20 QUESTIONS EXPOSING THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC MIGRANT NARRATIVE TO THE MARITIME COMMUNITY

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Ten personal accounts detailing the reality of African migrants’ reasons for moving North from the Sahel to Europe and crossing the Mediterranean Sea.
"I do not think that migrants will get rescued and I am neither expecting any rescue action by anyone when our boat sinks, because if the number of losses of life the media are showing is true, it would not happen, people rescue the migrants! I would rather rely on my swimming skill and God's blessing."

For every story, there is a human behind it. These are their words.

The following field research was commissioned by the UK independent maritime human rights charity Human Rights at Sea. The research is part of the charity’s on-going investigation and narrative explaining why people migrate from Africa. This often results in the loss of their lives while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, or otherwise they are rescued by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), military, coast guard or commercial vessels during such perilous attempts. Some migrants are returned to States where they are abused, persecuted or murdered.

This publication aims to provide those researching and teaching this subject matter further insight and evidence collected from witness testimonies at source. For those working in the maritime environment it provides first-hand insight into the backgrounds of the very people that they may come in contact with during humanitarian rescues at sea.

This publication complements the likes of the Marlins Maritime Humanitarian Response e-learning course, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Rescue at Sea publication, the ICS Large Scale Rescue Operations at Sea publication, the Human Rights at Sea Volunteer Maritime Rescuers: Awareness of Criminalisation and Deprivation of Liberty at Sea publications.

DETAIL

The following selected stories, some of which are difficult to read, describe the reasons for taking such risks and the triggers that cause economic migration. They include the awareness of the dangers faced in crossing the Mediterranean Sea and the varying expectations of potential rescue from vessels and government and non-government organisations, if they are rescued at all.

All persons who participated were interviewed on an entirely voluntary basis with names changed in order to protect their identities. Research was undertaken in line with the Charity’s Research Ethics Guidelines, where applicable.

The interviews have been translated as they were received and the text remains as it was recorded in order to accurately represent the words said and the context in which the answers were given.

Human Rights at Sea would like to sincerely thank all who contributed to this valuable field research.

David Hammond
CEO | Human Rights at Sea
May 2016

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20 QUESTIONS EXPOSING
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THE 20 QUESTIONS

- What is your quality of life like in Mali?
- How much do you earn and how much do you want to earn?
- What is the education like for yourself and your children?
- What are your current prospects for jobs?
- What do you want out of life for you, your children, brothers and sisters?
- Are you thinking of leaving Mali and migrating to another country? If yes, to which country and why?
- What would make you stay in the country?
- Are you aware of the dangers in migrating north to Europe, or other African countries? What do you think those dangers are?
- Are you aware that you will need to pay human traffickers to get you into Europe?
- Are you aware that they are criminals and that they do not respect your human rights, or care if you live or die?
- How much do you think it will cost each person to cross in to Europe?
- How would you afford to pay the trafficker’s charges?
- Are you aware of the large losses of life for migrants during crossing the Mediterranean Sea?
- What are your worries about crossing the Mediterranean Sea?
- Do you think you would be rescued if your boat sank at sea?
- Would you expect to be rescued by ships and organisations and taken to a place of safety?
- What would you do if you were returned to the country from which you came from?
- How do you think you will be treated when you reach your final destination?
- What are your expectations for accommodation, education and jobs when you reach your final destination?
- Is such a dangerous journey worth the risk and why?
I have no worry about crossing the sea, because as soon as I take decision to leave my family for an unknown world, there is no more worry; I will either succeed or die. That is it.

I am a football player and running my own business. My quality of life here in Mali is miserable if I can say so, I have got a hair cutting box from which I feed my family. In Mali I make one head for someone is 300 CFA, imagine how many heads should have to make in order to buy rice, condiment price, pay my electricity bill and pay my house rent?

I have two sisters and a brother in addition to my loved one and me; I don’t even have the three normal daily rations for my family! I cannot say all the educated people get a job but it make easier for them to get a job. Secondly, someone who is not educated has not the same view or understanding of the world as the one who is. I think if I have been educated I should not suffer like am today.

I will either succeed or die! That is it!

I would like to be a normal family leader, responsible and able to fulfill my family’s needs, send my sons and daughters at school, being able to pay their school fees; For my brothers and sisters I have always a will to help them so as they do not suffer as am suffering today. I wish to employ them in my own business and we would work together in as a family business.

I am quite ready to leave Mali and migrating north to Europe. For the first time I have tried to get in Italy but unfortunately I have been arrested and returned back to Morocco, and from there I have got some amount of money and get back to Mali to set my own hair cutting business. For this time I am trying to get to Spain, just because I failed my first attempt through Italy.

