

# Can Information and Alternatives to Irregular Migration Reduce “Backway” Migration from the Gambia?

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# Motivation

- While migration has large potential benefits to individual migrants, **irregular migration is particularly risky.**
- **Central Mediterranean Route** brings migrants from West Africa to Libya through the Sahara desert and from there to Italy by the sea:
  - **Substantial death risks crossing the desert and in Libya** - at least 15% of migration attempts ends in death (MHUB, 2017);
  - **Crossing the Mediterranean carries substantial death risks – rising since 2000**, at least 3% recorded deaths in 2017 (Missing Migrants Project);
  - **Upon arrival to Italy, 33% probability of getting a legal permit in 2016** (AIDA).

# Motivation

*Can provision of information about the risks of irregular migration change the migration decisions of potential irregular migrants?*

## Bah and Batista (2018):

*Why do People Migrate Irregularly?*

*Evidence from a Lab in the Field Experiment in West Africa*

- Study took place in rural areas of The Gambia in first half of 2017 based on a sample of about 400 young males aged 15-25.
- ***46% of sample wished to take the “backway” to Europe.***
- ***Average expected “backway” death rate was 49%.***
- ***Average expected probability of legal status was 38%.***

# Bah and Batista (2018)

- According to the results of the *lab-in-the-field experiment* we implemented, **providing information on actual “backway” death risks would lead to an *increase* in irregular migration!**
- But providing actual information on lower than expected probability of getting legal residence permit decreased irregular migration intentions.

⇒ *Providing reliable information about migration facts will likely change irregular migration decisions – **but the direction of impact may be surprising.***

# Our work: Research Questions

- **Main question:**

*How can individual willingness to migrate irregularly be changed?*

- **Theory of change:**

- **Information on expected costs and benefits** is an important input into decision of migrants. But is it enough?
- May need to **provide alternatives** to staying at origin:
  1. *Vocational training*
  2. *Facilitating regional migration*

# Research Questions

1. What is the impact of ***informational campaigns*** on irregular migration? What are the information gaps? What makes information campaigns effective?
2. Does ***vocational training*** deter irregular migration? Does it promote internal or regional migration? Or regular international emigration?
3. Does ***facilitating regional migration*** provide an alternative to irregular international migration? What are critical factors to make this a valued alternative?

