



# Teacher's Handbook:

## Making informed decisions about migration

This document is a teacher's handbook and it is designed to be used by teachers in Nigeria to impart awareness-raising sessions to students aged 13-18\* about irregular migration.

**Please note the content of these sessions is not suitable for children aged under 13.  
Please do not conduct one of these sessions with children younger than 13.**

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Overview	3
How to use this handbook	3
Objectives of the awareness-raising session	3
<b>Irregular Migration Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
Definition of terms	4
Key facts	4
Risks of irregular migration among young Nigerians	4
<b>Section 1: Introduction to Irregular Migration</b>	<b>8</b>
Introduction	8
Warm-up discussion	8
Activity	8
Equipment needed	8
Instructions	8
Affirmations	9
<b>Section 2: Reading Tomilade’s story</b>	<b>10</b>
Introduction	10
Activity	10
Wind-down discussion	10
<b>Section 3: Alternatives to irregular migration</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction	11
Activity	11
Teacher’s Feedback Form	12
<b>Annex 1: Tomilade’s story</b>	<b>13</b>

# Introduction

## Overview

The Migrant Project aims to protect vulnerable people from the harm and exploitation that are common on irregular migration journeys. This will be achieved by providing potential migrants in Nigeria with factual and useful information and filling existing information gaps to enable Nigerians to make informed decisions about whether irregular migration to Europe is a good option for them.

Prior research has shown that teachers are one of the major trusted sources of information for migration decisions. Through leading awareness-raising sessions, teachers in Nigeria can help their students become better informed about the risks and realities of irregular migration, as well as the safer and legal alternatives. In this way, they can help their students and their families make better-informed decisions about their futures.

## How to use this handbook<sup>1</sup>

This handbook is intended to be used by school teachers as a reference document when conducting awareness-raising sessions on irregular migration in schools, thereby sensitising their students about the risks and realities of irregular migration.

Teachers should take time to familiarise themselves with all concepts and vocabulary in the handbook and make sure they understand the activities that have been recommended for use. The handbook provides teachers and educators with a brief overview of irregular migration, relevant terminologies and key messages to aid effective communication. It is further organised into three sections:

- Section 1 provides an INTRODUCTION TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION to the students and examines their existing knowledge on the topic.
- Section 2 examines the realities of irregular migration through TOMILADE'S STORY. Using this case study, this section highlights the dangers of migrating through irregular routes and challenges the students to reflect upon the subject.
- Section 3 presents the possible safe and legal ALTERNATIVES TO IRREGULAR MIGRATION.

Each section consists of an introduction, activities to be undertaken with students and discussion sessions.

## Objectives of the awareness-raising session

It is expected that by the end of the training, students will:

- Understand the concept of irregular migration
- Understand the risks associated with irregular migration
- Understand that some safer, legal alternatives to irregular migration exist
- Understand how they can make better-informed decisions about their future

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<sup>1</sup>[A short explanatory video is also available on our website](#)

# Irregular Migration Overview

## Definition of terms

**Asylum seeker:** The status of a person who has fled from persecution or serious harm in their country and is applying for international protection and refugee status in another country. Although asylum seekers often arrive in a country illegally, the Refugee Convention states that they must be given access to fair and efficient asylum procedures and measures to ensure they live safely while their claims are processed. If an asylum application is accepted, a person becomes a refugee. Rejected asylum seekers are often ordered to leave the country and maybe expelled in the same way as any other irregular migrant.

**Refugee:** A person whose asylum application has been successful and is allowed to stay for a certain amount of time, because they have proved that they would face persecution back home.

**Irregular migrant:** A person who has entered a country irregularly, does not have the correct travel documents or a valid visa, and therefore lacks legal status in a transit or host country.

**Economic migrant:** A person who voluntarily migrates to another country to improve their quality of life. If an economic migrant arrives in a country irregularly and without a valid work visa, they can be arrested and sent home.

**Migrant:** A term that covers all those who leave their country of origin, whether to claim asylum out of fear of safety, to join family members and friends or to improve their socio-economic conditions.

**Unaccompanied minor:** A child who is under 18 years of age and who is migrating or has migrated to Europe without at least one adult who is responsible for their care by law or custom.

**Voluntary return:** The assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or another third country based on the free will of the returnee.

**Forced return:** The compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or a third country on the basis of an administrative or judicial act. Deportation and removals are forms of forced return.

**Exploitation:** The action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work.

**Human smuggling:** The facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border, in violation of one or more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents.

**Human trafficking:** The facilitation of the travel of a person with the intention of exploiting them soon after.

## Key facts

### Risks of irregular migration among young Nigerians

In 2019, nearly 18,505 unaccompanied minors registered as asylum seekers in Europe. While travelling irregularly to Europe, all migrants, but especially children, are very vulnerable to serious risks.