You know better than me, something that can make me stay in Mali! Who wants to leave his family and everything at home for an unknown world for pleasure? If I had a fund of 1.500.000 CFA, to set my own real business, or get a remunerated job at 150.000 CFA, I would not leave Mali for whatever reason.

I am consciously aware of the dangers in migrating north to Europe or other African country. I have experienced it in 2005, firstly the danger starts in North Mali to get to Algeria with transporters or traffickers; we paid the mini bus transporter for Algeria destination but they left us around a sandy and windy village at about 96 kilometres to our aimed destination: Algeria. We walked the rest of the distance on foot for three days, some of our migrant colleagues suffered a lot from dehydration and hunger because they were not expecting such kind of journey. A friend of mine told me that sometime the traffickers take all of the migrants’ money in the vehicle; these are the dangers we may encounter from North Mali to Algeria, Morocco or Libya. There is a major danger as well when we come up to cross the sea or crossing the big barbed wire obstacle crossing; it is there most of the migrant die or gives up when we come up to cross the sea or crossing the big barbed wire obstacle crossing.

I am expecting to be a trader or employed in the trade by my family; I don’t even have the three normal daily rations for my family! I cannot qualify the traffickers as criminals because they do not call the migrant from their homes, or force them to cross the sea! It is just an agreement between shipman and client! You pay money, you get crossed the sea nothing else! So it is up to the migrant to accept the condition of shipment.

There is no fixed price to cross the sea in to Europe; it depends on how good the migrant is in bargaining and the number of passengers they may have. But it is not less than 400.000 CFA each person to cross the sea, I am suffering today. I wish to employ them in my own business and we would work together in as a family business.

The migrant will pay the trafficker before shipment, “there is no payment after crossing”.

Am aware of the losses of life in crossing the Mediterranean sea for migrants, some of friends who had chance to cross told me they have seen a traffic boat sunk in the sea during their convoy; in addition to that, every time the media are talking about migrant ships sinking and causing many losses of life.

I have no worry about crossing the sea, because as soon as I take decision to leave my family for an unknown world, there is no more worry; I will either succeed or die! That is it!

Even if I am returned back to Mali again, I will do all my best to go back again. We have a saying in Mali, “death is better than always being in the shameful condition” but for this time I don’t expect to get returned back to Mali, during the shipment I will throw all of my ID papers I may have on me, like ID card, passport, telephone numbers, any evidence which can identify me. That was the mistake I have done during my first attempt to Italy in 2005.

I have no clear plan for accommodation, but people said that there is some organization which take care of the migrants for a while in a migrant centre, once they get to their final destination in Europe; I don’t expect to get to the (migrant foyer), because from there I may have bad luck to get returned back to somewhere in Africa again as I have any ID paper. I would rather memorize my friend’s phone number in Spain, once there I will call him to pick me up somewhere, and then he may provide me shelter and even job as he has already a regular resident paper in Spain.

It is even more risky to live in misery in my own home country with a family always having tears in their eyes from hunger, because in such situation I may end up by robbing or crooking someone by necessity and in turn I will spend the rest of my life in jail in Mali.

I don’t think I will be rescued when my boat sank at sea, because all of us in the boat will be called (illegal migrant) by Europeans, unless we manage ourselves or thanks by God’s will and blessed by our parents.

I am expecting any rescue neither from ships nor by organizations to take us to a safety place, unless if am lucky because if such ships and organizations exist permanently, there shouldn’t be losses of life we are seeing everyday through TV.

Yes it is worth risking such a journey, because life is daily com- bat! Either I will achieve my intent or I lose! It is even more risky to live in misery in my own home country with a family always having tears in their eyes from hunger, because in such situation I may end up by robbing or crooking someone by necessity and in turn I will spend the rest of my life in jail in Mali. Instead of taking such risk, I think better to take risk to leave Mali for another country where am sure to find some money and help my family.
It is worth to risk your life, because even if I stay in Mali in my current life condition the future of my daughters is in danger, I could not send them at school, cover my daily needs and help my Godmother who is also in a horrible condition that I won’t tell you what.

Yes I am aware of the dangers in migrating north to Europe. First, naturally migration does not fit to an African woman, it sounds better to men than women, and she cannot support some hard condition that men may support; in order to avoid such hard condition, she will trust herself to someone who is supposed to get her into Europe. Thus, who knows the one to whom she trusts herself? He may be a bandit, terrorist or whatever else wrong does! Or she can get crooked by someone and may end up by doing prostituting in European border countries like in Morocco, Libya, or Algeria, because she has no other way to get money for crossing the sea when she gets crooked by bandits!

Of course I am aware that I need to pay money to the traffickers to get into Europe.

