or provide services that IOM can use. By hiring returnees or engaging their businesses, we’re able to further support their reintegration process in the long run.

Here are some examples:

- In [Burkina Faso](#) and [Mauritania](#), returnee organisations provide catering services during IOM events
- In [Chad](#), [The Gambia](#) and [Ghana](#), returnee tailors produced thousands of colourful facemasks which were distributed for free by IOM

- In [Côte d’Ivoire](#), returnee painters supported the roll out of street art workshops
- In [Côte d’Ivoire](#) and [Niger](#), returnees are engaged by IOM as community mobilizers
- In [Burkina Faso](#), returnee tailors produce IOM branded tote bags made from Faso Danfani, a local cotton variant
- Yacouba, an artist and returnee, organises therapeutic painting sessions in transit centers in [Burkina Faso](#) to help migrants deal with mental health challenges
- Ahamdou Diallo, once a migrant himself, is today a counselor for IOM [Guinea](#), supporting other returnees through their reintegration process



Victims of Trafficking produce face masks for IOM and partners. Photo: IOM



Returnees produce Tote Bags in Burkina Faso. Photo: IOM

Returnee associations have always been at the forefront of IOM awareness raising campaigns. As independent contractors, they implement a diverse range of activities:

GRB



The Gambians Returned from The Backway organised caravans with attaya (tea) sessions and open-air cinema as well as improvisational theater in high schools.

ARECC



The Association des Rapatriés et de lutte Contre l'Emigration Clandestine du Cameroun produced a series of comic strips to tell migration stories and manages a WhatsApp Infoline for questions on migration.

OEMIT



The Organisation pour l'Eveil des Jeunes sur la Migration Irrégulière et le Traite de Personnes supports IOM Cameroon by rolling out community dialogue sessions.

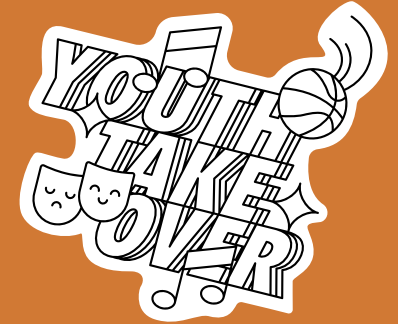
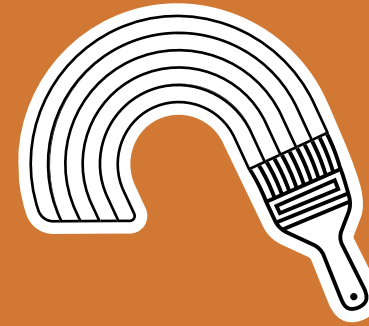
OGLMI



The Organisation guinéenne pour la lutte contre la migration irrégulière works closely with IOM Guinea to conduct outreach activities, particularly targeting the mothers of migrants. Active since 2017, OGLMI is one of the first returnee associations in the region and counts over 350 members today.

Returnees in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea and Senegal have joined the "Migrants as Messengers" network. After training in audiovisual production and community engagement, they contribute to peer-to-peer awareness raising through video production and facilitating community events.

NOW AVAILABLE: [YENNA.ORG](https://yenna.org)



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online learning platform
for awareness raising on migration!

YENNA

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[Yenna.org](https://yenna.org) is an open source platform designed to help partners, governments, and staff to make their activities more engaging and impactful.

Start learning about community engagement today, using top-notch training materials available for free. Download our activity guides and start implementing your own awareness raising activities.



The power of small scale

How tiny interventions
can bring about big changes

How tiny interventions can bring about big changes

Our last campaign promised to be BIG. We started off with an armada of experts, a seemingly bullet-proof strategy and the ambition to change it all for the better. So many smart-minds united, what could possibly go wrong?

The results were, to be honest, disappointing. The high investment did not significantly change the status quo. Wouldn't it have been better to take things one step at a time?

Why do we feel small is hard to do?

The project reality often comes with justifiable reasons to favour big over small. This might have to do with:

- Concerns about not having enough time to run several small-scale interventions
- Administrative procedures that seem too complicated for small activities
- Some donors preferring big campaigns with (expected) greater visibility

- Small partner organization, who may be in the startup phase, may have more coaching needs
- The belief that only big partners are part of the formal economy

How can we overcome those hurdles?

Keeping the above stated obstacles in mind, here are seven good reasons to consider micro over macro:



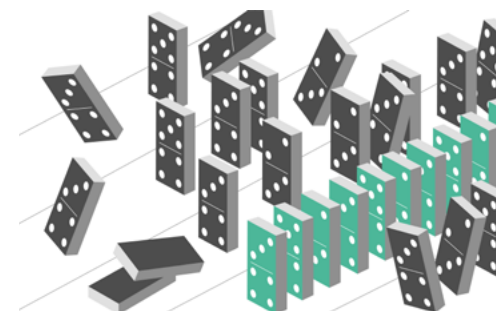
1 Requires little time from planning to action

Sometimes we need to act quick. While big efforts take a lot of time to plan, small interventions can be set up within days.



