



2021

ANNUAL

REPORT



IOM
UN MIGRATION

GHANA

PUBLISHER

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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 meeting the 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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This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.
This publication was issued without IOM Publications Unit (PUB) approval.

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Inauguration of a basketball court in Jamestown as part of the Playground project ©IOM/Ghana/Francis Kokoroko



FOREWORD



In a world on the move, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring challenges for migrants, Member States and civil society actors alike. While the initial shock of the pandemic had eased by the end of 2020, 2021 brought a diverse array of highs and lows, including continued high case numbers, intermittent movement restrictions and the rollout of vaccination programs. In Ghana, as it was experienced around the globe, the most vulnerable were disproportionately negatively impacted during this time.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is part of the United Nations (UN) System as the leading inter-governmental organization, continued to promote humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all during this time. Our Country Office in Ghana remained flexible and innovative, providing programming across various areas: Immigration and Border Management (IBM); Migration Protection and Assistance (MPA); Labour Mobility and Human Development (LHD); Migration and Health; Movement Operations; Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC); Gender; and Awareness Raising. Key achievements include the continued sustainable return and reintegration of over 700 Ghanaian migrants, the establishment of 2 border posts in the Upper West and Upper East regions and the resettlement of over 1,500 refugees. Such interventions not only contributed towards the Government's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework, but also the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Global Compact for Migration.

The aforementioned work hinged on our working relationships with a range of actors, including the Government of Ghana, fellow UN agencies, development partners (DPs) and civil society. Acknowledging the importance of such partnerships, 2021 was the year in which DPs in Ghana established the Migration Coordination Platform in order to improve coordination on migration management in the country. The inaugural Bi-Annual meeting was held in November, bringing together 60 representatives from the GoG, DPs and UN agencies.

As with other years, the development and publication of IOM Ghana's 2021 Annual Report has allowed us the opportunity to take stock of our progress made towards meeting targets set in our various programs. Just as importantly though, it enables the Mission an opportunity to assess challenges faced and ways forward. In a fast-changing world, such opportunities are essential to ensure effective and efficient programming that ensures no one is left behind.

We look forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration with all partners in 2022 and beyond to ensure that challenges related to migration are addressed and its opportunities leveraged.

Abibatou Wane-Fall
IOM Ghana Chief of Mission

Returnee, Abubakar, set up a transportation business and used the profits to purchase land for farming ©IOM/Ghana/David Darko



IOM Ghana main office in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig



IOM GHANA

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is part of the United Nations (UN) System as the leading inter-governmental organization promoting since 1951 humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all, with 174 member states and a presence in over 100 countries. IOM has been active in Ghana since 1987 and is contributing to the Government of Ghana's (GoG) efforts to manage migration effectively.

IOM works with its partners in Ghana to promote safe migration, meet growing migration challenges, advance the understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration and uphold the human dignity and well-being of all migrants. IOM is an active member of the UN System in Ghana, which has been working in the country since the early 1960s to support economic and social development, human rights, peace and security.

The Organization works within the [UN Sustainable Development Partnership \(UNSDP\) 2018-2022](#), which presents the coherent vision and collective support of UN Agencies towards achieving Ghana's development priorities. IOM's activities are also aligned with and contribute to the implementation of the [Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies 2017-24](#).

The Organization serves as the permanent co-chair of the UN Network on Migration (UNNM), established in 2019 together with the UN in Ghana's Resident Coordinator's Office, to facilitate effective, timely and coordinated UN system-wide support to Ghana on migration governance, including on the implementation, follow-up and review of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration \(GCM\)](#).

The IOM main office, the Canadian Visa Application Centre (CVAC) and the Migration Health Assessment Centre (MHAC) are all located in Accra.



Migration Coordination Platform Meeting ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



IOM Chief of Mission speaks at the Migration Coordination Platform meeting ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey

Migration and the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. The main reference to migration in the SDGs is made under SDG 10 on "Reduced Inequalities" (Target 10.7), which strives to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies." Migration is well mainstreamed throughout the SDGs, which are interconnected and indivisible: progress in one area is linked to progress in all areas.

IOM contributes significantly to 11 SDGs (as shown throughout the report). IOM supports the Government in its ambition to harness the benefits of migration for socioeconomic development, and to work toward the implementation of the migration-related SDGs and targets in the country. Interventions focus on migrants' health, education and skills development, gender equality and women's empowerment, human trafficking, labour migration, remittances, safe migration, migration-related policies, migration data, as well as partnerships with various stakeholders including Government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector.

Migration Coordination Platform

In recent years, IOM and development partners (DPs) in Ghana initiated a Migration Coordination Platform (MCP) to improve the coordination of migration-related interventions. In 2021, members agreed that two Sub-Committees, one under the thematic area of Border Management and the other under the thematic area of Return and Reintegration, would be formed. This was done to facilitate coordination as well as targeted programmatic discussions between DPs working in each thematic area.

The Sub-Committees started to meet every two months in 2021, and on 18 November 2021, the full MCP held its first Bi-Annual Meeting. The meeting brought together 60 representatives from the GoG, DPs and UN agencies to reflect on progress made, provide an overview of the MCP to the Government, receive an overview of GoG priorities in the area of migration and discuss collaboration moving forward. The MCP has established a directory for all migration stakeholders in Ghana, as well as conducted a mapping of all migration interventions amongst DPs.

<p>1 NO POVERTY</p> <p>Migration can be an effective poverty reduction tool for migrants and their families and can make significant contributions to development efforts in both countries of origin and destination.</p>	<p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p> <p>Food insecurity can be a driver of migration for individuals and their families.</p>	<p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <p>Addressing the health and well-being of migrants is a prerequisite for social and economic development.</p>	<p>Migration and the 2030 Agenda</p>		<p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p> <p>Education can facilitate migrant children's socio-economic integration and improve their livelihoods as adults.</p>
<p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p> <p>Migration can be a source of empowerment for women and girls, but they can also be especially vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse and exploitation.</p>	<p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p> <p>Water scarcity and related issues, such as drought, floods, sea level rise, water quality and health risks can be drivers of migration.</p>	<p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p> <p>Renewable and alternative energy solutions can benefit vulnerable or displaced communities with limited or no access to electricity.</p>	<p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p> <p>Decent jobs and safe and secure work environments for migrants are essential if they are to become productive members of society and contribute to economic growth.</p>		
<p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Migrants can transfer valuable knowledge and skills to their countries of origin and destination, helping to support technology development, research and innovation.</p>	<p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> <p>Effective migration governance is vital to reduce inequality and regular migration.</p>	<p>Migration governance will be a success factor for the achievement of all SDGs. Migration affects and is affected by all areas of governance and is therefore relevant to ALL SDGs. Migration is a global phenomenon affecting all countries worldwide and its effective governance needs global partnerships and both a 'whole-of-government' and a 'whole-of-society' approach if we want to make the most of its benefits.</p>		<p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <p>Migrants help cities to thrive and become more vibrant, successful centres of economy and life.</p>	<p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> <p>Promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns can help to protect migrant workers from exploitation.</p>
<p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Migration can be a potential climate change adaptation strategy and a way to build resilience.</p>	<p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <p>Combating marine and coastal resource depletion and diversifying the livelihoods of communities that are dependent on marine resources can help address forced displacement and migration.</p>	<p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p> <p>Desertification, land degradation, desertification and biodiversity loss can have profound impacts on communities whose livelihoods rely on natural resources and can be drivers of migration.</p>	<p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>Stronger, more transparent and accountable institutions and improved access to justice can help to protect and promote migrants' rights.</p>	<p>IOM UN MIGRATION</p> <p>International Organization for Migration</p>	<p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> <p>Timely, reliable and comparable data on migration can help policy makers devise evidence-based policies and plans to address the migration aspects of the SDGs.</p>

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The GCM, which was adopted on 19 December 2018, offers a 360-degree vision of international migration and is based on nine cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles. The GCM outlines 23 Goals and states that migration is a source of prosperity, creativity and progress, but it can also present risks and challenges in the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Ghana is one of 12 African countries designated as "champion countries" for the GCM's implementation. The UNNM assists champion countries in generating essential insights, lessons learned and best practices that may be shared in dedicated hubs with the other Member States. For the reporting period, IOM provided technical guidance to the Government of Ghana (GoG) in its role as a GCM champion country.

