



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

September

External Final Evaluation of the
Migrants as Messengers (MaM)
Phase 2 Initiative

Consultancy: External Final Evaluation of the Migrants as Messengers (MaM) Phase 2 Initiative.

Timeframe of the assessment: 8 April 2022 – 15 September 2022.

Geographical scope: Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

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ACRONYMS

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| CO | Country Office |
| ERG | Evaluation Reference Group |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| MaM | Migrants as Messengers |
| NCE | No Cost Extension |
| PRODOC | Project Document |
| RO | Regional Office |
| TNV | Training of New Volunteers |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| ToR | Terms of Reference |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |
| UNEG | United Nations Evaluation Group |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **purpose** of this final evaluation was to obtain a critical assessment of the efficiency, relevance and sustainability of the project “Migrants as Messengers” Phase 2, implemented by the IOM, with the dual purpose of accountability and learning. The scope of the evaluation considered the implementation period from April 2019, until April 2022¹. The **geographic scope** covered all the seven countries targeted by the intervention: Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

In terms of the **methodology**, the evaluation considered a mixed-method concurrent embedded approach by producing both quantitative and qualitative data, as well as a criteria-based approach complemented with a program theory model. The assessment was based on the analytical framework that included the evaluation matrix and the Theory of Change (ToC), as well as some key research methods, such as the Most Significant Change. The data collection techniques considered were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, extensive document review and an online survey. Gender equality and human rights were reflected throughout the process, and participation was ensured by involving a wide range of stakeholders in the design and execution of the evaluation.

The **key findings** are presented according to each of the evaluation criteria.

RELEVANCE:

- The ToC includes all key elements to explain how MaM is expected to work and includes a series of relevant assumptions that contribute toward explaining the mechanism of change leading from one level of result to the next. The ToC is well understood internally, although it would be helpful to share and include the ToC in key reporting documents to strengthen ownership and a shared understanding.
- A wide range of relevant training was made available to the MaM Volunteers, taking into account the communication and technical skills required for successful awareness raising as well as their psychosocial needs to enable them perform these tasks. There was general agreement that the trainings were beneficial and no specific gaps in training related to awareness raising were identified, and that the training would be useful beyond the scope of the MaM project. The media training was found highly relevant and useful by media participants, sensitising them to the topic and enabling them to report professionally and ethically on migration stories.
- The key messages of the digital content produced under the MaM project reflected the key messages of the project, although there was some imbalance between the key messages, with more messaging related to the dangers of irregular migration than legal routes and alternatives to migration.
- Lessons learned from Phase 1 were integrated in the design and implementation of Phase 2, mainly the use of the peer-to-peer communication approach, the follow-up opportunities for young people and to tailor individual components to different audiences using different messages and channels.
- Recognition of the role of women in preventing irregular migration in terms of their commitment, reliability and capacity to engage with female audiences was incorporated in

¹ Although this is the final evaluation, the evaluation did not cover at least three months of implementation.

Phase 2. Nevertheless, attention to how gender relations affect differently women and men in the (regular and more importantly, irregular) migration journey remained unaddressed during the trainings and awareness raising activities.

- As the context of the pandemic impacted in-person events, short online training capsules were developed, smaller calls and online sessions replaced regular coordination meetings, and activities were adapted to the respective COVID-19 restrictions in each country.