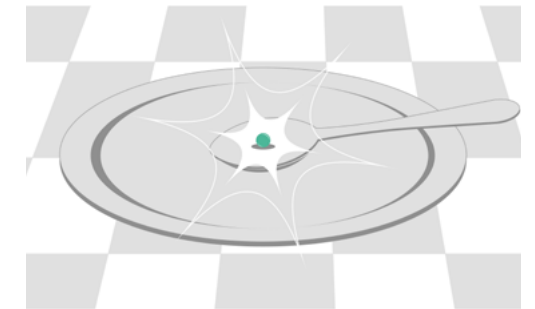
2 Can run on a small budget

Not having the big money on your side doesn't have to narrow your scope of action. You will be surprised what you can achieve with little money and a pinch of creativity.



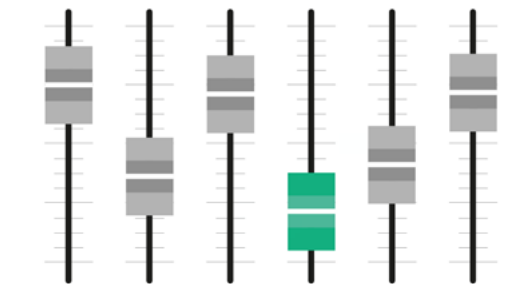
3 Allows for prototyping, testing and iterations

Our world is filled with complex problems which cannot be solved by a single response. Some are very difficult to solve because of their incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements. When standard solutions fall short, prototyping ideas with simple materials can quickly identify hidden problems and opportunities from the start.



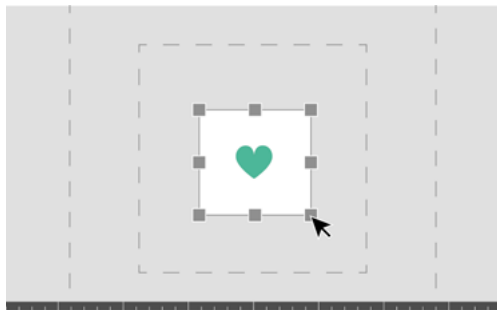
4 Consumes few resources

We have the right – and some would say even a duty – to fail from time to time. There is no shame in trying something even if the outcome is not what you expected. Use what you learn from this to adapt and make it better the next time. Fail early and fail small. You'll still have budget left to test different, more adapted approaches.