Ghana participated in the [African Regional Review Meeting](#) in Morocco, and IOM also facilitated Ghana's participation in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) consultations on the implementation of the GCM, which it chaired. Ghana, together with other African countries, agreed to improve migration management on the continent. For example, reducing barriers to travel on the continent and unifying African migration policy.

United Nations Network on Migration

Established in 2019, the UNNM in Ghana seeks to facilitate effective, timely and coordinated UN system-wide support to Ghana on migration governance, including the implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM. In 2021, the UNNM, coordinated by IOM and with membership from nine other UN agencies, continued its operation in Ghana. In particular, the UNNM deepened its engagement on joint programming as well as worked together to ensure migration is meaningfully mainstreamed into the new Common Country Analysis, which informs the development of the incoming UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. In particular,

the UNNM contributed analysis on migration and development, combatting transnational organized crime, climate change, responding to international public health concerns, vulnerability to humanitarian crises, amongst other topics.

Leveraging Global Frameworks Through Policy and Programming

The international migration governance landscape has changed dramatically in recent years, with the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, IOM's entry in the UN, the UN Development System reform, and the adoption of the GCM. Considering this, the e-learning course [Leveraging Global Frameworks through Policy and Programming](#) was offered to select IOM Ghana staff members in 2021. During the course, participants learned about how to better support IOM's role as coordinator of the UNNM, as well as how to adapt to the new environment in the context of the reform of the UN Development System.

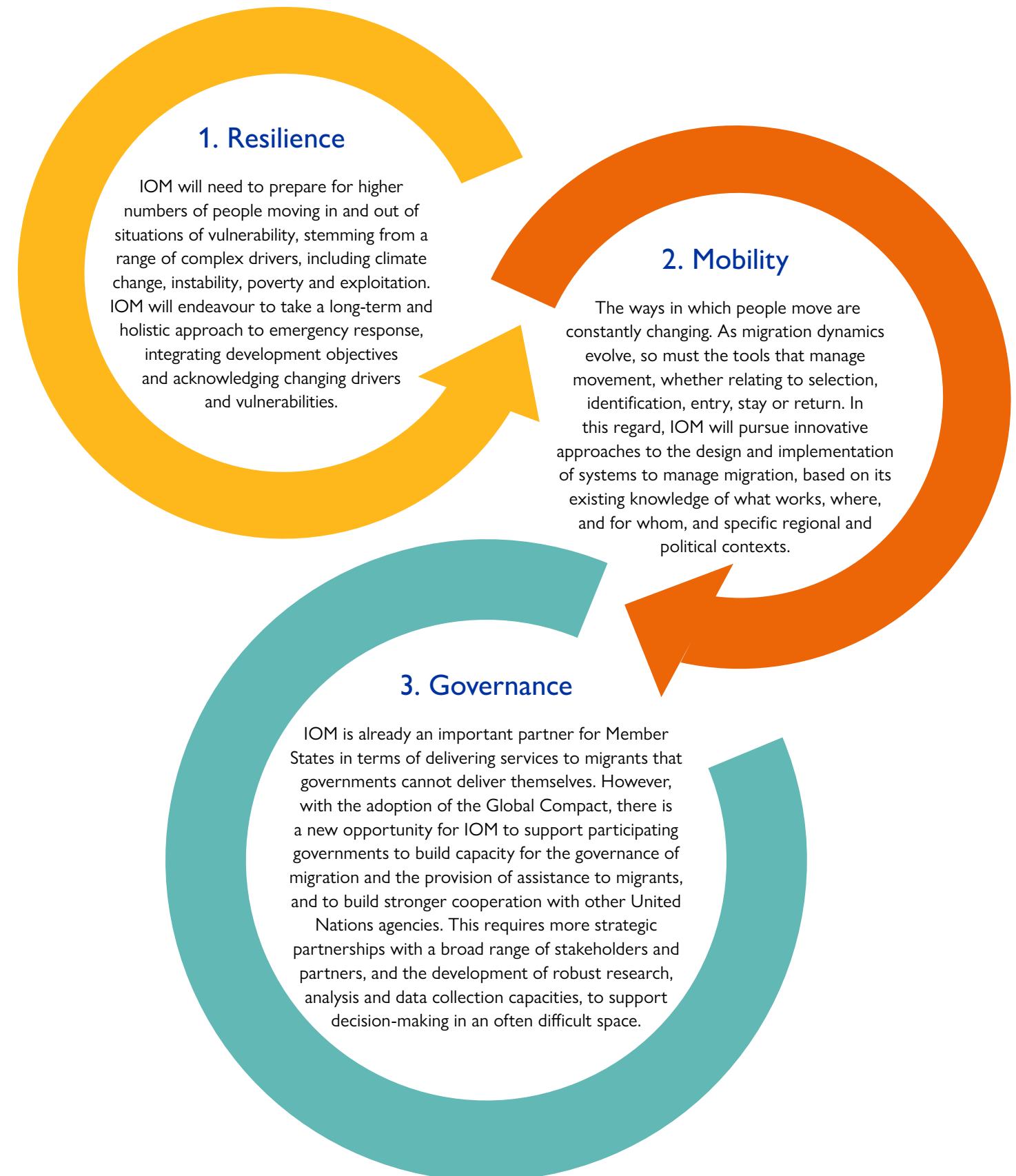


Global Compact FOR Migration

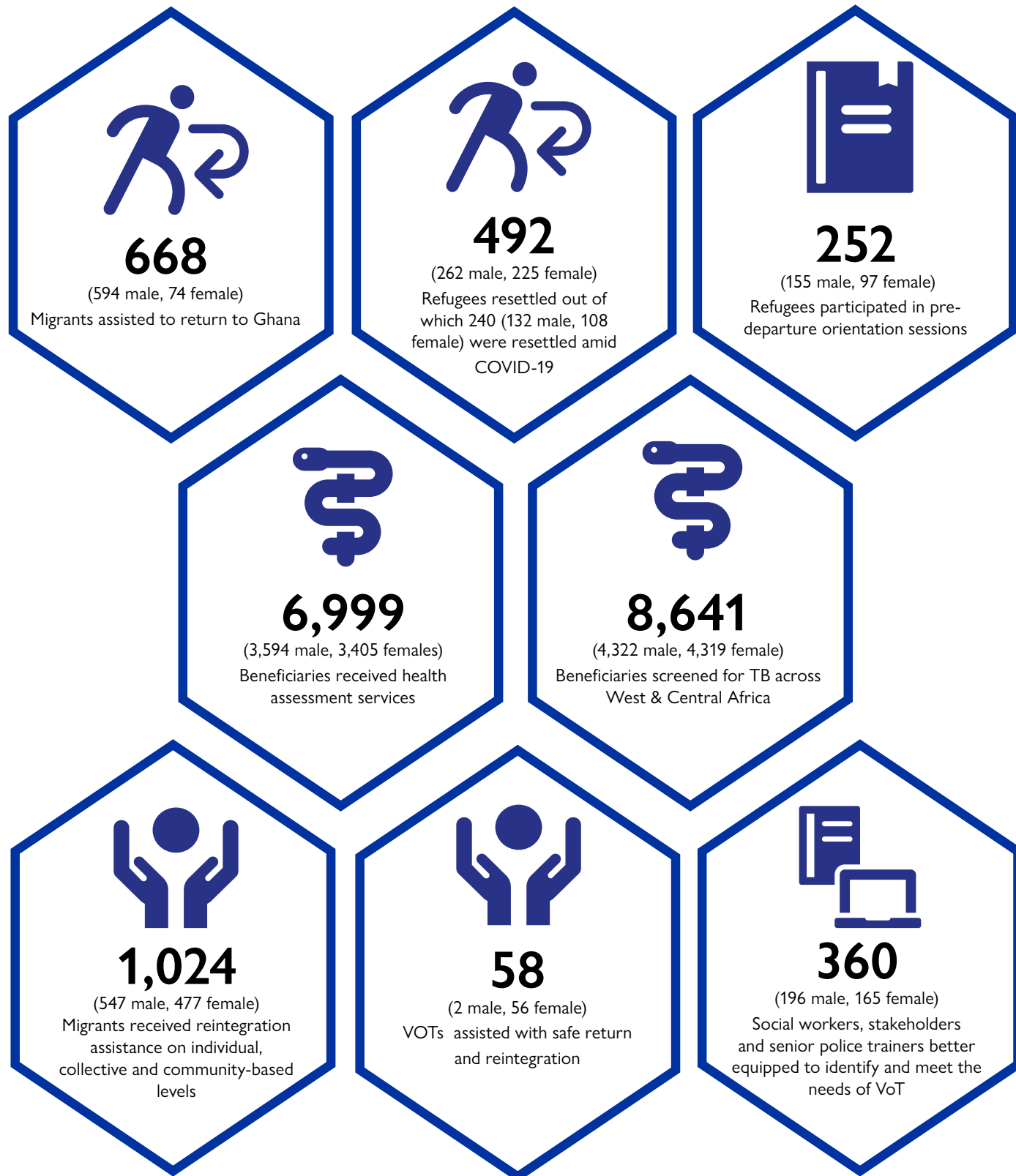
GCM OBJECTIVES	1 DATA	2 MINIMIZE ADVERSE DRIVERS	3 INFORMATION PROVISION	4 LEGAL IDENTITY AND DOCUMENTATION	5 REGULAR PATHWAYS	6 RECRUITMENT AND DECENT WORK	7 REDUCE VULNERABILITIES
8 SAVE LIVES	9 COUNTER SMUGGLING	10 ERADICATE TRAFFICKING	11 MANAGE BORDERS	12 SCREENING AND REFERRAL	13 ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION	14 CONSULAR PROTECTION	15 ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES
16 INCLUSION AND SOCIAL COHESION	17 ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION	18 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION	19 MIGRANT AND DIASPORA CONTRIBUTIONS	20 REMITTANCES	21 DIGNIFIED RETURN AND REINTEGRATION	22 SOCIAL PROTECTION	23 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