EFFICIENCY

- While there were delays to the initial recruitment and training of Volunteers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the network of Volunteers was strengthened over the lifespan of the project with the continuous addition of new Volunteers, reaching the target already by year 2, and the improvement of the skills and knowledge of existing Volunteers.
- The project budget was considered adequate and some savings were made in the early phases of the project due to fewer in-person activities and meetings than planned because of the pandemic. COVID-19 also had some impact on the timeframe, which led to a no-cost extension being granted.
- An appropriate balance of the different communications channels (community engagement, media and social media) was used. It was found that social media was generally more relevant for youth in certain countries and urban areas, while radio and community engagement remain key channels for reaching more rural regions. While there were some successes engaging influencers as message amplifiers, more emphasis could have been given to this area, particularly in those countries where access to internet and social media usage is high among youth.
- A wide variety of digital content was produced using various formats. Content using testimonials and drama was considered by Volunteers to be the most effective in connecting with audiences, including youth and young women. Many videos captured well the compelling stories of returnees, including of women. The use of local languages and dialects reinforced the peer-to-peer approach.
- The main strategies to ensure volunteer engagement included leveraging the peer-to-peer approach, using a cross-cutting gender approach to engage women Volunteers, involving MaM Volunteers in the COVID-19 response, and providing mental health and psychosocial support to Volunteers.
- The evolution of Volunteers has been gradual, with most Volunteers satisfied with their participation in the project, and a very high percentage of them now part of a volunteer network or association. This points towards their continuing engagement in awareness raising on migration issues. Furthermore, Volunteers report a high level of collaboration with both other MaM organisations as well as with external organizations engaged in similar awareness-raising activities.

SUSTAINABILITY

- The most significant changes identified that link to the sustainability of results are: at the individual level, Volunteers contributing to decision making processes within their communities, thus becoming agents of change; the willingness of some media partners to continue collaborations with Volunteers beyond the MaM project; the fact that skills training improved Volunteers' employment prospects; and the improvement of personal

wellbeing through psychosocial support. At the institutional level, the improvement of the volunteer's capacity to create, sustain and scale up associations; the strengthening of networking, and the generation of synergies and the improvement of the quality of media reporting on migration can be highlighted. At the community level, the improved coexistence and respect within members of the community regarding returnees, and stronger social cohesion in the communities.

- Various efforts have been made to train and support Volunteers in conducting awareness raising activities to build autonomy in this area. Volunteers have been trained and are motivated to continue with the awareness-raising work on preventing irregular migration and promote safe alternatives, the lack of funding and material support (mainly equipment), has been highlighted by all respondents as something needed.
- Some 16 returnees' associations, 4 of which are led by female Volunteers, have received logistical support from the MaM project so as to be able to continue awareness raising about irregular migration once the support is withdrawn. This support was mainly focused on legal advice for the constitution of the association as a legal entity.
- Volunteers had a high level of motivation to continue working on awareness raising, principally so that they can increase knowledge and capacities, improve their self-esteem and ease their professional and social reintegration, and help the overall community. Partner organizations improved their knowledge about the issue, and had adapted their stance towards returnees and their capacity to work with IOM.
- The key areas identified to ensure institutional and social sustainability of Volunteers and associations are to keep developing partnership with media and other relevant organizations, finding alternative source of funding to conduct awareness-raising actions, and engaging other UN partners to showcase volunteer associations and their skills in content creation.
- In terms of contextual challenges, it has been noted that the political, security and economic context, as well as some weather and infrastructures conditions, could affect the continuity of the awareness-raising activities. The fact that the project could receive negative media attention through inaccurate perceptions of media partners and influencers participating in the training, and the risk that migrants that testify in videos become the target of online harassment, are also perceived as potential risks
- With regard to the internal challenges, some aspects were identified that may affect the continuity of the associations (financial, legal, human resources); the engagement and commitment of Volunteers working on awareness raising activities; the means that Volunteers need to ensure the continuity of their work (tools for content creation, use of relevant platforms, access to internet, skills and equipment); Volunteers' needs for further training in order to become more professionalized; as well as the need to support women's associations, involve elders, religious and community leaders.

These key findings allowed the evaluation team to draw up the following **conclusions**:

RELEVANCE:

1. The ToC of the project is coherent, well contextualized and includes all key elements to explain how the project works, showing clear linkages and causal pathways among all these elements, and including relevant assumptions that contribute to the explanation of mechanisms of change leading from one level of result to the next. However, the ToC lacks assumptions linking intermediary outcomes with the final outcomes.