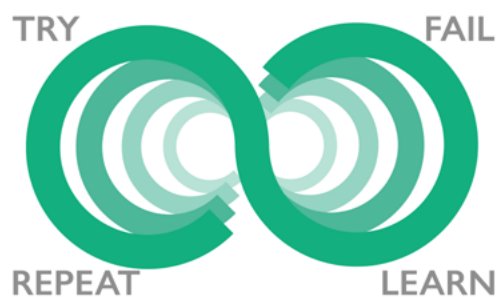


5 Allows for flexibility and adaptation to local contexts

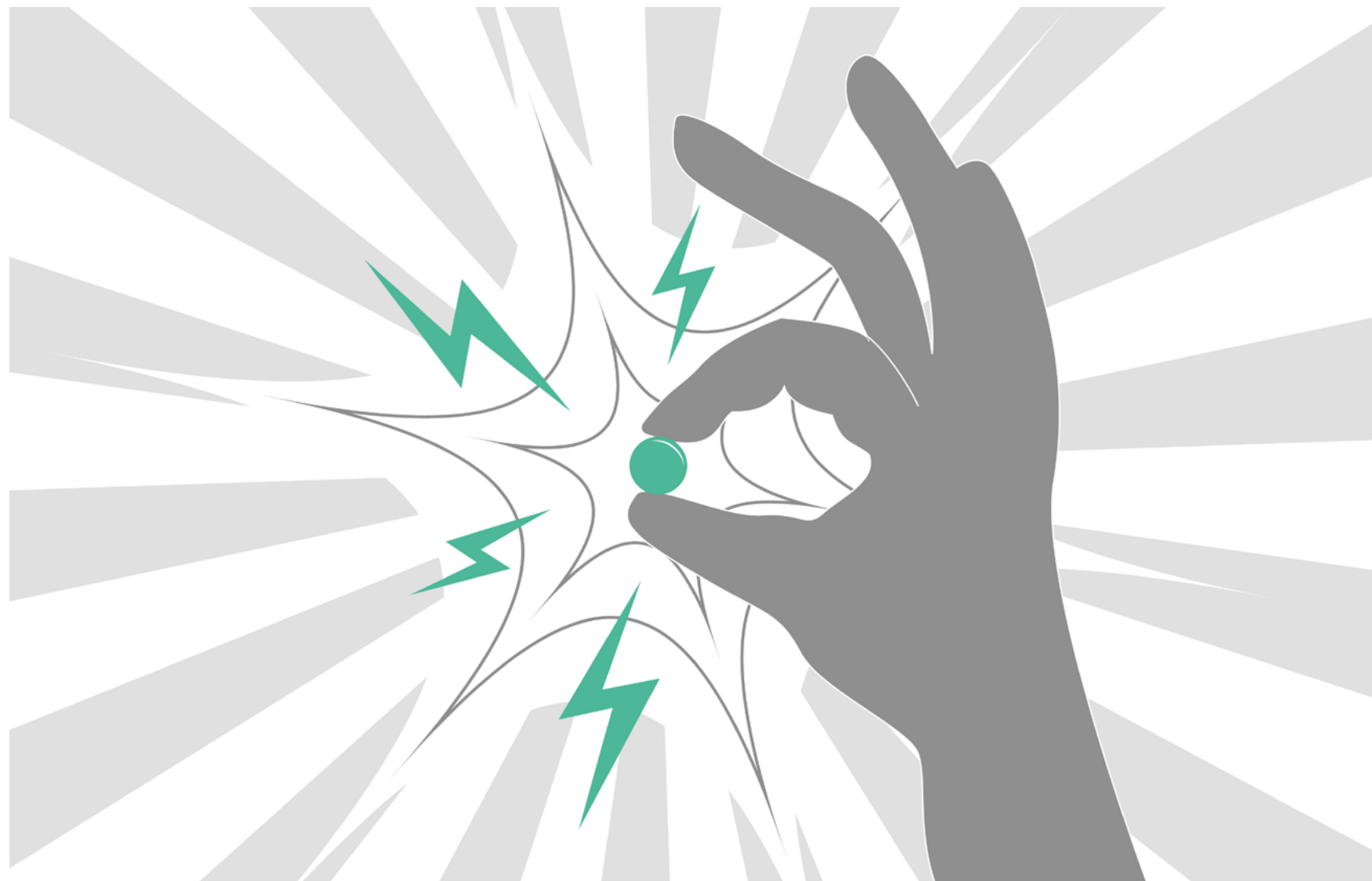
Big, complicated strategies do not always play out as you anticipate. In fact, they can be too rigid and lack flexibility to adapt to unexpected situations. This doesn't mean that you should start without preparations. Always have a plan but be prepared to change this to adapt to the reality of the situation.



6 *Is scalable and non-invasive*
Keeping a low profile takes your host community's interest at heart. Starting with a small and simple idea keeps your mind focused. Creativity begins with framing a problem, evaluating and playing with different options. Once you have found potential ways of addressing a problem, you'll always get a chance to scale it up.



7 *It's easy to repeat*
Whereas a big campaign might consume all your resources and will only allow for one shot, it's easy to repeat cheaper, small-scale activities. Going back to the same communities increases potential impact. And if you have budget left at the end, it's easy to add extra activities.



Small-scale in practice?

Under the Joint Initiative, expectations on the number of communities to target were high. Most of the communities were hard to reach, in remote and rural areas. Visiting them only once is not enough to establish trust. To get a message across, repeated interaction is key.

The solution was to conduct a series of one-on-one and small group meetings. And to make this happen, IOM worked with a tireless group of volunteers, returnees, migrants, and local associations. Armed with community dialogue skills and manuals, they traveled from one marketplace to another, set up tea sessions during daytime and screened movies at night. They performed theater, sang songs, facilitated debates, and distributed information materials.

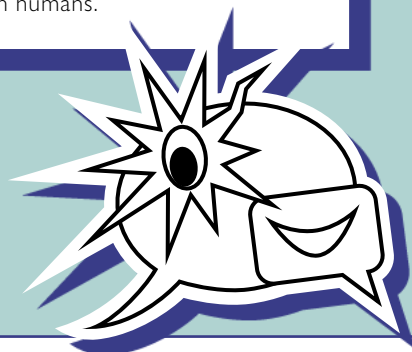
During COVID-19, IOM maintained these on-the-ground activities in accordance with local laws and prevention guidelines. This established network of volunteers was vital in reaching remote communities.

They are the centerpiece of the Joint Initiative in West and Central Africa. The thousands of conversations they led are a core element of success in IOM's awareness raising strategy in the region today.



Maquis Mana Wana, a living library

In Burkina Faso, IOM and the Human Library set up a series of small, intimate discussion spaces during social and cultural events. In these conversation booths, a visitor and a migrant sit together to have a one-on-one conversation. Like a mobile library travelling from one place to another, the living library replaces books with humans.



Community dialogue and theatre handbooks



To combine three years of outstanding experience in community dialogue, IOM Nigeria has bundled its knowhow into a handbook and an online course. The community dialogue manual is a complete review of best practices on how to successfully engage with local leaders, families and community members. It's regularly used by trained Nigerian government officials.