I think, if you can qualify the traffickers as criminals, the Malian government is also a bunch of criminals, because it does not take care about those who are poor; we always see through TV that the government gets financial support from Europeans to help the poor people in Mali or those who want to run their own business, but the government members use that amount in own benefit! I confirm the criminal is Malian government but not the traffickers.

I have no idea about the price to pay for crossing the sea, but all I know, I will go with some amount with which I think they can accept me to take over the sea.

I would like to pay the traffickers once I get crossed the sea but someone who is charge to take me up to Morocco from Mali told me that it should be a direct payment before shipment.

Yes I am aware of the losses of migrants’ life in crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

Yes it is worth to risk your life, because even if I go to Europe in this illegal way, forordly I should be subject to crossing the sea and dangers.

First of all, may God save us from ship sinking; yes if we are lucky, I think we will be rescued because wherever in the world there is bad and good people.

I think someone who rescues, either ships or organization, will then take us in a safe place.

If the Europeans expulse me back to Mali again after spending all my money on that deadly journey, for sure I will try to go back again; because from that time on, I will have no other option to succeed in my life but going to Europe.

I am expecting a good treatment when I reach my final destination because white men do respect and care about women more than African.

My expectation for accommodation and jobs depend on situation in which I will be when I reach the overseas. Either to get contact with Malians living in England or get caught by migrant control police to be sent to the migrants’ centre.

Yes it is worth to risk your life, because even if I stay in Mali in my current life condition the future of my daughters is in danger, I could not send them at school, cover my daily needs and help my Godmother who is also in a horrible condition that I won’t tell you what.

If I could get a job in a restaurant, hotel or get a fund to settle my own local restaurant, I would not dare going to England by leaving my little daughters in a sorrowful condition in Mali. Some amount about 5,000,000,000 CFA could be covering my business establishment.

If the Europeans expulse me back to Mali again after spending all my money on that deadly journey, for sure I will try to go back again; because from that time on, I will have no other option to succeed in my life but going to Europe.
In 2005 my friend who is in Spain said, during their convoy composed of three boats, two sank in the sea due to overload of passengers, he could see some of his comrades dying in the sea but the boat owner got rescued by his comrade who was the owner of the boat in which my friend was left the migrants drowned.
Name: Hamidou THERRO
Age: 36
Status: married, 3 children
Education: technician in agriculture  Mother: dead  Father: dead

I am worried about boat sinking due to over load or bad weather condition, but it does not prevent or discourage me to give my taken decision up.

I am a Malian but I was living in Côte d’Ivoire, I came in Mali as a refugee in 2003. I am living in a very poor condition of life. I have no proper job, but thanks to God my brother in law allocated me his spare flat in Bamako where I am living in today. I have not the three normal foods for my family; I have no electricity, no clean water just because I cannot pay the bill. My wife spends all days selling candles and soap at the gate to help me covering the daily needs of our family.

I am breeding three couple of chicken in the flat I am living, and I can earn 1000 CFA by selling eggs. I am looking an agricultural or cattle breeding job, which pays at 12000 CFA a month. In 2007 I had 6 months contract with a U.S. organization helping remote villages to improve their agricultural techniques, which was well paid, but just after a month the Manager who was a Malian replaced me by his own brother. That is to say, in Mali getting a job is more relational based than deserve.

Education is a good thing, it permits to understand the world, and if someone is not educated he has very less chance to get a job or manage his own business. I am blaming myself today because I have no diploma which qualifies me as a professional agricultural producer though I have all technical qualification in that field. I am planning to send my elder boy at school next year, I think my sister will assist me for his education for three or four years before I will be able to pay all the rest of the school fees.

I am looking to get employed by an agricultural company or open my own poultry, which requires lots of money. But there is no job.

I want to be independent in my life, be able to fulfil my family’s needs, create agricultural and cattle breeding business, employ my brothers and sisters in living in peace and prosperity in my home.

I think to migrate north to Europe but not to stay there. I would like to go to England because I think, English have a solid techniques and if someone is not educated he has very less chance to get a job or manage his own business. I am blaming myself today because I have no diploma which qualifies me as a professional agricultural producer though I have all technical qualification in that field. I am planning to send my elder boy at school next year, I think my sister will assist me for his education for three or four years before I will be able to pay all the rest of the school fees.

Nothing will make me stay in Mali in this current condition except a well-paid job from which my family may live in peace and happiness.

Of course I am aware of the dangers in migrating north to Europe; the dangers may be hunger, dehydration, bands and drowning in the sea in case the boat wreck.

I know we have to pay the traffickers and I think normal we will pay them; they are also living from that activity.

I do not see those traffickers as criminals, because they are helping the poor migrants who are sacrificing their life to get into Europe to help back their families and plan better life for their children.