STRATEGIC VISION

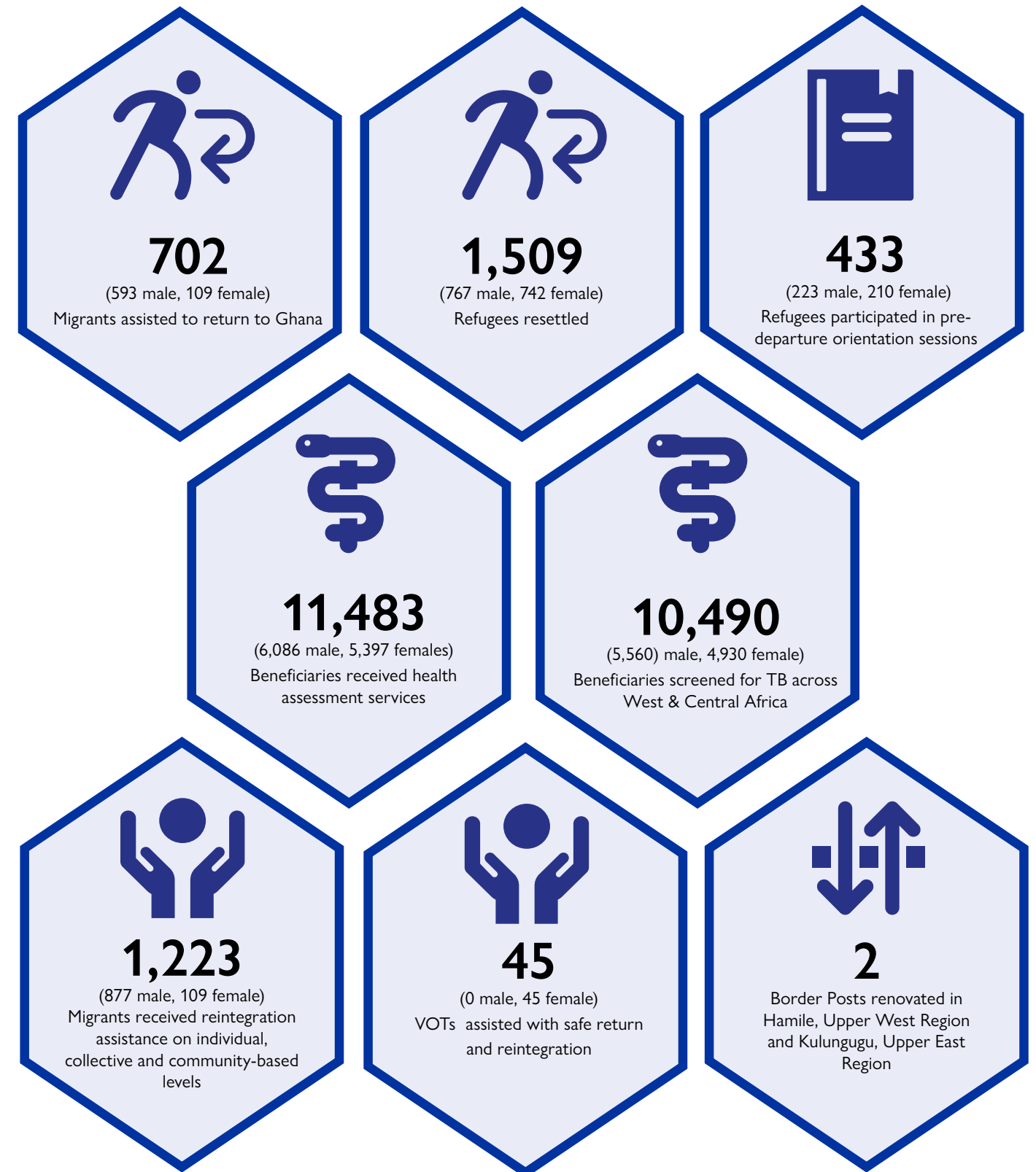
Drafted at the request of the Director General at the beginning of his term, the [IOM Strategic Vision](#) represents the Organization's reflection on its needs and priorities, drawing on a landscape assessment of what the next decade will bring. It sets out, through three pillars, how IOM needs to develop from 2019 to 2023 to meet new and emerging responsibilities in terms of migration dynamics and migrant needs. The three pillars are as follows:



2020 HIGHLIGHTS



2021 HIGHLIGHTS





MIGRATION AND HEALTH

IOM Ghana migration health physician explaining a chest X-ray ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey

Since 2007, the Migration Health Division (MHD) at IOM Ghana has been implementing health assessments (HA) for refugees and immigrants from Ghana, organizing mobile missions within West and Central Africa (WCA) and providing oversight and guidance to 23 IOM Country Offices implementing Health Assessment Programs (HAPs) in the WCA region from Mauritania to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

COVID-19 Response

In 2021, HA activities went on without interruption as opposed to 2020. To protect staff and beneficiaries against transmission of COVID-19, the MHD organized regular refresher trainings on infection, prevention and control (IPC) protocols and increased its budget for IPC materials. COVID-19 testing was conducted for refugees prior to departure to resettlement countries and all refugees and migrants were encouraged to receive COVID-19 vaccinations.

Relocation to a Bigger Space

After more than ten years of remarkable growth of the HAP in Ghana, the need for a larger facility emerged. Expansion would address office space issues to accommodate more applicants, improve IPC measures to meet social distancing requirements and meet anticipated program expansion and its corresponding increase in caseloads and projects.

On 4 November, IOM Ghana's Migration Health Assessment Centre (MHAC) moved to a new site, providing full HAs to a larger number of refugees and migrants going through the resettlement process of five main destination countries: United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The HA services include in-house laboratory and radiology services as well as immunization and pre-departure medical screenings with presumptive treatment to all applicants based on each country's relevant guidelines. MHAC's goal is to expand HA services to a larger population of refugees and migrants in Ghana and other neighboring countries to reduce waiting time.