The Benin Film Academy and its founder Lancelot have published their expertise in community theater with returnees in a practical handbook, with templates and training manuals. It will support many aspiring directors and actors to work with IOM and its partners in the future, reaching even more communities with creative and engaging content.

COVID-19 prevention in transit centers

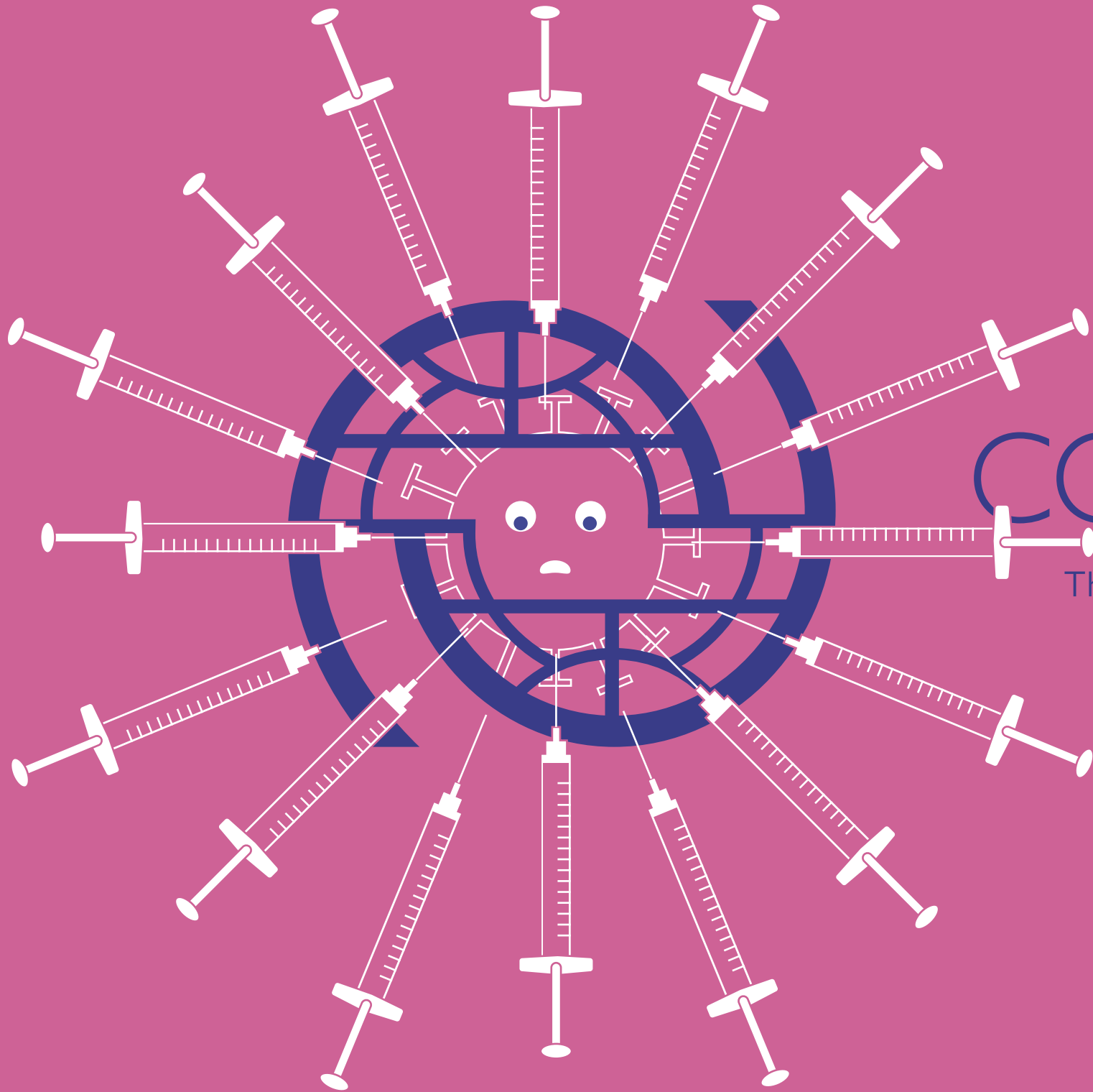


With most borders closed, IOM's voluntary return programme was put on hold, leaving many migrants stuck in transit for months. Confined in migrant centers, it was important to install sound preventive measures to protect everyone's health. Community mobilizers in Niger paid regular visits to the centers to remind its visitors of key practices. IOM also organised a photo contest and exhibition with the visitors depicting a "Life on Hold".

With the outbreak of the health crisis, countries such as Cameroon and Ghana intensified their collaborations with civil society and returnee organizations. Following their initiative, volunteers from 10 different organizations conducted door-to-door community outreach and small group dialogue sessions. Armed with facemasks, hand gel and information materials, they filled the need for trusted messengers in real-life settings. This approach has been crucial in handling the spread of the virus in places with low connectivity.