The traffickers are not human life protection agent but normal transporter as air plane or train, the only problem is that they are reserved to the poor people! Only God may save someone’s life, no one else. Thus I cannot blame the traffickers as criminals.

According to my friends who got to Europe though on ground journey as call here in Mali, each person should pay 400.000 to 600.000 CFA (800 to 950 euros) to cross the Mediterranean Sea. As I have not been there yet, I can only give you the price that my friends told to me.

We should pay in cash the traffickers before getting in the boat, like in normal payment to the airport or train station in Mali. Only we, the migrants and traffickers are seen in bad eyes, and victims of negative connotations in using our name: illegal migrants, human traffickers for those who transport us. As we are qualified as illegal migrants, we make disappear our ID papers before getting to Europe, and see what will happen to us.

Am aware of the losses of life in crossing the sea, the loss of life is happening everywhere in the world but people keep continuing their activities; I can even say migrants death in the sea is more politics through the media than reality.

I am worried about boat sinking due to over load or bad weather condition, but it does not prevent or discourage me to give my taken decision up.

By chance we may get rescued in case of boat sinks; otherwise we cannot say we will surely get rescued.

I do not know if there are rescue ships or organizations, but in my view when you rescue someone in danger you will take him in a safe area.

I am not expecting to get repatriate back to Mali because they will find no evidence which shows I am a Malian, but when it happens, I will try back again because it is a shame to the neighbour I failed in migrating.

I am expecting any kind of treatment once in my final destination because I don’t know anybody, and people may lie on me that I am a bad guy; but if am lucky since the first day I will be taken by someone as an employee and he will understand what reason I am there for!

I have no plan for accommodation neither for job, everything may happen by chance. Firstly I will sleep on roadsides, and try to find out some Africans or Malians otherwise I will try find out a migrant reception foyer. From there when I get a job, I will do all my best to acquire some experiences or even study agricultural technique which is my main aim to go there, so as I can exploit it back to Mali.

Yes it is worth to risk our life to such journey because we have more chance to succeed in our life once we get over the sea, and we may help our parents back home.

I do not see those traffickers as criminals, because they are helping the poor migrants who are sacrificing their life to get into Europe to help back their families and plan better life for their children. The traffickers are not human life protection agent but normal transporter as air plane or train, the only problem is that they are reserved to the poor people! Only God may save someone’s life, no one else. Thus I can not blame the traffickers as criminals.
I prefer rather to get drowned by trying to get myself out from that misery than staying here in the shameful situation while my former classmates have jobs, and some are in Europe and helping their family.

My quality of life is very poor; I am struggling to get my basic necessities. In classification I can say I am in the low class society in Mali. I am living in a single room without electricity and no facility. I can earn 50,000 CFA a month; I am a supervisor in start-up security agency and give some private English class occasionally to students in right time. I would like to get a job, which may pay, at 150,000 or 200,000 CFA (300 euros) a month in order to live independently with my family in Mali.

Education is capital either for me as well for my children in the future. Though today I am not employed but I have more chance in the future. I am a supervisor in a security agency, which pays 150,000 or 200,000 CFA (300 euros) a month; I am a supervisor in start-up security agency and give some private English class occasionally to students in right time. I would like to get a job, which may pay, at 150,000 or 200,000 CFA (300 euros) a month in order to live independently with my family in Mali.


I am aware that I need to pay the transporters that you call human trafficker to cross the sea. I do not see the transporters as human trafficker because the only difference between them and normal transporters is that they do just transport poor person like I! And in none of these companies no one can get transported for free, thus it is normal to pay them to achieve our goal.

They are neither criminal because the traffickers do not sink their boat deliberately or kill people in the sea as people think! It is just a matter of bad luck for those who lose their life in the sea; the only problem on which I can blame them is the overloading of passenger. In term of taking care of our life, even in our home country our government does not care of our life condition! It is to say, I do not blame neither the traffickers nor the European but our government.

The price for crossing the sea is 500,000 to 600,000 CFA each person according the information I have got from my friends. I have already been informed about the entire situation in order to avoid any mistake, which will be fatal to my migration adventure.

The charge for traffickers is like an organized network. It roots from the criminal organizations, and they are treating me as a coward now.

The only thing I am worry once in the sea, is the boat sinking and that is natural phenomenon like air or car crash!

I think if have God’s and my parents’ blesses on me, I may even not encounter problem getting into the Eldorado let alone to get rescued

My friend in Paris told me that there is coastguard and some organization that rescue people in trouble in the sea sometime. He said some of the organization do help the national police by giving information of where the migrants are from, which may end up by getting taken back to Africa again. I do not expect to get safe by such so-called organization; I would rather die than get rescued.