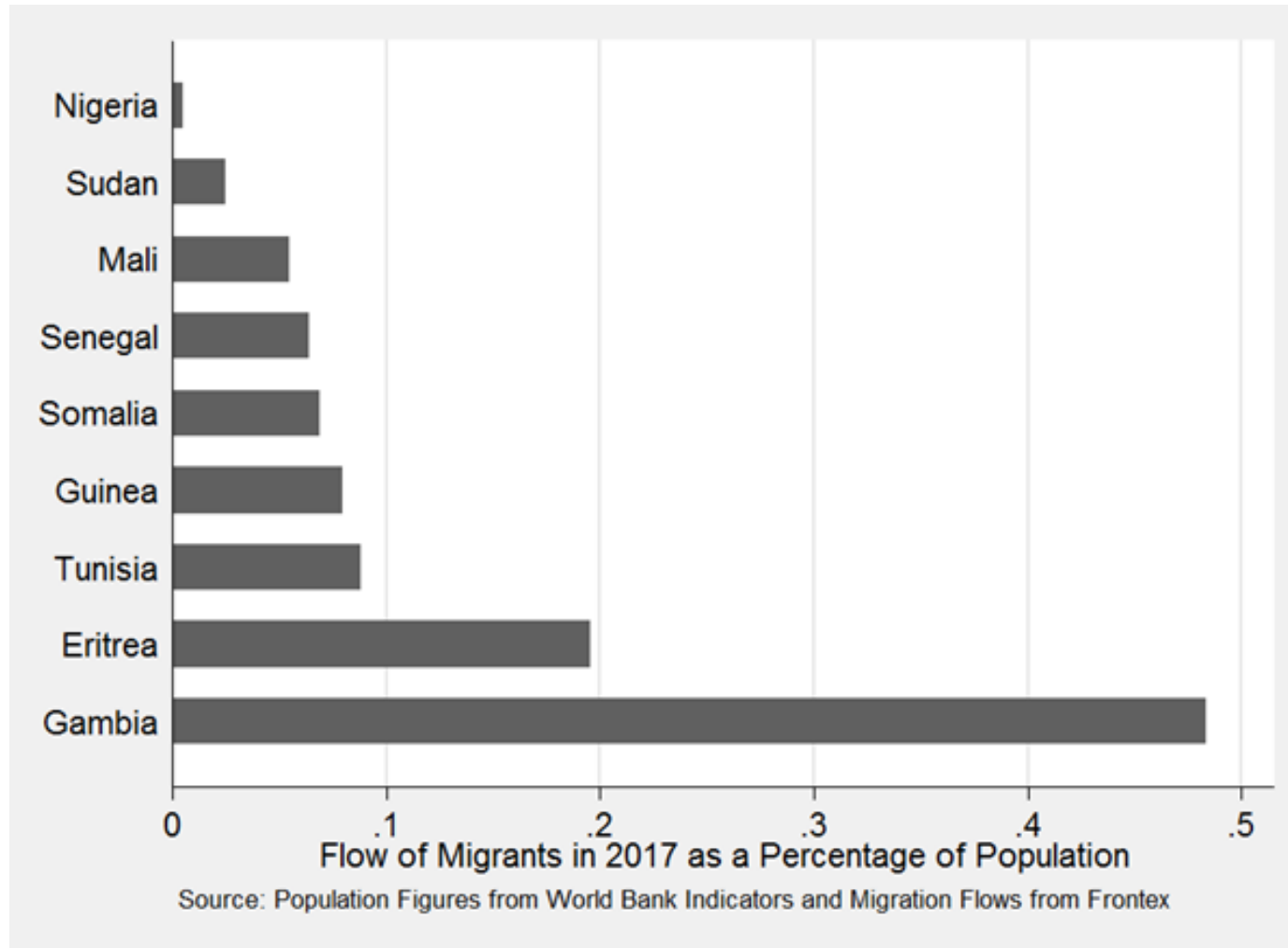
# Context and Study Setting – The Gambia

- **Population:** 2.3 million people (World Bank, 2018)
- **GDP per capita:** \$1700 PPP (10<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world - World Bank, 2018)
- **Migration context:**
  - International remittances account for 20% of GDP (more than tourism, which the main contributor to GDP).
  - Massive irregular emigration: 43,400 Gambians recorded as having reached Europe through the sea between 2000 and 2017 (FRONTEX); in 2017 alone, about 8,500 people (nearly 0.5% of the country's population).