Door-to-door sessions essential during COVID-19



COVID-19

The year of adaptation

The year of adaptation

At the beginning of 2020, no one could have imagined how our activities (and lives) would change over the course of the year. Following the declaration of a pandemic in March 2020 and the creation of the EU's COVID-19 fund, IOM has rapidly adapted to the changing environment.

IOM awareness teams across West and Central Africa joined efforts beyond physical and project borders, with local partners and within interagency task forces. Our expertise in community engagement and strong presence on the ground helped to support populations to protect themselves from COVID-19, prevent the spread of the disease within communities and combat rumors and stigmatization.

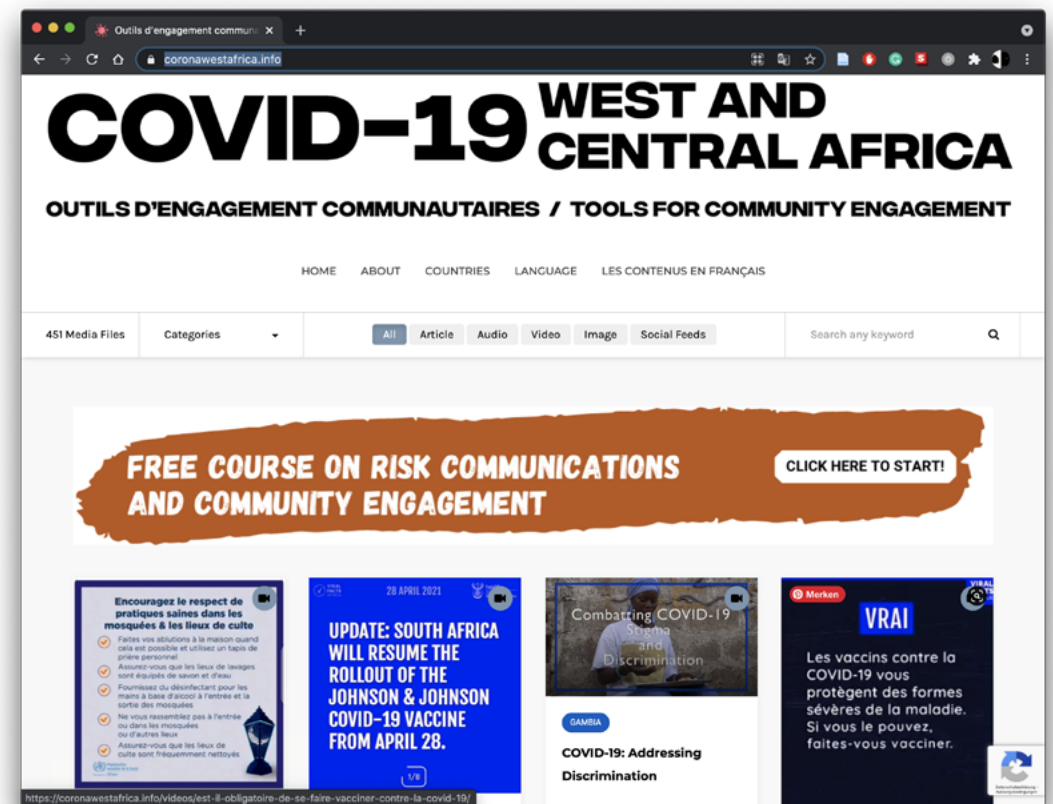
At the heart of IOM's RCCE response is the recognition that the fundamental principles of community engagement have never been more important. Messages must be tailored based on what we learn through community feedback, available in local languages and delivered by people the audience trusts; only through this approach can we effectively support and empower communities to protect themselves from COVID-19.

What did we learn?

IOM and its partners learnt some important lessons vis-à-vis RCCE – Risk Communication and Community Engagement during the first twelve months of the pandemic. Thanks to these learnings, our future RCCE responses will be proactive and even more adapted.

Information sharing among practitioners needs to be streamlined.

At the start of the pandemic, vast amounts of information tools were forwarded ad hoc by email and WhatsApp. Shared folders were created here and there by practitioners but those weren't always accessible to all. And what's more important: they didn't reach our key audience of community mobilizers. This is where IOM and its partners decided to create the regional platform coronawestafrica.info – publicly accessible to all and hosting materials in relevant regional languages.



coronawestafrica.info

Trained volunteers on the ground drastically increase reaction speed and reach.

Over the last two years, IOM has invested greatly in its network of volunteers on the ground – from community mobilizers to Migrants as Messengers Volunteers and local leaders. Thanks to them, we were able to quickly react and adapt to each community's needs. Door-to-door outreach remained a necessity in this health crisis, and our trained volunteers were perfectly placed to carry out these sessions safely and responsibly. Altogether they supported 3,351 activities over the period of April-November 2020, accounting for 65 per cent of IOM's overall RCCE activities.