I do not hope to get taken back to Mali again, but unfortunately if the case happens, I will always try to migrate in another way. I think with the plan and information I gathered it will not be possible for the police to take me back to Mali, but maybe somewhere in Africa because I will burn all my 10D papers once at the coast of the sea.

I am struggling to get in a country where I am expecting a better life. I have any negative idea of treatment once in my final destination; I think anytime everything is good there!

Once in my final destination, as I have my pen friend’s contact in London, I will call him. We became friend in Dogon country in Mali as tourist. I am sure he will help me to get shelter and resident paper; thus I do not worry too much about accommodation, job once in London.

It is worth to risk such a journey, there is no easy way to earn money; I think it is more than normal and worth to fight for our own welfare and help people who are in need if possible!

He said some of the organization do help the national police by giving information of where the migrants are from, which may end up by getting taken back to Africa again. I do not expect to get safe by such so-called organization; I would rather die than get rescued.
I would rather die by trying to find out ways to live in dignity than being criticised and living in a shameful condition forever.

I am from a farmer family in Mopti and I am accommodated by someone since 2004 in Bamako, when I was in high school. But now I am old enough and got finished my study, I would like to take my own responsibility but I have no way and my accommodator has enough with me. I sometime have no dinner, and his children provoke me every time that I am a coward and a lazy, the fact I have no area to go and no job. I am living in a shameful condition.

I have no job, no income, the mere amount of money I may get are from my brothers who are living in Kaye and Sikasso; they sometime give me money for clothing and food, as I cannot have regular food in the family I am accommodated.

I would like to get a job, which may pay me at 125,000 CFA a month so as I can be totally independent.

Education is good thing. I am educated and I hope sooner or later I will get a job; but the problem is, I will get old before I get a job due to the corruption in Mali. My view on my children’s education is clear, they will go to school and study further than me. Nowadays most of the job opportunities require professional, how can you get job if you are not educated in such world?

I have no job but ready to do any kind of job for the time being just to survive. I did some training in drug store and many others hoping to get employed but they have just used me for nothing.

In my life I would like to be independent and responsible to be able to pay school fees for my children, own a flat for my family and help my brothers and sisters in future.

I am definitely devoted to migrate to Europe, from where I think I may get welfare and prosperity. I would like to go to Belgium because I have two of my classmates migrated there and I think they may help me once I will be there.

Only a well-paid job can make me stay in Mali. I am just looking for job; why do I leave my parents if I can get a job in Mali?

I am aware of the dangers we may encounter in migrating to Europe through ground way as we call it in Mali. Dangers such hunger, dehydration, bandits taking money from migrant once in the desert and the boat sink in the sea while crossing the sea. We, the poor people are used to the dangers since we are in Mali; what is more dangerous than having not a shelter in your own country?

We absolutely need to pay the traffickers to get to Europe as a businessman pays airline company to go the U.S.A for his own business, and that is normal I think. Nothing for nothing!

I have not been there but got briefed about the charge and way of payment for the traffickers from here up to the sea. Each person should pay 400,000 to 500,000 CFA to cross the sea. My brothers are collecting money every month to send me there, and once I succeed in migrating I will pay them back and help them as well.

The traffickers are sometime criminals, the fact they overload people in a small boat for such expensive charge and do not care about our life, the only thing which interests them is money! As we have no other option to cross the sea, I will accept their requirement.

The traffickers’ charge is a cash payment before getting in the boat, and there are no papers which could be used as evidence to change them for none respect of passengers rights.

I am also aware that many people are dying in the sea by trying to cross the sea; that is the law of the nature, some will die by trying to succeed, some will succeed and the coward remain on someone’s mercy forever. I would rather die by trying to find out ways to live in dignity than being criticised and living in a shameful condition forever.

Most of the time the rescue team comes late to fish out the migrant’s dead bodies, that is not a rescue.

I don’t know if there are special ships or organisation that are dedicated to rescue migrants in difficulties in the sea; even if they do exist, I do not expect to get rescued by them because after taking us out the sea they will send us in a centre and send us back to Africa. They are sometime obstacle to migrants.

I will for sure try to migrate back to Europe in case I will get repatriated back to Mali again, because I have no more hope of success in Mali.

Anyway in term of treatment once at my final destination, my fundamental human right will not be taken away from me by anyone else just because I am a migrant. I am definitely ready to support any kind of treatment if does not ends me up to get repatriated to Mali.

I am relying on my former classmates who are today living in Belgium to help me for accommodation and initiation on ways to get a job in Belgium.

Though it is a risky journey it has a price forever! By the end in Europe, even if I will not be a rich man, I will be in condition better than in Mali.
My worry in the sea is boat sinking and the stream of the sea, honestly if I had another way to get to Europe without getting in the traffickers boat, I would do it but I feel compelled to pass by due to poverty.