In 2021, IOM conducted 11,483 (6,086 male and 5,397 female) migrants' health assessments for various countries. A total of 4,500 (2,385 male and female) refugees benefited from pre-departure medical screenings and among them 2,900 (1537 male and 1363 female) were given presumptive treatment administrations.

Tuberculosis Assessment for Migrants

IOM Ghana's MHD conducts TB assessments for migrants planning to travel to the United Kingdom (UK) for more than six months from Ghana and other locations within the WCA region. In 2021, 10,490 (5560 male and 4939 female) migrants were screened at the MHAC in Accra under the UK Tuberculosis Detection (UKTB) Programme.

DNA Sample Collection

625 applicants (331 male and 294 female) were sampled for DNA to support migrant family reunification in Australia, Canada, USA, Italy, amongst other countries.



MHAC Office in Accra ©IOM/Ghana



IOM Ghana radiographer taking a chest x-ray of a migrant ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



IOM Ghana lab technician taking a blood sample for lab testing ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



IOM Ghana Nurse counselling a migrant ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



MOVEMENT OPERATIONS

IOM supports victims of trafficking at the Kotoka International Airport in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig

IOM Ghana's Movement Operations Unit coordinates departures, pre-departure orientation and logistical support to HA and regional medical missions. The Unit fully complies with the GoG's COVID-19 regulations for departure, transit and arrival cases.

Movements Amid COVID-19

Throughout 2021, the GoG shared a series of ongoing COVID-19 guidelines and health requirements for all international arrivals, including those from the ECOWAS region, to meet prior to admission into Accra's Kotoka International Airport. In coordination with airport authorities and the Presidential Task Force, the Movement Operations Unit shared these details with other IOM missions worldwide for their reflection as they plan movements to Ghana.

In 2021, a total of 1,509 refugees (767 male and 742 female) were successfully resettled to Canada, USA, Australia, Europe and other countries. These cases departed from 19 countries in WCA. In full compliance with GoG COVID-19 regulations, Movement Operations provided assistance upon arrival at the airport, medical assessments and support to COVID-19 testing to refugees prior to departure and upon arrival. A total of 702 migrants (593 male and 109 female) were assisted and returned to Ghana from 30 countries including three chartered flights with 441 migrants (392 male and 49 female). 130 refugees and migrants (50 male and 80 female) were supported to return home from Ghana to 14 countries.

Canadian Orientation Abroad Programme

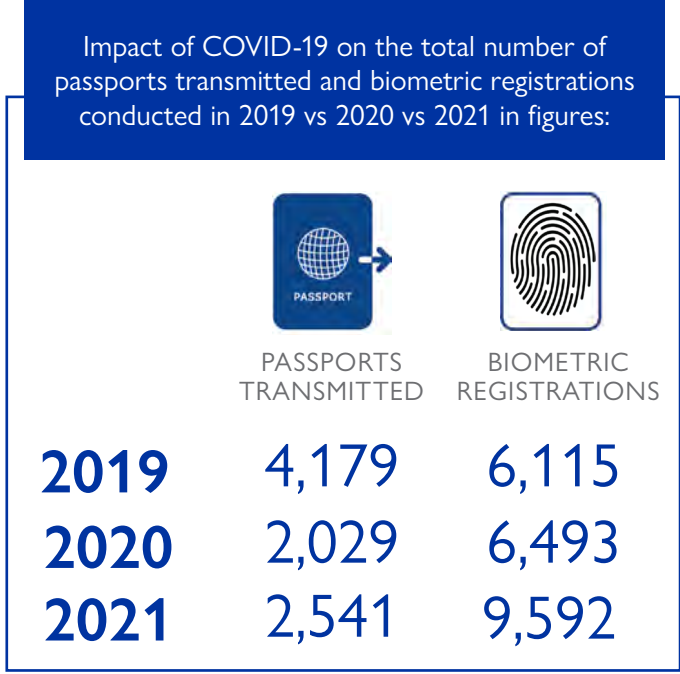
Pre-departure orientation activities through the Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) programme were conducted for 433 refugees (223 male and 210 female) in 2021. The participants reached were residing in the following nine locations across the region: Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Morocco. Participants also received COA informational materials as part of their briefings.

The COA facilitators also took part in COA global related initiatives and activities such as global COA meetings, COA familiarization webinars, O-Canada app, research on digital inclusion of refugees, the pre-departure orientation manual for facilitators and the population profile for Central African Republic.

Canadian Visa Application Centre

As part of IOM's global partnership with Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global (an exclusive service provider for visa services to the Government of Canada), IOM operates the Canadian Visa Application Centre (CVAC) in Ghana. It accepts applications for various visas (visitor, student and work permits) to Canada for nationals from Ghana as well as Ascension, Benin, Liberia, São Tomé and Príncipe, St. Helena, The Gambia, Togo and Tristan da Cunha.

IOM supports the High Commission of Canada to Ghana by reviewing these visa applications for accuracy, processing and dispatching the applications, conducting biometric registrations and transmitting passports. As per the graphic below, the total number of biometric registrations conducted has risen since 2019 while passport transmissions have decreased due to COVID-19 travel implications.





IOM reintegration officer in conversation with a returnee, Aaron, who set up a convenience shop as part of his reintegration support ©IOM/Ghana/David Darko



Rockson, a returnee, set up a local 'chop bar' (restaurant) as part of his reintegration support ©IOM/Ghana/David Darko



MIGRANT PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE

IOM reintegration officer in conversation with a returnee, Abubakar, who set up a transportation business and used the profits to purchase land for farming ©IOM/Ghana/David Darko

IOM supports migrants who require protection and/or return and reintegration assistance. Beneficiaries consist of irregular and regular migrants, stranded migrants, and migrants in vulnerable situations, such as victims of trafficking, unaccompanied and with separated children and migrant medical needs.

Assistance to Migrants and Returnees

In 2021, IOM Ghana's dedicated Migrant Protection and Assistance (MPA) Unit supported the Movement Operations Unit with the voluntary/humanitarian return of 671 returnees (577 male and 94 female) by fostering informed return decisions, providing pre-departure counselling and supporting mass arrivals via charter flights. Three charters from Libya accounted for 441 (392 male and 49 female) of the total arrivals. IOM Ghana's MPA team also supported 1,233 (877 male and 356 female) beneficiaries with tailor-made economic reintegration assistance provided at individual, collective and community-based levels.

A total of 393 returnees (369 male and 24 female) were screened for mental health issues upon arrival. Furthermore, 13 psychosocial support (PSS) group sessions were facilitated for 121 (111 male and 10 female) beneficiaries who were commencing their business set-ups and 15 migrants (13 male and 2 female) benefited from individual psychotherapy.

IOM also increased its efforts to enhance the sustainability of return and reintegration assistance by continuing and increasing capacity building of its partners. For instance, 84 (54 government and 30 non-government) representatives took part in two trainings in Ada Foah and Sunyani, based on the [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) for Reintegration in Ghana](#), that was developed in close coordination with the GoG and launched in September 2020.

In September, at the request of the European Union (EU) Delegation in Ghana, IOM facilitated training for non-government stakeholders on tools and methodology to design and develop awareness raising campaigns on safe migration. An additional 321 key migration stakeholders (231 male and 90 female) were trained in eleven capacity building sessions on PSS, including first aid and sensitization on stigmatization of returnees. This need was exacerbated by the negative side effects of the pandemic putting additional pressure on returnees and their communities.

Among the beneficiaries of the PSS capacity building sessions were also 70 staff (55 male and 15 female) of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO).