French and other local language tools need to be available from the start.

In the early days of the pandemic, many materials were only available in English, thus delaying the sharing of important information in the region. In the future, translation service providers should be engaged as part of the initial set up to fast-track potential outreach. IOM's information materials have been disseminated in more than 20 languages in West and Central Africa.

Content strategies need to adapt to changes in the way audiences interact. Social media users were more likely to share posts at earlier stages of the pandemic. The peak of retweets on Twitter and shares on Facebook through IOM's regional social media platforms was reached in May 2020. Similarly, the number of engagements with COVID-19 related content in the first months of the pandemic was much higher than in the following time period. A total of 725 posts generated 74,555 engagements from March-June 2020, while 622 posts generated 28,600 engagements from July-November 2020. This shift in user habits may be useful for future RCCE responses, allowing us to adapt content strategies to changing user behaviours.

CoronaWestAfrica.info is a publicly accessible, online library of context specific tools for COVID-19 community engagement in the region. The website launched in April 2020, and by March 2021 hosted more than 400 tools (images, videos, audio files and PDFs) in over 20 languages. In parallel, IOM launched a social media campaign to support material sharing, and to build a strong online community of practitioners.

In September 2020, IOM rolled out its first publicly available e-Learning course on RCCE, available in both English and French. By March 2021 more than 700 people from UN, government, NGOs, government and media agencies had completed it. By popular demand, an offline version of the course was created in March 2021 including a handbook, PowerPoint presentation and facilitation guide.

During Ramadan, IOM and Doctors without Borders developed a "Guide for Engaging with Religious Leaders", published in English and French in May 2020. Two months after that, IOM also supported the development of guidance for RCCE in complex settings: "Finding community-led solutions to COVID-19".

What did we do?

Activities with a regional scope

IOM was an active contributor to the regional COVID-19 response. In collaboration with other actors such as UNHCR, UNICEF, Doctors without Borders, the WHO, Bioforce and many others, IOM supported the development of a wide range of online information tools.

COVID-19 RCCE in West & Central Africa

March 2020 to 2021

1728

communities reached through RCCE activities

203

partner organizations supported RCCE activities

20+

languages used across RCCE activities

217,135

PPE – Personal protective equipment distributed during RCCE activities

Working alongside regional partners

20,131

CoronaWestAfrica website visits

7,000+

followers on social media platforms

731

completions of RCCE e-Learning

16

joint RCCE materials produced

On-the-Ground

5,133

on-the-ground activities

862,460

people reached

342

videos produced

49,981

educational materials disseminated

Across West and Central Africa, IOM and its partners conducted 5,133 on-the-ground activities from March 2020 to November 2020, engaging 862,460 people across 1,728 communities. This includes 338,113 females and 117,483 migrants in transit. A total of 342 videos were produced to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention, and 49,981 printed information materials were distributed in more than 20 regional languages.

On-Air

751

television broadcasts

6,090,000

potential audience reached through television

7,452

radio broadcasts

13,083,330

potential audience reached through radio

Through 751 television airings and 7,452 radio broadcasts, IOM reached a potential audience of more than 19 million people in West and Central Africa with information on COVID-19 from March 2020 to November 2020.

Online

1,251,298

video views

103,155

likes, shares and comments

1,347

posts about COVID-19

As a response to movement and gathering restrictions across the region, IOM adapted its COVID-19 community engagement response to digital solutions. In the period from March 2020 to November 2020, more than 100,000 people have engaged with (liked, commented and shared) 1,347 IOM COVID-19 posts on digital platforms. IOM's COVID-19 related videos have been viewed more than 1.2 million times.

Capacity Building

236

COVID-19 trainings

6,752

people trained

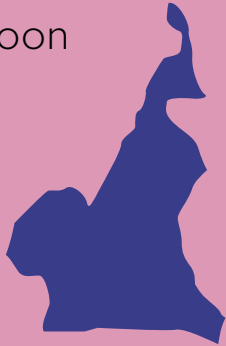
2,085

videos produced

From March 2020 to November 2020, IOM conducted 236 trainings to 6,752 people (2,085 female), to support the dissemination of accurate information on COVID-19 in West and Central Africa.