The traffickers can be criminals somehow, because the way they overload migrants in their boat, they do not care about passengers than always money; but in another hand we, the migrants are conscious to put our life in danger by accepting to get in the boats though we see they are not in good shape, and cannot transport the number we would at once! In this case I do not blame the traffickers but the migrants, no trafficker will force migrants to get into the boat for crossing the sea.

According to the information I have got from other migrant candidates, the charge varies between 400.000 CFA to 500.000 CFA each person to cross the sea.

Migrants should pay the traffickers in cash money before getting into the boat.

I am aware of the losses of life in crossing the sea; we are always watching TV news about migrants’ life toward the sea world.

My worry in the sea is boat sinking and the stream of the sea, honestly if I had another way to get to Europe without getting in the traffickers boat, I would do it but I feel compelled to pass by due to poverty, unless I will get in situation more comfortable in Gabon.

I would expect to get rescued and taken in a safe place, because I cannot swim and as we all human being, they cannot sit and watch while innocent are dying in front of them!

I will definitely go back again if I am returned back to my country; but I will be luck, because my uncle promised me that when I get to Gabon I will get Gabon Nationality ID, so in case of repatriation, I will be taken back to Gabon instead of Mali, Gabon is better than Mali.

I don’t think I will have any problem in my first destination which is Gabon because I have my uncle there, but as far as my final destination, in Italy, the treatment may different though I have my friends there; no matter how the Europeans will treatment at my final destination, the essential is to be in the over side of the sea: Europe.

I am relying on my uncle about accommodation once in Gabon, and on my friends once in Italy, and then together we find some handwork for me.

It is worth to risk my life in such journey because when I succeed to get in the other side, it means “good bye poverty and good morning to welfare”.

I think people will get rescued if they are lucky when there is shipwreck, but it is not obvious in my view, because if such team does really exist migrants will not die in mass at sea.
Most of the time the ships get sank because huge number of migrants hide themselves in only one side of the boat and balance it into water. If traffickers where not criminals, they should not accept to overload the boat.

I am in a miserable condition of life in Bamako. I got married there is one and half year. I have no specific job to take care of my wife, pay our accommodation, food in addition now she is pregnant. I sometime have problem of food in my family. My mum and dad are old, I am the elder son of the family who is supposed to take over in somehow the charge of the family, but there is no way; Currently I am hated by mother and father because I am not contributing to the family, and I became a foreigner in my own family. My God!!!!

I do not have a regular income, I am a photographer but my work material is very limited. I sometime earn 3000 CFA a day but not everyday. I would like to have a job through which I can get 150,000 CFA a month in order to be able to take care of my family and then help my mum and dad.

Education is source of knowledge and everything may come from education. Due to lack of means from my parents I stopped continuing my telecommunication otherwise I would continue till master level, and for sure I could have got a well-paid job in that case. Now, I have seen how poverty may impact on the children's future, I will do all my best so that my children not to fail their study due to my limited means, in term of financing their study.

I am employed as a photographer in someone's studio and the amount I get from there is just to cover our food expense. I have applied to many telecommunication agencies but in vain to get employed there. I have even not been called for interview. I have applied to many telecommunication agencies but in vain to get employed there. I have even not been called for interview. I have already 350,000 CFA, I will manage myself to get to Libya and get more to continue into Eldorado, mainly in England because, English people are more altruist than other, and I have a friend of mine in London.

I am aware of the dangers the migrants may be facing, such as hunger, dehydration, bandits, shipwrecks in the sea or disease as it is a long term preparation when they get to coast before getting shipped to the over side of the Mediterranean sea.

For sure we need to pay the traffickers to cross the sea, even before getting to the sea, we will pay those who give us advices and trust us to their organization located in different countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco and then finally to the boat owners. It is for reason why I borrowed money from my uncle!

I know the traffickers do not care about our life; the only thing, which links us, is money. They have no limited places in their boats; they always try to transport as many migrants as possible at once. Can you imagine they dare to load 80 people in a boat which is supposed to transport 50 Migrants get loaded like animal and then they will get hidden in the boat so as not to be seen by coastguards in case of control. Most of the time the ships get sank because huge number of migrants hide themselves in only one side of the boat and balance it into water. If traffickers were not criminals, they should not accept to overload the boat.

My friend in Libya, who is well aware of the traffic charge for each person to cross the sea, told me that I need to own at least with 500,000 CFA.

I would migrate back to Europe again in case I will get repatriate back Mali. But I think I will not be taken back to Mali because no one will find any ID paper on me. Maybe I will be taken back to South Africa or Gabon.

