

## PRESS RELEASE

### “YOU ARE HOME” Awareness raising campaign against irregular migration targeting young senegalese: radio is the messenger

Saving lives and providing accurate information to potential Senegalese migrants was the objective of the YOU ARE HOME campaign, which has just ended after four months of intense activity on social networks and on the ground.

It is no secret that traffickers are calling the shots when it comes to communicating the reality of the illegal crossing to Europe. They don't say that more than 4,000 migrants have perished in the Mediterranean waters in 2021 alone. They also lie about the real living conditions of the minority of migrants who pass the difficult steps in the desert. But above all, they are careful not to tell the uncertain life in Europe and the miserable living conditions that are often the fate of illegal immigrants.

A lot has been said and done about the reality of life in Europe for undocumented migrants, yet it seems that the message is not getting through, and more and more young people are risking their precious lives for chimera.

The YOU ARE HOME campaign wanted to give voice to the diasporas, so that they stop being a smoke and mirrors and tell the truth about real life in Europe where everything is far from being a bed of roses.

The four messages of the campaign

Targeting first the Senegalese youth of Touba, Rufisque and Dakar, the promotional messages highlighted the cruelties of the desert; between thirst, dehydration and the macabre spectacle of dead bodies abandoned in the sand dunes. They showed the despair of a young girl trapped in a rotting prison in Libya, the desperate struggle of a young man dying by drowning at sea. The campaign made a point of depicting the living conditions of undocumented migrants in Europe, from a young mother without medical care for her and her baby, to a young man who finds himself begging on the street, not to mention those who become involved in the drug trade and end their lives in prison.

The campaign highlighted some opportunities for legal migration, such as work permits, studies and family reunification, where possible.

The strength of the campaign in Senegal was to highlight the employment opportunities that exist there. Influencers based in Africa were tapped to spread a message that emphasised local entrepreneurship, building a strong Senegal with all its sons.

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Non-governmental organisations based in Senegal actively participated in the campaign by carrying out communication actions on the field, on beaches and through community radios, with testimonies of returnees who left Europe after fruitless stays in the country.

Often criticised for their misleading narrative by many, diasporas were targeted with messages calling on them to give a real image of life in Europe.

In order to make the campaign messages effective, 12 giant billboards were placed in busy intersections in Dakar, Touba and Rufisque. More than 69 radio programmes were broadcast.

80 messages in French, Wolof and English were disseminated on social networks, including Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Influencers organised live shows on their platforms, and focus groups were organised with young people in Senegal.

### Debates and recommendations

The YOU ARE HOME campaign generated considerable debate on traditional media and social networks in Senegal. It emerged that young people are aware of the danger they face when choosing to migrate irregularly, but the siren call of smugglers is strong, the biased messages of "successful" diaspora members are very attractive, and social security is not well developed in Senegal.

The consortium that organised this campaign noted that community radios were more effective in getting messages across to prospective migrants and their families, and recommended that billboards be more numerous and widespread throughout the country. It also recommended that the Senegalese government be more forthcoming with its young population to develop more employment opportunities.

On the positive side, and according to the evaluation conducted at the end of the campaign, the consortium reported that many of the targeted youths declared that they had given up their plans for illegal immigration.

Ideal-M was an EU-funded project run by seven partners.

For more information, visit the website: <https://www.ideal-migration.com>

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