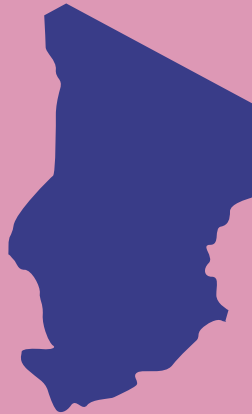
Activities on the national level

Cameroon



- Community outreach by volunteers and partners
- Campaign on mental health support for people impacted by COVID-19.
- Community outreach by volunteers in border communities and entry points

Chad



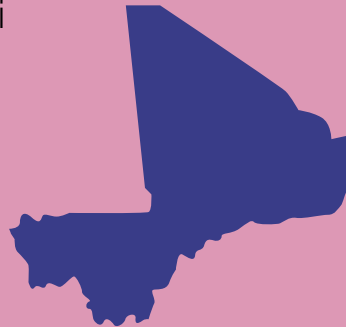
- Prevention sessions in transit centers
- Community outreach by town criers, in local languages

Guinea Bissau



- Street art
- Radio programmes with information and prevention messages
- COVID-19 prevention sessions for returnees
- Short film on the effects of COVID-19 during migration, broadcast on TV

Mali



- Radio broadcasts on stigma and how to manage transit centers during COVID-19
- Prevention sessions in transit centers
- Training for partner organisations, community leaders, health workers, community mobilizers and traditional healers on COVID-19 prevention

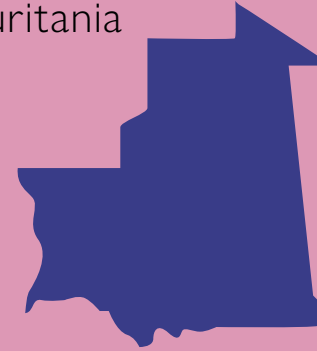
The Gambia



- Radio and TV broadcasts on COVID-19 stigma and discrimination, in four languages (English, Wolof, Mandinka and Fula) on 27 stations
- Virtual journalist training on the impact of COVID-19 on migration
- Community outreach by volunteers in border communities and entry points

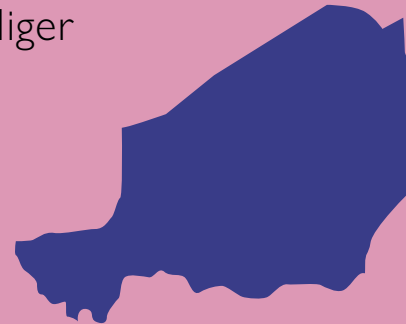
This overview only shows the highlights – for a full report on COVID-19 community engagement activities, visit the website migrationjointinitiative.org.

Mauritania



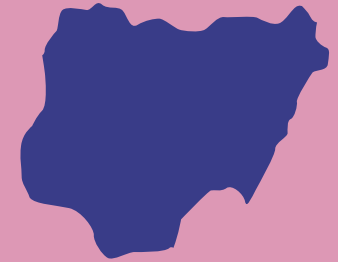
- WhatsApp group to share and collect information on COVID-19 among migrant communities
- Video campaign by Mauritanian doctors from the diaspora who came home to support the COVID-19 response
- Training on community engagement and COVID-19 for local leaders and NGOs
- Community outreach by volunteers in border communities and entry points

Niger



- Community outreach by volunteers reaching 60,000 people (including migrants in transit)
- Photography workshop in transit centers and online expo “Life on Hold”
- Community mobilizers and artists covered 1200km of the Nigerien territory with an awareness raising caravan by volunteers and artists to inform, prevent and combat rumours, reaching more than 10,000 people
- Online concert
- Organisation of the first COVID-proof youth basketball camp with testing and monitoring of the 40 young participants

Nigeria



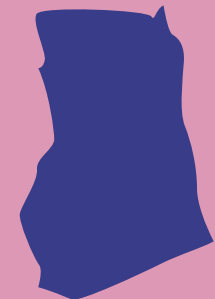
- Radio shows reaching over 2.5 million listeners with information and prevention messages
- Face mask production by returnees, distributed for free in churches, mosques and markets
- Community outreach by volunteers during market days, reaching over 2,000 people

Senegal



- Street art
- Community outreach alongside the distribution of hygiene kits
- Digital art exposition: 10 artists, depicting the difficulty of adapting COVID-19 prevention measures in Africa (cf. physical distancing)

Ghana



- Community outreach by volunteers
- TV show on solidarity and discrimination in times of COVID-19
- Radio broadcast on COVID-19 and migration
- Posters and postcards distribution
- Street art



This was their year

IOM staff become
awareness raising champions

Adaora Okoli

Senior Project Assistant IOM Nigeria



Age: 30 years old

Favorite country: France, for its people and the ambience in the cities

Three years ago, Adaora joined the IOM **Nigeria** team, which she describes as “hard working, super creative and talented”. She’s distinguished herself by being a good team player, but she also has some special talents: “writing, singing and dancing”.

Adaora decided to join IOM’s efforts in promoting safe migration after “seeing Nigerian youth risking or losing their lives and wasting away their talents and skills by traveling irregularly while if they had traveled the right way, they would have been able to contribute back to society”.

With the help of her team, she developed an activity she’s particularly proud of: “it consists of creating and training five different troops comprised of local actors, students and returnees on how to perform theatre in their respective communities and thus use community theater to promote social cohesion”. This and other activities have taught her how to manage people and projects even better.