2. The shift from an individual-centered approach during Phase 1, to one that is more supportive of associations and which recognizes the role of women in preventing irregular migration in Phase 2 shows a positive evolution of the MaM approach towards ensuring sustainability while considering cross-cutting issues. Nevertheless, attention to individual Volunteers and informal networks of Volunteers as well as identifying how gender relations affect differently women and men in the (regular and more importantly, irregular) migration journey remained very limited.
3. The project has ensured the usefulness of the knowledge and skills developed beyond the awareness raising purposes of the intervention. This means that Volunteers can actually apply their knowledge and skills to other personal interests, which in some cases include self-employment and income generation. This might be the reason why participants highlighted the need to include additional vocational trainings. Media representatives also found the trainings highly relevant and useful, as they enable them to report professionally and ethically on meaningful migration stories.
4. During the pandemic, IOM mobilized the MaM volunteer network to conduct peer-to-peer awareness raising on COVID-19, which had a positive impact and reinforced the concept of volunteering. In order to adapt the implementation of activities to the restrictions imposed, short online training capsules were developed, and virtual meetings replaced regular face-to-face coordination meetings. Although it accentuated the relevance of the use of new technologies and digital education among the participating Volunteers, some challenges related to limited internet connections were faced.

EFFICIENCY:

5. The project shows good adaptability to contextual factors, especially to the challenges imposed by the pandemic, and particularly when it comes to recruiting new Volunteers and the improvement of the skills and knowledge of existing Volunteers. Overall, the great majority of Volunteers in all target countries expressed considerable levels of engagement and their willingness to continue with the awareness raising activities, and a high percentage of the Volunteers are part of a volunteer networks or associations. The challenge at this point is to ensure that the necessary conditions are in place so that this volunteer engagement can bring sustainable results at the highest levels.
6. The efficient use of the budget and the positive impact that virtual trainings had on its execution led to a no-cost extension of the project, which is a great opportunity to consolidate the results achieved. With regard to more cost-efficient strategies, no specific alternatives were identified, but increasing the in-house capacity in digital skills, the identification of lessons learned regarding online activities and more advance notification to Volunteers about activities could be further explored.
7. The relevance of the communication channels depending on the location of target audiences (urban and rural areas) calls for specific approaches based on the analysis of these criteria. In addition, the engagement of influencers can be prioritized in the next phase in those areas where access to internet and social media usage is high among the youth. Finally, in terms of video production, testimonials and drama using local languages are identified as they are main enablers to reach and sensitize young people, while considering an emphasis on quality over quantity and providing certain control and flexibility to Volunteers in the video-production process.

8. During the implementation of the project, some strategies were put into place to strengthen volunteer engagement, such as the peer-to-peer approach, a gender approach to engage women Volunteers, the involvement of Volunteers in the COVID-19 response, and the provision of mental health and psychosocial support to Volunteers. Despite the limited data on volunteer's retention rates, the overall number of MaM Volunteers grew over the years with a special attention to the recruitment of female Volunteers. It will be essential to ensure the measurement of the levels of retention through the years by country as a proxy indicator to measure levels of engagement.

SUSTAINABILITY

9. Relevant changes have been identified, mainly at the individual and institutional levels, which are the key areas of direct focus of the project. At the individual level, the considerable levels of motivation and engagement identified stand out, since these are essential toward ensuring sustainability of results. Sustainability efforts are mainly put in developing formal entities (associations), and limited focus is given to individual Volunteers and informal networks to keep developing awareness raising activities. At the institutional level, logistical support, counselling and training are the key contributions made to ensure the sustainability of volunteer associations. However, although the project has enabled the creation of a structure of Volunteers working on awareness raising in the seven countries, the institutional sustainability still relies on the capacity of the associations to access alternative sources of funding and develop meaningful partnerships with other organizations. In addition, the sustainability of results also relies to a certain extent on the capacity of IOM to link current activities to other relevant internal initiatives and initiatives from other UN entities and relevant organizations to maximize cross-fertilization and sustainability of results.
10. No particular contextual challenges were identified beyond those already considered in the ToC and other project documents, beyond those linked to COVID-19 measures that are expected not to have a major impact for a potential Phase 3. When it comes to internal challenges, these are mainly linked to the assumptions included in the revised ToC: volunteer associations not having sufficient resources and meaningful partners, community leaders/decision makers not being engaged, synergies not being created with media and other partners such as UN entities and other relevant organization, not ensuring that broadcasts and articles reach intended audiences and not ensuring that media sources are trusted by target communities.