Finally, a national/regional workshop was organized in Kumasi in December on PSS provision for 34 (25 male and 9 female) participants comprised of technical staff and practitioners from local government, regional organizations, UN agencies and other international organizations, development partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

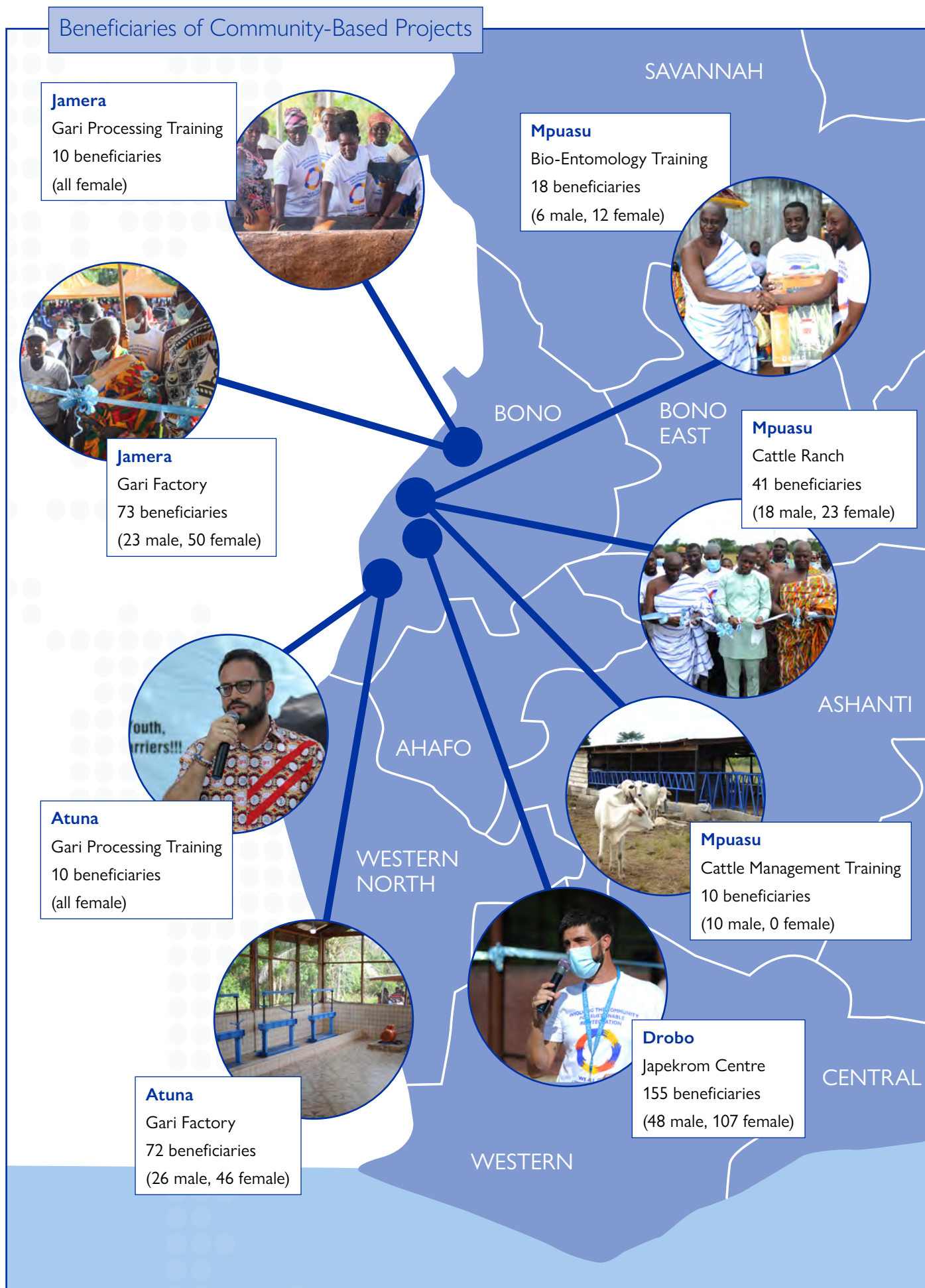
On 28 July, a ['4 Years On'](#) event was held to mark the achievements of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration project which started in 2017. One key achievement was the launch of the SOPs for Reintegration of Returnees in Ghana in September 2020. The Technical Working Group and the Project Steering Committee, established under the project, also met in 2021 to discuss future programming and sustainability of protection and reintegration assistance to vulnerable migrants.



Kofi Kinaata, IOM Ghana Goodwill Ambassador, greets returnees at Kotoka International Airport in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



Beneficiaries of Community-Based Projects



IOM supports child survivors of trafficking to return home safely at the Kotoka International Airport ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig

Interventions to Combat Human Trafficking

Building on the previous years' activities, IOM provided technical and capacity building for the GoG in the area of counter trafficking. IOM supported 145 facilitators to provide training for 11,854 members of the Ghana Police Service (GPS) in 18 regions between June and October 2021.

Following a presentation on the IOM drafted trainer's manual/practical guide on Trafficking and Assistance to VoTs with focus on child victims, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) was supported to integrate the manual as an academic course. In the first quarter of the year, IOM distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) kits and other hygiene items to key partners, including GPS, GIS and DSW, in the Oti, Bono East and Eastern regions of Ghana.

To enhance the data management through the [Trafficking in Persons Information System \(TIPIS\)](#), a database established with IOM support through the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership from 2015-2020, the GPS and DSW were provided with computers in Oti and the Eastern region.

In support of the government's efforts, 45 (0 male and 45 female) (17 minors) VoTs of Ghanaian nationality were assisted to return home and provided social and economic reintegration support including PSS counseling.

Working closely with partners including the GPS and GIS, IOM assisted to identify and return 48 (1 male and 47 female) (14 minors) VoTs of other nationalities in the region, thereby fostering regional cooperation on protection of VoTs.



IOM staff assisting child survivors of trafficking at the Kotoka International Airport ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig





IOM Beneficiary, Lincoln, performs at the inauguration of a basketball court in Jamestown ©IOM/Ghana/Francis Kokoroko

Psychosocial Support

Helping Ghanaian Returnees Rebuild Their Lives

After five years in Libya, Dotse's return to Ghana was not what he had hoped for – an initial struggle coping with mental health issues.

"It took me a lot of effort to heal when I came back. I was disoriented when I arrived and don't remember anything that happened," he says. Another returnee, Lincoln, faced similar hurdles. "I felt abandoned."

Today, things are different for both men, who are among the more than 1,800 returnees (as of December, 2021) that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported to voluntarily return to Ghana since 2017 as part of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

Some migrants experience stigmatization, exploitation, violence, and life under inhumane conditions when they travel, especially when using irregular means, but the decision to return home is not easy. Expectations are high, and the pressure can affect their mental health, hindering successful reintegration into their communities.

"When IOM called, it gave me that psychological fitness that, yes, there's some support," Lincoln says. Dotse is also grateful for IOM's help in addressing his anguish. "Thanks to the psychosocial support, I am a better person and I feel much healthier and happier."

IOM counsels the migrants upon return to Ghana and guides them on reintegration. A comprehensive plan for returnees encompasses economic, social and psychosocial needs, and may also include identifying income-generating activities, housing, education, or training to develop business and other skills. As of December 2021, more than 800 returnees so far have benefitted from this innovative and holistic approach.

"IOM recognizes the importance of migrants' and returnees' mental health in ensuring their successful and sustainable reintegration back into their communities of origin," says Pooja Bhalla, IOM Project Manager for the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.

"To manage the complex process of reintegration effectively, including the psychosocial dimension, IOM, together with the Government of Ghana, developed the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Return and Reintegration," Bhalla says.

The SOPs were launched in September 2020 to ensure a consistent approach to the management of returns to Ghana and the returnees' subsequent reintegration. Since then, more than 80 government and non-government migration stakeholders have been trained across Ghana. Community influencers have also been a channel to inform on the need for psychosocial wellbeing of the returnee.

Robert Ketor is IOM's Psychosocial Assistant and Clinical Psychologist who offers psychosocial support services, including virtual counselling. With the outbreak of COVID-19, much of IOM's psychosocial support to returnees has been virtual and by phone in Accra.

After many virtual counselling sessions, Robert recently met Dotse for the first time since his arrival at Kotoka International Airport in Accra.

"Remembering the state in which he arrived in Ghana, and looking at him now, I would say, there has been vast improvement in his general health and especially his mental health."

For some returnees, group counselling, focus group discussions or collective psychosocial activities are important first steps, and for others, one-on-one sessions are a better option.