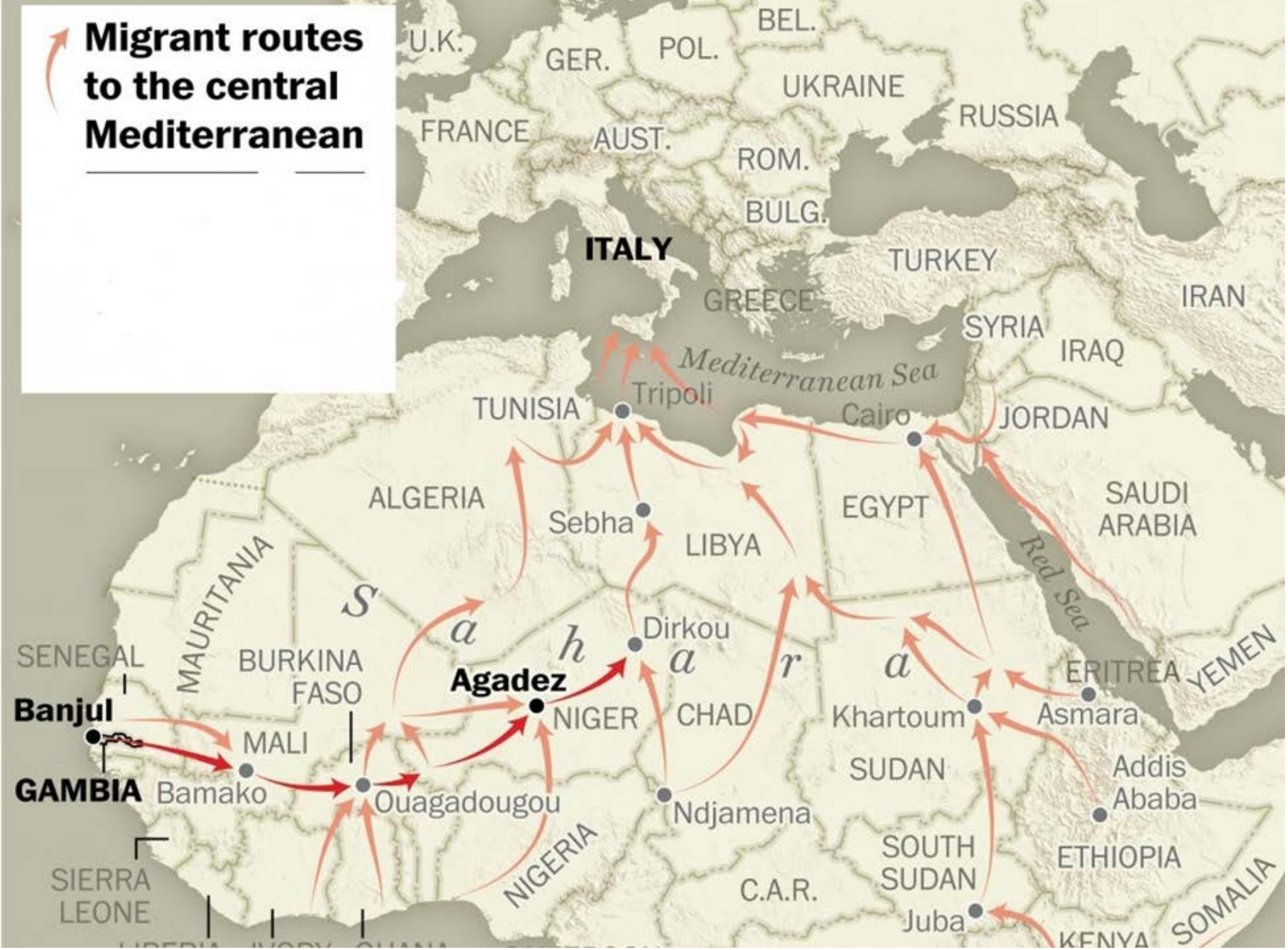




## Migrants Crossing the Central Mediterranean Route in 2017 by Top 10 Countries of Origin (as a Percentage of Origin Population)