When COVID-19 hit, the situation in Nigeria was not easy, and the team had to take into consideration all COVID-19 protocols and restrictions when implementing awareness raising activities. “One lesson learnt is the importance of being adaptable. People realize that over time there will be fewer face-to-face interactions and they must learn how to use digital spaces”, Adaora says.

Her wish for 2021: “**further improving our monitoring and evaluation techniques to better showcase the impact of our activities in the lives of community members of potential migrants and returnees**”.

Collins Yeboah

Community Outreach Assistant IOM Ghana



Age: 37 years old

Favorite country: Ghana, for its hospitality and feeling of collectivity

Collins joined IOM **Ghana** in October 2016 to lead the community outreach component of the Joint Initiative. His colleagues at IOM describe him as “a great guy, very supportive, a good counsellor who supports his team even when it comes to personal problems”. The strong assets that make his work special are his communication skills and public speaking ability.

He comes from a migration prone area in Ghana himself. It was after hearing so many returnee testimonies about their journeys that he decided to become active in the awareness raising field himself. What motivates him is his dedication to “combat misperceptions around migration”.

With the support of his team, he developed the nationwide, audiovisual, online and offline #LetsTalkMigration campaign of which he’s particularly proud: “We’ve been using various channels to reach as many people as possible. Our safe migration messages can be seen and heard all over the country to impact change”.

Throughout 2020, his key achievements were the improvement of his visual language skills, and the ability to use street art to raise awareness not only on migration, but also on COVID-19. That was not the only thing he learned. Due to COVID-19 situation, he learned to use resources at hand to reach the most difficult areas: “we expanded activities to Community Information Centers and worked with community influencers to build the bridge between communities”.

While it was difficult not to be able to do more face-to-face awareness raising, his wish for 2021 is to bring “**improvements in the use of communication for development tools, to get more community members and influencers involved from conception to implementation and thus reach the unreachable**”.

Mohamed Aly Diabate

Media & Communication Assistant IOM Côte d'Ivoire



Age: 30 years old

Favorite country: Senegal for its culture, social environment, diversity, and hospitality

Described by his colleagues as “available, altruistic and always in a good mood”, Mohamed does not hesitate to put his sense of humour to work and make the people he works with feel at ease. What does he appreciate about his colleagues? “Their professionalism and the ease with which they work in perfect harmony.”

Since he joined IOM in 2018, his special talent for human focused photography allowed him to put his art and skills at the service of his office and the communities in which it works, to promote safe and informed migration.

Mohamed feel particularly proud about a photography training he helped to set up with the participation of the renowned National Geographic photojournalist Reza Deghati. Together, they taught three journalists and three returnees how to use images to raising awareness. He said it was an amazing experience. Six months later, he works hard to keep the project alive: “I’m

still in contact with the journalists, and I help them each time they call. I am also in contact with the returnees. When we organised activities, I called them, I gave them advice. Today, I am really proud of what they are becoming in their communities.”

The COVID-19 crisis taught him to be more resilient and inclusive. A good example is the campaign he proposed to raise awareness among deaf-mutes, with the support of doctors. He also learned to consider each difficulty as a challenge to overcome.

His wish for 2021 is: “to see as many people as possible impacted by awareness raising activities and to make IOM a reference known even in the most remote places, and that a migrant goes to IOM for information instead of searching for a smuggler”.

Pascale Essama

Communication & Awareness Raising Assistant IOM Cameroon



Age: 30 years old

Favorite country: Cameroon for its very delicious “ndole” and its friendly mixed population

Since her first day at work with IOM in November 2018, Pascale never hesitated to put her talents to practice, especially her communication skills and the eloquence with which she implements different projects. Described by her colleagues as “accessible, dedicated, meticulous, and with easy laughter”, she was able to forge a fraternal relationship with them.

With the support of the returnee organisation AREC, Pascale created the comic book series “KWATT” of which she is particularly proud and dares to call her “baby”. It’s a useful digital awareness tool for future activities, fully realized with and by (returnee) migrants.

Her motivation to raise awareness on safe migration has increased by “having been in contact with many returnees, having listened to stories as sad and tragic as any other...I

take it as a personal duty to pass on the message that it is no longer acceptable for people to lose their lives in tragic conditions at sea, in the desert...”.

In addition to having learned to manage a unit in times of crisis, COVID-19 gave her the opportunity to realize even more that every person is sacred and that they must be taken care of regardless of status. In her words: “nothing is hard when you turn difficulties into challenges to overcome ... just look on the bright side.”

Does she have a wish for 2021? Oh yes, “more funding for awareness-raising activities. More populations still need to be targeted, identified and informed”.



Young welder at the weld-champions workshop

at MIC Soma-Pakalinding, The Gambia. IOM/State of MIC

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in the meeting of operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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