IOM also runs trainings on psychological first aid for migration stakeholders and community members so they can provide basic psychological first assistance.

Family Support: A Key Pillar for Returnees

In Libya, Dotse – not his real name – suffered a series of challenges: being cheated by his employer, low payment and difficult work, and a bullet which smashed his hand. He is lucky he can count on his family's support, which psychologist Robert says can be crucial.

"I counsel those who need psychosocial therapy and will also get in touch with the family if needed. Support through the immediate family and the larger community contributes greatly to a successful and sustainable reintegration process. If there is family support for returnees, there is much improvement in their healing process and sometimes it is quicker because the support system is solid," he says.

Dotse's wife recounts her husband's return: "If not for IOM, I don't know if my husband would be alive. When I first saw him at the airport, I was shaken, and I feared I had lost my husband. If not for the instant and immediate support maybe he could have lost his life."

While community support is key, a psychologist might be needed to help migrants cope. "I try to equip my patients with strategies to overcome stigma. I might encourage them to stand up for themselves, to refrain from self-stigmatization, to educate others, to be strong and to prove themselves," says Robert. "If someone realizes that stigma is affecting their actions, emotions and thinking, subsequently affecting their daily functioning, they should seek help."

Going through therapy can be challenging. "I am a very quiet person, so it was difficult for me in the beginning stages but eventually I warmed up to the counsellor," says Dotse. "He was able to see through me and help me, and now I am even expecting a baby."



Lincoln making music at his home ©IOM/Ghana/Apag Studios

Using Music to Heal and for Advocacy

Lincoln, a returnee from Takoradi, in the Western Region of Ghana – one of the migration-prone regions of the country, according to statistics collected under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative since 2017 – had left for Libya, hoping to go on to Italy.

“I dropped out of university and started recording music. But I couldn’t make ends meet from recording music. All my friends that I had made growing up were taking the same route. So, I decided, ok, let me join them in Italy,” Lincoln says.

“I have always felt that there might be a better option outside but looking back now... It is not easy out there. Not knowing if you are going to make it or not. Being alive is just by the grace of God.”

When Lincoln returned to Ghana in 2020, he felt like he had failed and lost hope in life. A perilous journey through the desert,

during which he was kidnapped, saw people die and experienced violence first-hand, affected his mental health.

“One day, out of the blue, an unknown number called. It was IOM!” he says. Lincoln was offered support by IOM’s Psychosocial Project Assistant.

“We spoke about a lot of issues, some of which were really challenging actually. By God’s grace, I am getting better.”

Lincoln now not only uses music to heal but also to spread a message. In one of his songs, “Guns from Tripoli” for example, he narrates his migration experience. Through his creativity he has become a safe migration advocate. In July in Jamestown, Accra, Lincoln performed his track at IOM’s launch of its new youth empowerment project “Playground”. More than 200 in the audience reacted enthusiastically.



Returnee Dotse in conversation with IOM Ghana's Psychosocial Assistant ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey

Optimistic About the Future

After much progress, Dotse is optimistic. He wants to start an agro-chemical business because he comes from a remote farming community which needs improved farming yields. As part of his reintegration package, IOM Ghana is supporting him to start up his business.

Lincoln is keen to try life as an artist. “The support of IOM in this process has been very helpful for me to get equipment.” His advice to young people is to find passion in whatever they do.

“Just look at that one thing that brings you joy and happiness and keep at it. Do not go and risk your life; it’s not safe out there.” He adds: “The thing about irregular migration is that it can get you killed. I’d say if you want to migrate, exercise a bit of patience and use the right channel.”

Dotse’s advice is similar. “If you wish to travel, make sure you have the right documents.”

IOM Ghana Chief of Mission meets with Eswatini Delegation
©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig



LABOUR MOBILITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

IOM's migration and development initiatives support Ghana's efforts to leverage migration for sustainable development, support poverty reduction efforts and empower communities.

Technical Support for the Implementation of the National Labour Migration Policy

With the support of IOM Ghana in previous years, the GoG adopted a [National Labour Migration Policy \(NLMP\)](#) with an implementation workplan from 2020-2024. The NLMP provides a coordinated framework that seeks to promote good governance in the management of labour migration issues, to protect the rights of migrant workers in Ghana and abroad, and to maximize the positive impacts of migration on sustainable development.

In 2021, IOM continued to provide technical support to the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the host for the sub-thematic Inter-Agency Technical Working Group for the implementation of the policy. IOM support has included technical assistance for coordination meetings, training on ethical recruitment and the IOM's [International Recruitment Integrity System \(IRIS\)](#) – a due diligence tool that support governments, civil society, the private sector and recruiters to establish ethical recruitment as a norm in cross-border labour migration. It does this by promoting respect for the rights of migrant workers; enhancing transparency and accountability in recruitment; advancing the Employer Pays Principle; and strengthening public policies, regulations and enforcement mechanisms, such as supporting the drafting of Bilateral Labour Agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoU).

IOM Facilitates Official Visit of Eswatini Government Delegation to Ghana

The GoG in coordination with IOM facilitated the [visit of a delegation](#) from the Government of Eswatini (GoE) to Ghana. The study visit was organized within the framework of the "strengthening the capacity of the Government of Eswatini to engage with Eswatini in the diaspora for social and economic development" project. It aimed to enhance the delegation's knowledge of best practices, experiences and lessons from Ghana's engagement with the diaspora community including diaspora data management and national inclusion, especially given the context of the 2019 '[Year of Return](#)' led by the GoG.

The delegation comprised technical officials from different Eswatini Ministries and Institutions and was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The delegation paid a courtesy visit to the public institutions supporting Ghana's engagement with the diaspora such as the Diaspora Affairs Office at the Office of the

President and Innohub and Zeepay, private sector actors supporting diaspora engagement in Ghana. The GoG committed to supporting the Eswatini delegation in hosting its first diaspora homecoming summit along the lines of the bi-annual Ghana Diaspora Homecoming summit.

Support for the establishment of the National Migration Coordinating Mechanism

IOM assists the GoG in enhancing migration governance to ensure the consistent and long-term implementation of Ghana's [National Migration Policy \(NMP\)](#), which requires an appropriate institutional structure to enable policy design and implementation coordination.

To develop a national architecture for migration management, IOM supported the drafting of a cabinet memo and the validation of a study on the mapping of commissions in Ghana, to inform the establishment of the National Migration Coordinating Mechanism (NMCM). This included facilitating a capacity workshop in partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to analyze and identify the model for the NMCM as well as find out the various actors to be involved in the establishment of the NMCM.

The strong political commitment, existing institutional and individual capacities, as well as support from development partners, were all identified as strengths that might be leveraged for the creation of the NMCM. Nonetheless, existing gaps impinging on the creation of the commission of the NMCM included a lack of effective coordination, policy consistency, and resources.



Eswatini Delegation in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig





Mainstreaming migration into the national census meeting at the IOM main office in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig

Mainstreaming Migration in the National Census

Through the project on mainstreaming migration into the national census, IOM support was instrumental in ensuring that the 2021 census captured comprehensive and inclusive information on migration in Ghana, such as sex-disaggregated characteristics of households interested in migrating, the reasons for migration and internal and external migration patterns.

IOM facilitated the organization of coordination meetings for migration data actors as part of the implementation of the National Migration Data Sharing Strategy. Overall, nine state institutions are now sharing administrative migration with the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS).

The GSS and the Ministry of the Interior (MINTER), with support from the IOM Global Migration Data Center in Berlin, trained 38 Migration Desk Officers (25 male and 13 female) selected from the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) responsible for collecting administrative migration data. The training focused on the harmonization of reporting templates for submitting migration data to the GSS, definition of migration terminologies and concept integrating gender.

The project supported the GSS in training 254 (158 males and 96 females) regional trainers in the Bono region of Ghana as part of the national training of trainers (ToT) for census data collection in May 2021. The training contributed to the effective administration of the census questionnaire which included a migration module. IOM is working with the GSS to produce a census migration thematic report which will provide an overview of the migration profile in the country.