**Overland travel from Nigeria to Europe is extremely dangerous for irregular migrants**

- To get to Europe, most irregular migrants have to travel through the Sahara Desert. The Sahara Desert is a huge ungoverned region, and there are many criminal gangs and bandits who attack and kidnap migrants or take their belongings.
- The journey through the desert can take weeks. The terrain is difficult, and the temperatures are very high during the day. There have been many reports of cars breaking down, leaving migrants stranded in the desert. In this situation, or if cars get lost, migrants can die of thirst, starvation and from the heat.
- Vehicles are also often overcrowded in this stretch of the journey. That means migrants are at risk of falling out or becoming seriously injured in collisions.

### **Libya is one of the most dangerous transit countries for migrants**

- A key transit country on the route from Nigeria to Europe is Libya. In this North African country, migrants are often affected by ongoing violence and conflict. There have been reports of migrant facilities being directly targeted by armed groups in the past.
- In Libya, irregular migrants are often held in detention facilities. They cannot leave and face dire living conditions and serious abuse. There have also been reports of migrants in Libya being sold as slaves.
- It is very difficult to get on a boat in Libya as the beaches are patrolled, and migrants are regularly arrested at sea by the coast guard and returned to detention centres in Libya. Many migrants have paid money to agents for access to a boat, but the agents take their money and disappear.

### **Many migrants die or go missing while trying to cross the Mediterranean**

- To get to Europe, Nigerian irregular migrants often try to cross the Central Mediterranean from Libya to Europe. In 2019, over 1,200 people died or went missing while trying to take this route.
- Smugglers often lie about the length and safety of the journey and do not tell migrants that the boats are overcrowded, unsuitable for long sea journeys and are at risk of sinking.

### **Migrants are vulnerable to physical, sexual and psychological abuse and exploitation**

- All migrants, but especially women and children, are at serious risk of being abused and exploited, by smugglers, other criminals, security forces and even other migrants.
- There is often limited access to the healthcare and justice services that survivors of abuse and exploitation need.
- Migrants who leave Nigeria willingly can often end up being trafficked against their will. For example, smugglers sometimes force migrants to work or sell them to other criminal gangs. They tell the migrants they need to “pay off their debts” as an excuse to exploit them to make money.

### **Smugglers deceive migrants for their own financial gain**

- People smugglers pose a risk for migrants, both physically and financially. They may pretend to be a friend but typically they are only interested in migrants' money.
- They make false promises to potential migrants and put them in very dangerous situations. It is also common for them to raise the amount of money they are charging migrants as the journey continues, taking advantage of migrants' vulnerability.

### **Irregular migrants often end up financially worse off than they started**

- Many Nigerian migrants set off with a plan to find better economic opportunities. They sell their possessions and spend lots of money on the journey. But often they end up worse off financially than they started.
- Research revealed that many potential Nigerian migrants ended up spending between USD 4000 to 6000 (N1,480,000 to N2,220,000), or even up to USD 24,000 (N8,880,000) in some cases. Smugglers often raise the prices once the journey has begun. The journey can also take many months. Migrants often have to sustain themselves during these months without being able to earn any money. Unexpected costs like accommodation, food and medicine often come up.
- If they make it to Europe successfully, migrants will not be able to work legally unless they can get a legal status which is unlikely unless they have lots of proof to show they are escaping serious threat of harm in their home country. Some migrants work illegally and are exploited by unscrupulous employers. They barely earn enough to cover their living costs. Others end up being deported and find themselves arriving home in debt and having wasted all their savings.

### **There are safe and legal alternatives to irregular migration**

People sometimes think that irregular migration is their only option, but usually, there are safer legal alternatives, including:

- **Work visas:** Many countries offer visas for seasonal work and skilled labour. These visas allow you to travel safely abroad and to work and live legally.
- **Student visas and scholarship schemes:** If you are accepted into a university abroad you will usually be able to apply for a student visa. Tuition and living costs can be expensive, but there are a number of scholarships for the brightest and most needy students.
- **Family reunification:** If one of your parents is abroad with a legal status, you could apply to go join them legally.
- **Resettlement:** If you are registered as a refugee in any country, you can then be considered for resettlement to another country through the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).
- **Local alternatives to irregular migration:** There are many local initiatives being funded by the government or in collaboration with their international development partners

aimed at supporting and expanding Nigerians' livelihoods options. Through these programmes, beneficiaries can be trained or get access to credit, such as Graduate Internship Schemes (GIS), Osun - Youth Employment Scheme (O-YES), Youth Employment in Agriculture Programmes. Many of these initiatives are designed to assist youths.

- **Migrating in the ECOWAS Region:** It is safer, cheaper and legal for Nigerians to go to countries in the ECOWAS region which includes Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

# Section 1: Introduction to Irregular Migration

**Time estimate:** 20-30 minutes

## Introduction

This section aims to introduce the topic to the students and to help the teacher get a sense of their existing knowledge.

