MIGRATE TO SUCCEED: UNDERSTANDING YOUTH MIGRATION TRAJECTORIES IN GUINEA

This research project is part of the "Safety, Support and Solutions along the Central Mediterranean Route" programme funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) which objectives include improving the understanding of migration trends by governments, humanitarian agencies and national organizations in a bid to formulate appropriate responses for vulnerable communities. Under this programme, six countries in West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal) conducted research projects in 2018 and 2019.

Identifying migration routes, Mamou Prefecture, Middle Guinea, Photo IOM, 2018

This research is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methodologies:

- An individual questionnaire conducted with **415 young returnees.**
- A questionnaire conducted with **217 households** (in which the young migrants currently reside or resided).
- **Four (4) focus groups** conducted with community members in each region (youth associations, women leaders, local authorities, and community leaders).
- A **participatory mapping** exercise with 40 young returnees.

INTRODUCTION

The recent phenomenon of irregular migration of young people aged between 15 and 24 in Guinea scaled up considerably since 2016 and requires special attention because of its unprecedented nature and its political, social and economic implications. Between 2015 and 2018, IOM recorded more than 25,000 Guinean migrants arriving irregularly in Italy. These statistics place Guinea among the countries with high rates of irregular migrant outflows in sub-Saharan Africa. Under the European Union Trust Fund (EUTF) initiative and other programmes, IOM facilitated the voluntary return of more than 10,000 migrants between January 2017 and September 2018.

The main objective of this research is to understand the underlying factors of irregular migration of young Guineans aged between 15 and 24 to Europe through the specific case of returned migrants who received voluntary return assistance from IOM in 2017. **Data collection took place between February and March 2019 in Guinea's four main regions: Lower Guinea, Middle Guinea, Upper Guinea, and Forest Guinea.**

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUNG RETURNED MIGRANTS

Among young migrants, only 27% are from Conakry, but upon their return more than half of them settled in the Guinean capital (51%), focusing on jobs and services. **This shows that the priority for these young people upon return is access to economic opportunities.**

Moreover, most of the young returnees received an education as **60% of the migrants reached a secondary level of education.**

However, the level and quality of education do not allow young people to integrate into the labour market and thus ensure their economic stability. **There is a loss of confidence in the education institutions.**

> *"The education level of young migrants does not in any way influence their decision. Whether they are pupils, students or graduates, once they make the decision, they travel without anyone's advice."*
>
> Focus group with women in Kankan

67%

OF YOUNG MIGRANTS WERE BORN INTO POLYGAMOUS FAMILIES

A proportion of **69%** of migrants highlighted the lack of economic opportunities as the main reason for leaving the country to Europe, while **15%** mentioned the desire for adventure as a motivation.

Migration is seen as a way of integrating into an increasingly globalised world. International migration is thus seen as the easiest alternative to achieve high living standards including **social recognition and high status in society that the community of origin can no longer offer.**

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AUTONOMOUS MIGRATION: A LOSS TO FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

A proportion of **55%** of young migrants indicated that they travelled without their families' agreement.

Previously, families were more involved in migration projects of young people. Migration was then clearly defined within a family dynamic and was a strategy of diversification of household incomes. In recent years, young people seem to have changed their decision-making patterns, not necessarily informing their parents of their intentions and **plan their journey based on information gathered on the Internet and social networks**.

> *"Migration is a long-standing societal phenomenon in this community, but migrants left in plain view of their families with a specific goal in mind: to meet the needs of their families. This new form of migration did not exist in our time (irregular migration) and its rate was low compared to now."*
>
> Focus group with women in Kankan.

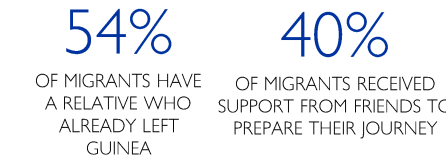## COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Throughout the various focus groups conducted with elders and women from different communities, it appears that **neither parents nor local authorities support the departure of their young members**. They denounce the fact that their villages and communities are losing their most active members over the years. Community members also regret the misunderstanding that develops between the different generations, creating family tensions gradually that risk destroying the social bond.

The high emigration rate of young people significantly changes the family and community structures in the areas of departure and can also lead to conflicts.

> *"At this rate of young people migration, our societies are losing out in valid arms, customs and cultures. In addition, the social fabric loses its meaning and value, because families are affected by the departure of young people.*
>
> Focus group with elders in N'Zérékoré.

THE INFLUENCE OF FRIENDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKS OF RELATIVES IN THE MIGRATION PROJECT

54%
OF MIGRANTS HAVE A RELATIVE WHO ALREADY LEFT GUINEA

40%
OF MIGRANTS RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS TO PREPARE THEIR JOURNEY

Focus groups with community elders and women highlighted the strong competition between young people of the same age, and particularly between members of the same polygamous family. Jealousy between brothers and the determination to succeed fuel the desire to leave the country.

Participatory mapping also revealed well-established networks of relatives along migration routes, particularly **in Bamako (Mali), Adrar (Niger), and Algiers (Algeria).** The presence of relatives along the Saharan crossing thus seems to be a key factor supporting the mobility of young people leaving Guinea.

35%
OF RETURNED MIGRANTS TRAVELLED ALONE

THE ROLE OF TRANSIT COUNTRIES IN YOUNG MIGRANTS' JOURNEY

> *"Today the trends show a very high migration rate, and young people migrate without asking anyone's opinion and take unknown and unsafe routes."*
>
> Focus group with women in Kankan.

Young migrants rarely make a straight journey and often complete several stages before approaching the Mediterranean or undertaking the return to their country of origin. Transit countries and areas then become real "development spaces" on a personal level for young Guineans.

Gao in Mali, Niamey in Niger and Tamanrasset in Algeria have thus become "hub cities".

However, these crossing points are also synonymous with violence, risks and abuse for young migrants.

1. IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRATION ISSUES AND SUPPORT CREATION OF NEW PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Promote research, data collection and analysis on youth migration to better understand and assess the underlying factors of young people's mobility.

- Support government partners in the implementation of effective vocational programmes that address the issue of youth employability in a sustainable way.

- Call on civil society actors and government institutions to factor the gender dimension in youth migration policy and access to employment in Guinea.

2. STRENGTHEN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY BONDS

- Put in place mechanisms for consultation, dialogue and meeting with the youngest, adolescents and communities to better understand their needs, aspirations, and expectations.

- Reach out to rural communities for the implementation of inclusive development interventions and programmes adapted to local realities.

- Develop risk and opportunity assessment systems to implement locally adapted development interventions and programmes in rural areas.

- Encourage the creation of returned migrant associations in rural areas to allow for better information sharing and knowledge on migration routes.