Validation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy

IOM provided technical support towards the validation of the Diaspora Engagement Policy (DEP) as part of a Multistakeholder Dialogue on the DEP organized by the government. Ghana validated its DEP for submission to cabinet for approval. The policy includes areas on enhancing the diaspora and homeland relationship; programmes for institutional capacity building; citizenship, nationality, and rights; social security and portability; political incorporation and voting rights; social protection and human rights leveraging investment benefits and privileges; and mobilising remittances for sustainable development.

Youth Connekt Africa Summit 2021

On 20 October, the IOM Chief of Mission (CoM) joined youth connecting across the continent for the Africa Youth Connect Summit 2021, hosted by the Republic of Ghana in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

In a panel discussion hosted by IOM and The African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), the IOM CoM noted that mobility for employment is a key feature of youth migration in Africa. Youth migrate to learn new skills, trade and improve social status, but only 25 percent are absorbed into the labour market each year. The IOM CoM advocated for intra-regional labour market integration and mobility; fostering peace and security on the continent through youth empowerment; and reinforcing transnational networks to unlock diaspora capital in addressing youth unemployment.



IOM speaks to youth at the Youth Connekt Africa Summit ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortrey



IOM Ghana Chief of Mission speaks at the Youth Connekt Africa Summit ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortrey



IMMIGRATION AND BORDER MANAGEMENT

Immigration and Border Management (IBM) activities are designed to support the GoG in improving policy, legislation, operational systems, human resources and administrative and technical structures required to respond more effectively to diverse migration and border management challenges. IBM activities are in line with IOM's commitment to facilitate orderly, safe and regular migration and mobility.

Reinforcement of Infection Prevention and Control Capacities Along the Land Borders

In partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), Ghana Health Service (GHS) and GIS, IOM Ghana organized a series of workshops to reinforce capacities of border management officials in IPC at various land Points of Entry (PoEs).

Two ToT workshops were held in [Accra](#) and [Ho](#) and a cascade training was held in Sunyani to train officers from GIS, Port Health of the GHS and Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA). This was to support GoG efforts at providing a coordinated response to public health emergencies such as COVID-19, while also ensuring that International Health Regulations (IHR) capacities are strengthened at the various land borders.

In total, 32 out of 48 PoEs (i.e. 66 percent of all official PoEs in Ghana) were covered by these workshops with a total of 62 officers (57 male and 5 female) trained. The workshops covered IPC techniques, self-protection measures, disease surveillance, risk communication and community engagement, risk assessment and management at PoEs, environmental health/waste management, among others. Participating border and health officials also received operational guidance on how to effectively communicate health and safety measures to travellers and how to conduct screening and referral of suspected ill travellers.

Strengthening Border Security Along Ghana's Northern Border

Ghana's land borders, like many West African countries, face perennial challenges including inadequate infrastructure and equipment, management of numerous irregular border crossing points and migration data management.

IOM in supporting the GoG to respond to these challenges and with funding from the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), began the renovation of two border posts along the northern borders of Ghana. The selected border posts, Hamile and Kulungugu, are being renovated to increase functionality and to support traveller facilitation and control.

The border posts will be provided with renewable energy in the way of solar panels. Construction of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities at the two PoEs also commenced in December to support public health security in the face of public health emergencies. Once completed, the border posts will be fitted with IOM's Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS). MIDAS is a user-friendly, non-commercial, and fully customizable border management information system that provides countries with the possibility to collect, process, analyse and share traveller information. Developed by IOM, MIDAS offers exclusive control and ownership of all data recorded.

The renovation and construction fall under the auspices of a multi-country project, "[Strengthening Border Security and Border Community Resilience in the Gulf of Guinea](#)", which was launched in May 2021. To increase the coverage of the interventions to strengthen the northern borders of Ghana, in December IOM launched another [multi-country project](#) with funding from the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. This response is focused on improving border security by increasing the capacity of border management agencies (BMAs) to respond to emerging challenges, while reinforcing the resilience of border communities.





IPC ToT in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig



IPC ToT in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig

Vulnerability and Security Perception Assessment

In November, a vulnerability and security perception study was carried out in Hamile and Tumu, border towns in the Upper West regions, to understand the threats, tensions, root causes and resilience to insecurity in the selected communities. The findings will help support the development of context-driven, concise and specific recommendations for integrated border management and to enhance security in border communities in northern Ghana.

Improving Trade Facilitation and Border Public Health Capacities

In an effort to enhance public health capacities and improve trade facilitation at selected land borders, IOM is undertaking a survey to collect data from the major PoEs of Paga, Elubo and Aflao. The survey is aimed at providing knowledge on existing bottlenecks at land borders due to the impact of COVID-19 on trade, public health and general border management. As a result, 43 enumerators and officials from key stakeholder organizations were trained on the data collection tools. This intervention falls under the ['Data Collection Survey on Improving Border Facilitation and Strengthening Border Public Health Capacities in West Africa in Response to Infectious Diseases/ COVID-19'](#) project, funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).



IPC ToT in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Juliane Reissig



IOM discusses SOPs at the IPC ToT in Ho ©IOM/Ghana

IOM Ghana beneficiary receives a start-up kit after undergoing a training for farmers on environmentally friendly farming practices in Mpuasu ©IOM/Ghana/Geoffrey Buta



MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

IOM Ghana works to contribute towards enhancing the Government's management of the migration, environment and climate change (MECC) nexus, as well as the resilience of Ghanaians and their communities, including migrants, to cope with a rapidly changing climate and environment.

Mainstreaming Environmental Sustainability

In 2021, IOM Ghana continued its programming on the MECC nexus by mainstreaming environmental sensitivity into project activities, as well as by contributing towards increased awareness on the MECC nexus both internally and amongst the general public.

For instance, IOM's implementing partner, BOK Africa Concern, delivered trainings on the usage of environmentally sustainable farming practices as a way to foster alternative livelihoods in Mpuasu – a community of high outmigration in Bono region. 18 beneficiaries (6 males and 12 females) were trained to produce self-made and chemical-free protection for plants (i.e., pesticides and herbicides). This knowledge has the added advantage of providing the collective farmers an alternative to using industrially produced chemicals.

In November, IOM held a session with staff to increase their understanding of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. In December, IOM participated in an episode from the podcast show [Climate Change and Us: Ghana Ground Zero](#). The podcast provided an overview of MECC trends in both Ghana and the broader WCA region.



IOM Ghana planted trees as part of Green Ghana Day ©IOM/Ghana/ Angela Bortey



Queen Mother of Senase is dedicated to women empowerment providing economic opportunities for women returnees and community members ©IOM/Ghana/David Darko



GENDER

IOM is committed to gender mainstreaming in all its migration management activities. As part of the UN system, IOM supports the Government of Ghana's commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and to work towards achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

Mainstreaming Gender Equality

The GoG and IOM Ghana recognize the pivotal role of gender equality and women's empowerment in national development. This is reflected in Ghana's ratification of national and international commitments, as well as measures taken to achieve gender equality. Gender equality and women empowerment were mainstreamed into various projects at IOM in accordance with the GoG's objective towards the realization of a prosperous Ghana.

Additionally, IOM through the UN system in Ghana and working with the Ministry for Gender Children and Social Protection (MoGSCP), commemorated the various international days that raise global and national attention to the state of gender equality in Ghana and identify progress and gaps in achieving global objectives.

'No Manel Campaign'

On 8 September, IOM as a key member of the United Nations Gender Team (UNGT), joined the UN to launch the '[No Manel Campaign](#)' working with the national gender machinery. The Campaign urged stakeholders to take a pledge to end 'Manels' (all-male panels) at all organized meetings and to ensure the participation of qualified females. By taking the 'No Manel Pledge', IOM ensured holistic, innovative and insightful perspectives on migration discussions in the country.

Additionally, on 27 November as part of the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, IOM joined the diplomatic community in Ghana, including the UN system and the MoGSCP, to undertake a 'No Manel Walk'. Over 500 people participated in the walk which commenced from the Obra Spot at the Kwame Nkrumah Interchange and ended at the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection. The walk was to intensify the campaign and stimulate public conversation on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in Ghana as well as educate the public on the Domestic Violence Act (732) and its regulation (2237).