## Warm-up discussion

Begin by explaining that the class will participate in a workshop on the topic of migration. Ask them a few warm-up questions, such as:

- What do you already know about migration?
- Do you know anyone who has migrated?
- What is the difference between legal migration and irregular migration?
- What are some of the risks of irregular migration?
- How do you think migration affects our community?
- Would you migrate? Irregularly or legally?

Remember none of their answers is “correct” or “incorrect” — at this stage, the aim is just to get them talking and sharing their thoughts. Use this conversation as an opportunity to introduce them to some of the key information laid out in the “irregular migration overview” section of this handbook.

## Activity

### Equipment needed

- List of affirmations with “true” and “false” answers (found below);
- A sheet of card or paper with the word “False” written in clear and large letters on it;
- A sheet of card or paper with the word “True” written in clear and large letters on it.

### Instructions

1. Place the “True” sign on one side of the classroom and the “False” sign on the other.
2. Ask all the students to stand in the middle.
3. Read out the first affirmation from the list below.
4. After each affirmation, the students will be asked to move to one side of the room or the other, depending on whether they believe the affirmation is true or false.
5. Once the students have moved to one side of the room, you will reveal the correct answer. The students who were correct will move into the centre of the room; the students who were incorrect should sit down.
6. Read the next affirmation and continue the game until you have read all the affirmations or until there is only one person left standing. The person(s) left standing at the end is/are the winner(s).



7. After the game, ask the students whether they were surprised by any of these facts.

### Affirmations

1. There are safe and legal ways to migrate.
  - o True—there are alternatives like work visas, resettlement, student visas, etc.
2. Smugglers' main priority is keeping migrants safe on their journey.
  - o False—smugglers often deceive migrants to earn more money.
3. You get asylum if you have lots of money.
  - o False—you can apply for asylum if you are fleeing serious harm in your home country.
4. Migrants have reported paying up to USD 24,000 for the trip to Europe.
  - o True.
5. Asylum seekers who arrive in Germany receive a welcome payment.
  - o False—they receive a small monthly allowance while their asylum application is being processed, but not a welcome payment.
6. If you cross Europe irregularly, you could be sent back to apply for asylum in the first European country you passed.
  - o True—In 2018, nearly 9,000 asylum seekers were sent back to the EU states where they first arrived.
7. If your mother or father is a refugee in Europe and you are a child, you have to travel irregularly if you want to join them.
  - o False—your family can apply for family reunification, which means you could travel safely and legally to live with them there.
8. In 2019, the number of migrants that died or went missing while trying to cross the Central Mediterranean was 943.
  - o False—1,262 migrants died or went missing on this route in 2019.
9. Irregular migrants in Europe can easily get a good job and make money.
  - o False—Irregular migrants are not legally allowed to work in European countries.
10. If you get a scholarship for a European university, you can apply for a student visa on which you would be able to travel safely and legally to Europe to live while you study.
  - o True.

## Section 2: Reading Tomilade's story

**Time estimate:** 1 hour

### Introduction

This section aims to help students discover and internalise the realities of irregular migration through the story of a young Nigerian migrant.

### Activity

#### Equipment needed

- Case Study (Available in annex)

#### Instructions

There are various ways to go through the case study with your class. Choose the option which you think your students will respond best to and which you will best be able to manage with your time and space constraints. Here are some options:

- Ask the students to read a section each out loud.
- Read it out to the class yourself.
- Split the class into groups and ask each group to prepare a short dramatisation of a specific scene. Have each group perform their scene to the rest of the class.

It is recommended that all students participate actively.

#### Wind-down discussion

This activity aims to help students digest the information they have received and reflect on its relevance to their own lives. Have a round-up discussion as a class to help the students process the story, such as:

- What did you think of the story?
- Did you learn anything about migration that you didn't know before reading the story?
- Would you recommend irregular migration to a friend?
- If Tomilade was your friend and she was considering taking the trip, what alternatives could you suggest to her?

Use this conversation as an opportunity to introduce your students to some of the "key facts" laid out in the "irregular migration overview" section of this handbook.

## Section 3: Alternatives to irregular migration

**Time estimate:** 20-30 minutes

### Introduction

This section aims:

- To help students understand the difference between legal and irregular migration; and
- To inform students on the various safer and legal options available.