After the analysis done, the **recommendations** made by criteria are:

DESIGN AND MONITORING

- The MaM team, together with relevant stakeholders, should review and validate the assumptions proposed at the highest level of change, and propose additional ones if needed for potential Phase 3. In addition, a simplified version of the ToC should be embedded in key documents to strengthen ownership and a shared understanding among partners.
- Develop an accurate measurement of the levels of retention of Volunteers through the years by country and by gender, as a proxy indicator to measure levels of engagement of Volunteers working on awareness raising.

RELEVANCE

- Consider linking MaM Volunteers in parallel to separate livelihood support programmes so that the focus of MaM can remain on tailored training and capacity building of Volunteers for awareness raising and the project is not seen as a substitute for ensuring their personal economic stability, despite the professional skills that some MaM trainings may provide.
- Keep exploring ways to engage media through non-transactional partnerships that emphasize the importance of the topic of irregular migration as an issue of public interest, to ensure more durable partnerships. At the institutional and community level, the project should strengthen the work with women's organizations and community and religious/traditional leaders in preventing irregular migration through awareness-raising sessions, in order to reach out to a larger number of people.
- Put more emphasis throughout the project on the discourse around volunteerism in order to enhance the sense of ownership, promoting its benefits to the empowerment of the individual and its contribution to social transformation in communities. This could be done by holding information sessions on the role of Volunteers in disseminating messages on the importance of safe migration.
- Ensure a more consistent and systematic approach to disseminating all the key messages of the project by elaborating this aspect more clearly in the communications strategies and campaign plans at both regional and country level, to ensure that there is not an imbalance of messaging. This can also include developing more consciously targeted messages for the different audiences (including women) and the different communications channels, and ensuring the use of testimonials and drama in local languages.

EFFICIENCY

- Consider maintaining some of the practices introduced during the pandemic such as online regular meetings and online training modules, where cost efficiencies can be achieved without compromising on quality and/or participation. These should be based on a thorough identification of potential limitations, so as to ensure that the hybrid implementation approach (face-to-face/virtual) provides the same services and opportunities to Volunteers and target groups with limited access to internet.

SUSTAINABILITY

- Contribute to reinforcing partnerships among migrants' associations and other CSOs, and their capability to apply for funding with a view to implementing other projects related to preventing irregular migration. Information sharing, including good practices and lessons learnt among volunteer associations across target countries, could also reinforce synergies and eventually lead to joint activities that could also strengthening their capacity to access funding.
- Strengthen the partnership of volunteer's organizations with the local administration is also important to buy-in the support of decision makers, essential for sustainability purposes and the eventual support of public entities to the activities of the Volunteers. While in some countries such as Senegal the project has engaged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there is still room for improvement when it comes to volunteer associations being recognized by political actors as partners in the prevention of irregular migration.
- Keep promoting synergies with other projects from IOM and other UN entities and relevant organizations, in order to work under a more comprehensive/holistic approach that can

ensure contribution from different angles while strengthening the sustainability of results. Within IOM, a series of relevant initiatives are currently being developed, such as the COMPASS project, the IOM X campaign and the Waka Well website for which relevant synergies have been already considered.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- Add new markers to identify and broaden the level of integration of gender issues at all levels (activities, outputs and outcomes). The GRES Score could be used to ensure that all relevant gender-oriented work is captured, classified (gender negative, blind, targeted, responsive and/or transformative)² and reported.
- Provide specific gender trainings to staff at the country level. The trainings should present good practices and lessons learned from other COs, ensure that a broader understanding of how gender issues can be applied in the prevention of irregular migration, as well as include clear protocols on how to address the work with female migrants.

² http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/gender/GRES_English.pdf