I have no idea how I will be treated once in my final destination, anyway God is watching us, rich or poor we are! I hope by God's and my parents bless I will not be treated in bad way.

I have no expectation for accommodation once in my destination than relying on my friend's help before I get a job. I would accept any kind of job, which pays me at my first arrival, because I need to get money for accommodation and finding a regular residential paper.

It is of course worth to risk my life in such journey, I would rather prefer dying by trying to get in a country where there is justice and equality and I can get job according my qualification. "Death is better than humiliation."

"It would be good if the governments had put a special and independent rescue team in place but which does not prevent migrants to try their chance. As nowadays, everything is politic, powerful countries use poor countries to play scenarios and then poor countries uses poor people from their own country to play unconsciously scenarios in the profit of the states.

I am aware of the losses of life in migrating but I think it is more politic than truth, despite all of the propaganda; people are always migrating and for sure we will never give up to migrate unless find jobs, and justice in our own country. You never see one Ministry or business manager's son risking his life in such journey! All who are trying are those who are from poor families and victims on injustice in term of employment in their own country! I am an example of that situation.

I have no worry either in crossing or in the desert, the humiliation and suffers I am living in Bamako is worse than those who I may encounter in migrating; I will either succeed or die, nothing else.

I do not think that migrants will get rescued when their boat sink every time, if it was the case the picture they are showing through the media would not happen.

It would be good if the governments had put a special and independent rescue team in place but which does not prevent people who experienced in migrating, the traffickers will never accept such proposal even if I am their brother, they will say they are not there for charity. That is to say, we will pay cash or swim to cross which is definitely not possible.

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Three years ago I was in a very miserable condition of life, studying in Bamako but accommodated by someone’s family. After full three years of misery as a student, I decided to give up my studies because I had no means to go regularly to school. I sometimes had no lunch in the family I was lodged in. It was a poor family. My own parents live in Dogoton, 70 km from Bamako; they are farmers. But nowadays, I thank God; my quality of life has improved since I left Mali for Libya.

I had no regular incomes when I was in Bamako at that time I had a spare time job as hair cutter in someone’s workshop, where I was earning 40,000 CFA a month. With that amount, I paid my school transport fees and food as well when I am out in the family and pay someone hand out that our teacher were imposing us to buy. I would like to get 120,000 francs in order to continue my studies but unfortunately, I had not and ended by giving up my studies to migrate to Europe.

Education is crucial for those who are lucky to have rich parents to support them to continue their studies. It means independence. It is independence, responsibility, and happiness as I have been unlucky or failed; I will do my best to assure my children’s future.

As mentioned earlier I earned 40,000 francs CFA a month as a hair cutter; I would like to be a translator or a firm clerk in order to finish my studies; but unfortunately not.

After having noticed that I had no job opportunity, I decided to migrate to Libya first and from there to Europe. I am working as a tile layer and hair cutter in night time from which I got 500,000 francs a month.

In my life I would like to be a responsible chief of family, able to cover his family daily needs and sends his children to school and helps my sisters and brothers.

I have already migrated to Libya from Mali but still thinking to go to Europe mainly to Italy. I see all days long my friends from Mali and Libya crossing the sea to Italy and we are permanently in phone, internet contact. Italy is the closest European country from which I can attend other European countries.

If I had what I am earning now in Libya I would stay in Mali helping my parents and fund my own family.

I am aware of the danger in migrating north to Europe; I suffered from hunger and dehydration when the traffickers left us before our destination in Tripoli. We walked 70km to get to Tripoli, we ran out of food and water; we even left one of our Ivorian migrant totally dehydrated on the way with his friend helping him getting a car to take them to Tripoli. I do not know how they ended up.

I know we need to pay the traffickers to cross the sea; it is for these reasons why I am saving money for the journey charge.

The traffickers are only interested in money we do pay as charge to cross not our life security. Despite all of the losses of life due to negligence of traffickers, migrants are eager to go just like me.

The crossing charge is 500,000 francs each person and cash payment before getting in the boat.

People die everywhere before and during crossing the sea; I am well aware of the tragedies migrating north to Europe.

I sometimes worry about boat sink and get crooked by bandits; sometimes the intermediary who takes money from migrants and disappears.

Sometimes migrants in difficulties in the sea are rescued by the coastguards and sometimes they are chased back before shore.

I am not expecting a special rescue ship or organization that will rescue and takes care of the shipwreck migrants.

My decision is taken and it is unflinching, I will never give up getting into Europe even if I will be repatriated back in Mali.

I had no clear idea about how I will be treated in my final destination, but anyway I have many friends in Italy who are ready to welcome me once in there, thus I am not expecting any bad treatment by Italians. They are friends for sure, provide me shelter and food before getting a job or something. Now the only obstacle is to get more money before going because I would like to own some amount of money with which I may cover my necessities in my first arrival in Italy.