International Women's Day

IOM facilitated the participation of an IOM-assisted beneficiary involved in the production of nose masks in a UN Country Team online symposium to commemorate International Women's Day 2021. The event, which involved the participation of over 100 stakeholders across the UN system, the national Zonta Club and MoGSCP, highlighted the achievement of Ms. Sherry North in contributing to minimizing the impact of the pandemic through the production of nose masks.

International Day of the Girl Child

On 11 October, during International Day of the Girl Child, which was commemorated under the theme 'The Digital Generation: Maximizing Opportunities and Minimizing Risks for Girls Without Discrimination', the IOM gender team organized an event with over 1,000 students from the East Airport International School in Accra. The students were exposed to the opportunities and dangers in the digital world as well as career development in the digital space by female digital trailblazers in Ghana. The students were sensitized on the dangers of cyberbullying and trafficking and provided an opportunity to engage with the IOM psychosocial counsellor on managing instances of cyberbullying.



Women in the Jamera community processing gari ©IOM/Ghana/Geoffrey Buta





International Day of the Girl Child: IOM gender team colleague addresses students from the East Airport International School in Accra ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey



Women in the Jamera community processing cassava into gari ©IOM/Ghana/Geoffrey Buta



AWARENESS RAISING

Youth participating in the IOM X project performing a drama during International Migrants Day in Sunyani ©IOM/Ghana/Angela Bortey

Throughout 2021, IOM used diverse strategies to sensitize the public, including the youth, on the dangers associated with irregular migration and the need to use safer migration options.

IOM Supports GoG in Sustaining Safe Migration Awareness Raising Interventions

IOM Ghana trained GIS officers of the MICs in Takoradi, Western Region; Tamale, Northern Region; and Sunyani, Bono Region on development and implementation of safe migration campaigns. 70 GIS officers (28 male and 42 female) participated in the trainings as part of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). The trainings covered migration terminologies, Communication for Development (C4D) tools, guidance to develop a campaign including identifying target groups and developing call to action messages, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Participating officers received a package of awareness raising materials developed in collaboration with the GoG, as part of the multimedia awareness raising campaign that ran in 2020 under #LetsTalkMigration. Materials included video testimonies of returnees, radio jingles, posters, postcards and a guide on running safe migration campaigns. ICT sessions of the trainings included basic and advanced excel training and the development of databases to monitor the visits at the MICs. The improvement of data collection and processing is key in identifying the profiles of the visitors and tailor the services accordingly.

IOM X: A New Safe Migration Campaign in the Making in Ghana

IOM X is a global campaign aimed at encouraging safe migration. In 2019, IOM X adapted its model to the West African context to empower young people to make informed migration-related decisions.

In 2021, IOM engaged a creative group of young people from the Bono and Bono East regions to design a new IOM X Ghana campaign. From 23 to 25 November, IOM held a workshop in Sunyani with training on C4D. Subsequently, a two-day Design Lab encouraged the participants to showcase their creativity and apply their C4D knowledge in exercises aimed at creating the #WAKAwellGhana campaign.

Prior to the workshop, a baseline knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) study was conducted. Over 400 young people (15 to 35 years) living in the Bono and Bono East regions were interviewed about their perceptions on the risks of and alternatives to irregular migration; media consumption behavior; knowledge on migration (in-country, regionally, internationally); and available employment and educational opportunities at home. The study will evaluate how far IOM X activities shift participants' KAP vis-a-vis migration at the end of the project.

Based on the KAP study findings and applying the learnings from the C4D session, the participants developed a series of messages, identified channels and activities to reach the target audience, and discussed the roll-out of the campaign for 2022. The youth's ideas will contribute to raising awareness on safe migration, the dangers of irregular migration and opportunities at home under the hashtag #WAKAwellGhana.

Stakeholders' Forum on Media and Migration

On 5 March, IOM was invited to speak on irregular migration trends and interventions in Ghana as part of a stakeholders' forum on media and migration under the 'Empowering Young People in Africa through Media and Communication' project organized by the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana. The opportunity was used to sensitize the youth on safe and regular migration as well as the opportunities available in Ghana. Participants thanked IOM for the educational intervention and raised the need for such interventions in rural areas, where potential migrants are continuously deceived by unscrupulous recruitment agencies.

Wamafo Senior High School Sensitization

On 15 April, 46 students at the Wamafo Senior High School were sensitized on safe and irregular migration and opportunities in Ghana. The event was also attended by the District Chief Executive (DCE), the Member of Parliament (MP) in the constituency and a representative from the Office of the President. The DCE and MP used the occasion to advise the students to take their studies seriously and look for opportunities in the country rather than embarking on perilous and irregular means to travel outside the country.

International Migrants Day

On 18 December in Berekum, Bono Region, IOM, the Ghana Immigration Service, the Municipal Assembly, Traditional Authorities, a young creative group and returned migrants, marked International Migrants Day with a series of community interventions to reflect on the global theme – "Harnessing the potential of human mobility". It was an occasion to discuss topics such as safe migration, irregular migration, stigmatization, and opportunities in the country. The "Made in Taadi" Youth Seminar, an initiative of IOM Ghana Goodwill Ambassador, Kofi Kinaata, took place on 23 December in Takoradi. Under the theme "Untapped Opportunities in a Pandemic Era", the seminar explored opportunities for the youth, and discussed these in relation to safe migration pathways and the persisting issue of irregular migration. The short film "I like it here" by Ghanaian film maker Amartei Armar was screened as part of the Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF).



The youth of Jamestown enjoy the newly renovated basketball court
©IOM/Ghana/Francis Kokoroko

Jamestown Playground

Empowering Young People in Ghana to Build Their Dreams

On 2 July, 2021, in Jamestown, Accra, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Delegation of the European Union to Ghana, the Sports for Education and Economic Development (SEED) Project and DUNK Grassroots, together with some 200 youth, inaugurated the newly renovated basketball court at the GaMashie Development Agency.

The renovation and inauguration were part of a project titled “Playground” that was created to empower young people to create viable alternatives to irregular migration. It leverages the educational power of basketball to equip the youth with life skills and self-resilience.

“Using basketball as a vehicle to foster life skills, is a fantastic approach that will be beneficial for the youth of Jamestown and neighbouring communities. Our youth has a lot of potential, and they need safe spaces to grow and thrive. This is an opportunity to allow them to create their own alternatives to irregular migration,” said the Mayor of Accra, Honourable Mohammed Adjei Sowah.

The Playground project is a partnership made possible through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

“Playground has the youth and community at its heart. We work with our partners to inform about safe migration options as well as the dangers of irregular migration,” said Abibatou Wane-Fall, Chief of Mission IOM Ghana. She added: “Together, we bring the vision of an open and inclusive space to life – a space for girls and boys, young women and young men, from all walks

of lives and backgrounds, migrants, returnees, neighbours, and locals. Everyone is invited to play and learn and grow together.”

The Playground project partners work together to empower young people to make well-informed migration choices, to decide on their own futures and to build their dreams. Together with local partners, it builds a culture of self-development and pride on and beyond the court.

“Ensuring youth have access to safe places to play is fundamental, as it’s the place where all the life skills programmes, games and community outreach occur – it all begins on the court,” explained Mactar NDiaye, Director of Operations, SEED Project. “This is why we at SEED are incredibly honored to have worked on the ground with the community of Jamestown to refurbish this basketball court, which also helps better secure their actual needs and ownership.”

This inauguration event concluded a series of youth engagement initiatives designed to empower young people. Implemented under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative since 2017 in 12 countries in the region, these activities mostly happen in public spaces using sports and art.

As of July 2021, IOM supported over 1800 Ghanaian migrants to voluntarily and safely return home. Over 700 returnees have completed their reintegration, despite the challenges posed by COVID-19. Overall, over 300 awareness-raising sessions have taken place in communities and schools across the country, while radio and TV broadcasts have reached approximately 1,100,000 Ghanaians nationwide.

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