### Activity

#### Equipment needed

A board and pen

#### Instructions

##### Learning the difference between irregular and legal migration

- Begin by asking students: “What is the difference between “legal migration” and irregular migration?”
- Allow them to pose different perspectives and opinions, and then clarify that:
  - *for migration to be legal, the migrant must have **the required documentation** (such as the relevant visa and passport) and they must **pass successfully through the required border checks** upon entry into a country.*
  - *Irregular migrants can be **arrested and deported**, whereas legal migrants are **granted specific rights** to stay in the country, depending on their visa type.*

##### Discovering safe alternatives to irregular migration

- Write the following words on the board:

<b><i>Work visas</i></b>	<b><i>Student visas</i></b>	<b><i>Resettlement</i></b>	<b><i>Asylum</i></b>
	<b><i>Family reunification</i></b>	<b><i>Work opportunities in Nigeria</i></b>	
	<b><i>Opportunities to study in Nigeria</i></b>	<b><i>Migrating in the ECOWAS Region</i></b>	

- These are all legal and generally less risky alternatives to irregular migration. Ask the students to try to explain each one and how they could go about researching each option.
  - For example: *a student visa allows you to travel to another country, then live and work there legally. You could find out how to get a work visa by searching on the country’s official website.*
- Once you have explored all these options, giving your own explanations when necessary, ask students to think about which option they would most like to explore after they finish school.

- Ask them to fill in the gaps of this sentence verbally:
  - *Instead of migrating irregularly, I would rather consider... because...*
- As students give you reasons in favour of these safer options (such as “*its safer*”, “*I want to stay near my family*”, “*I want to support my community*”, “*I don’t want to have problems with the authorities*”, etc), you can write them on the board. In the end, you will have a mindmap, highlighting the positive aspects of these alternatives in comparison to irregular migration.

## Teacher’s Feedback Form

After completing the awareness raising sessions with your students, we ask all teachers to please complete this feedback form. Your honest feedback will help us improve:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1K3KfsAUNkgQST-rbJ9qiAYa2F5-o7YCHwCdLVZhQ9nQ/edit>

## Annex 1: Tomilade's story

Tomilade always dreamt of becoming a filmmaker, but that dream was cut short when her mother lost her job. Since the death of her father, Tomilade and her two younger siblings depended on the little income her mother earned in selling books.

At age 17, Tomilade graduated from secondary school with flying colours, but she was unable to secure admission into the university because her mother could not afford the fees. Moreover, if her mother paid for her university education, then her siblings would no longer be able to go to school. A sacrifice had to be made. She decided to upgrade her skills in hairdressing to support her mother.

Many of Tomilade's friends had been to Europe. They always showed off their lives on Facebook: nice houses, flashy cars and brand-new clothes. "Life in Europe must be easy," she always thought, "Maybe if I go there, I can send money to mother and also go to the university just like my friend Enobong."

One evening, Tomilade told her mother about her plan of going to Europe; her mother was not having it. "You are too young, you are just a child. And it's my duty as your mother to provide and protect you and your younger ones." But Tomilade was certain that Europe was the only solution to their current problems.

Tomilade met Madam Gold, a woman that could introduce her to a smuggler. According to her, the trip costs 400,000 naira and Tomilade will have to give her 80,000 naira as commission for the job. For the next one month, Tomilade worked thrice as hard to collect the money for the journey and when it was time to leave, her mother prayed for her and gave her some money that she had borrowed from a relative.

Madam Gold took Tomilade to a lonely warehouse where she met the smuggler and other travellers. After some days with little food, they were told to climb on to a coaster bus to begin their journey. At a certain point, they were asked to come down to enter another truck that would cross through Niger. The smuggler told them to go under the tarpaulin while he loaded bags of rice on them. They protested, and he explained to them that in Niger, migrant smuggling carries a prison term of 20 years, so they had to stay hidden. Shortly, they arrived at a compound, where they were asked to pay if they wanted shelter. Tomilade didn't have much spare money, but she was tired and sore from the journey, so she paid. She soon found out the shelter she paid for was a space on the floor in a dark damp room. She was hungry, thirsty and tired. Several days went by and more people joined them.

One night, a group of men holding guns led Tomilade and the other migrants to a pickup truck outside the compound. They began their journey again, this time through the Sahara Desert. It took several days and was very tough. The sun burnt them, and the desert wind filled their eyes, mouths and even inside their ears with sand. At night, they slept by the side of the truck. From time to time they stopped and drank from one of the water gallons attached to the truck. This water was their source of life. Each person had his gallon and if anyone ran out, their fate was in

God's hands. There was no protection on the truck. One time, one of the passengers fell off the truck, but the driver did not stop.

When they reached a seaport, they were told that they would be crossing by boat to Italy. If they made it there, they would then begin a long journey through Italy and France, to eventually cross on another boat to England. This is not what Tomilade had thought the journey would look like!

When they were on the sea, they were intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard and taken to a detention centre. Life at the detention centre was tough. They fed on only stale bread and water. There was only one toilet for about 40 people – it was disgusting. They had to sleep on the cold floor with a small piece of cloth to cover themselves. The girl that slept beside Tomilade had died the day before - from starvation? Cholera? Depression? - No one knows. Tomilade wept bitterly. She thought about her family and wondered if she would ever see them again.