It is worth risking my life in such a journey, because I noticed a significant improvement in terms of life condition since I left Bamako, starting from Libya and I am sure Europe will be better than Libya too.
I am as well aware that there are losses of life of migrants in the Mediterranean due to shipwreck, which I think is more political to limit the number of people to migrate to Europe.

I have a low quality of life though I am single and I am accommodated by someone for free since I was student. Now, I have finished my study, I have decided to take my own charge. My accommodate did his best to support me for more than 6 years in term of food, accommodation and moral... now it is time for me to leave the place to the other students coming there to get accommodated. I am living in the shameful condition.

I am jobless and I have applied to many different private schools as teacher and others but no positive result. My parents back in the village are old and really need my support, but unfortunately there is no way living in such condition. I would like to get a job at 150000 CFA per month to be able to pay my house rent and help my parents who are deeply in need.

I am definitely decided to migrate to Europe via Maghreb and my final destination is supposed to be France. I would like to get to France because in my view, we have more Malian migrants in there, and French may understand Malians more than other European countries.

I know quite well that there are dangers in migrating north to Europe, such as shipwreck and bandits but it is more dangerous to live in a shameful and hopeless condition in your own country while your are healthy than taking risk to go migrate to Europe or wherever else you hope better life!

Yes I know that I need to pay the traffickers to cross like any normal transport: car, train...

The traffickers are seen as criminal, but in my view criminals are our governments, why people try to risk their life if they could get job in their own country in a normal way, without corruption? I cannot blame the traffickers as criminals, they are just poor people like us, to conduct their income generating activity.

I do not think that migrants will get rescued and I am neither expecting any rescue action by anyone when our boat sinks, because if the number of losses of life the media are showing is true, it would not happen, people rescue the migrants! I would rather rely on my swimming skill and God's bless.

As I have mentioned earlier, nothing will hold me in Mali except a job from which I can found my family, even if I will get repatriated back to Mali, the only solution for me is to try back again because it will be more shameful again when someone fails in his attempt of migration, while my friends succeeded in migrating, and some are working in Mali and have their families.

I am expecting any kind of treatment once in my destination, but that will be temporary, and then I understand someone will suffer before the locals may understand who is! But later they will come up to provide shelter and take care of me if I am lucky.

I have no plan for accommodation, job or education, my first intend is just to get out from this corrupted Mali, and see what will happen next.

I do not honestly care about the risk I may encounter in such journey because I am sure to succeed when I get to Europe sooner or later, and any suffer has its price!

I understand the price of risking my life in such journey, is for sure success forever.

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In my life I would be a responsible father, who will be able to cover his family's daily needs, to pay his children's school fees, own his own business in which he can train and employ his brothers and sisters and help my parents.

In my final destination I would like to be a responsible father, who will be able to cover his family's daily needs, to pay his children's school fees, own his own business in which he can train and employ his brothers and sisters and help my parents.

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FIELD RESEARCHER BIOGRAPHY

Hassim Barama KAMOKO was born in Ambain Koro District in Mali. He finished his primary and secondary school in Koro in the Dogon Country before attending the University of Bamako in the Department of Languages, Arts and Human sciences with his specialty in English Language. He achieved his Masters degree in English Language in 2009 and achieved his Diploma of Higher and Professional Teaching from the University of Bamako in 2012.

He has been engaged as an interpreter for multinational forces working in Mali and as a translator for International Humanitarian Law training for the European Union Training Mission in Mali since April 2013, working alongside ICRC and UN Women. He currently works as an interpreter and advisor to the British Government in co-ordination with the Malian Government.

Hassim has additionally been acting as an independent field researcher for the UK Charity, Human Rights at Sea, investigating the stories and backgrounds of Africans migrating north to Europe as part of the declared ongoing European migrant crisis.

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WHO WE ARE

BACKGROUND

Human Rights at Sea was established in April 2014. It was founded as an initiative to explore issues of maritime human rights development, review associated policies and legislation, and to undertake independent investigation of abuses at sea. It rapidly grew beyond all expectations and for reasons of governance it became a registered charity under the UK Charity Commission in 2015.

Today, the charity is an established, regulated and independent registered non-profit organisation based on the south coast of the United Kingdom. It undertakes research, investigation and advocacy specifically for human rights issues in the maritime environment, including contributing to support for the human element that underpins the global maritime and fishing industries.

The charity works internationally with all individuals, commercial and maritime community organisations that have similar objectives as ourselves, including all the principal maritime welfare organisations.
20 QUESTIONS EXPOSING
THE AFRICAN ECONOMIC MIGRANT NARRATIVE
TO THE MARITIME COMMUNITY