# Migrant routes to the central Mediterranean



# Experimental Design

- **Randomized Impact Evaluation with four different groups:**

*Treatment 1:*

Information deterrence intervention

*Treatment 2:*

Treatment 1 + Facilitating regional migration to Senegal intervention

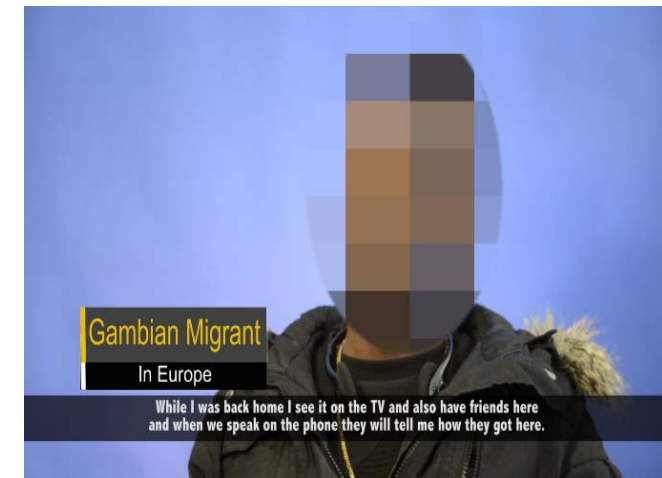
*Treatment 3:*

Treatment 1 + Vocational training intervention

*Control*

# Treatment 1: Information and deterrence video documentary

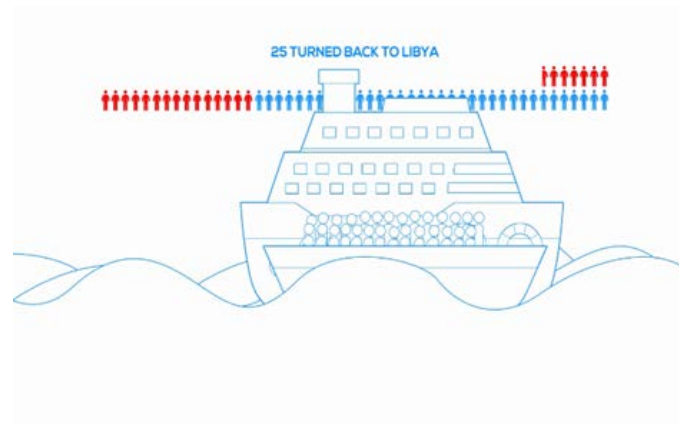
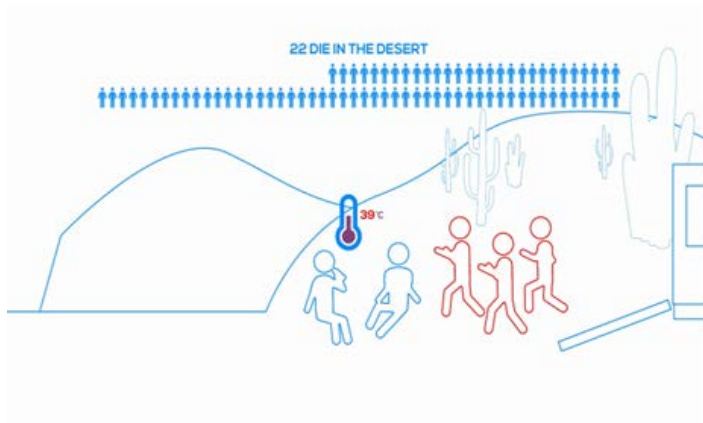
- **Testimonies of Gambian failed irregular migrants to Italy** who created the YAIM NGO. They provide reasons for migrating, how they obtained information about the trip, duration of the trip, experience during the trip - including witnessing accidents, deaths, kidnapping and general advice to prospective migrants.
- **Testimonies of irregular Gambian migrants residing in Italy** in local language.



# Treatment 1:

## Information and deterrence video documentary

- **Animation video** to convey statistics about the migration journey: cost of migrating, probability of dying *en route*, probability of obtaining residence status, and chances of being deported.



# Treatment 1:

## Information and deterrence video documentary

- Videos dubbed in three major languages spoken: Mandinka, Fula, and Wolof.
- Videos shown individually so that we could make sure video was fully watched.
- **Theory of change:** new information; role models; salience.

# Treatment 2:

## Facilitating regional migration to Senegal

- **Video documentary** including testimonies of Gambian migrants residing in Dakar: convey information on migration experience to Dakar, the cost of migrating, type of job opportunities and earnings, and general advice to prospective Gambian migrants.





# Treatment 2:

## Facilitating regional migration to Senegal

- **Cash provided to pay for transportation costs** to Dakar.
- **Additional financial support and connection with the Dakar Gambian immigrant association.** Cash for initial settling costs and personal advice provided upon arrival to Dakar.
- **Theory of change:** in addition to information deterring illegal migration to Europe, this intervention provides viable alternative to improving prospective migrant lives – new information, increased salience and role models, and lowering the cost of experimentation.

# Treatment 3: Vocational Training

- **Opportunity to enroll in a tuition-free vocational skill training program.** Leaflets with registration instructions and list of available courses. Training provided locally by the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), with a duration of six months.

**TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS**  
Venue: GTTI (Julangel Branch)

1. Obtain a TRAINING VOUCHER from your interviewer
2. Send a REGISTRATION TEXT MESSAGE to 5122794. For Example;  
Name: Sheriff Sabally  
Issue Number: 0002213  
Interested Course: Plumbing and Gas Fitting
3. A receipt notification message will be sent upon receipt of the registration message.
4. You will be notified in September if your application was successful or not and the date on which the course will commence.

NOTE:

- ❖ Training Voucher ONLY covers TUITION FEES, that is all other expenses away from tuition should be handled by the beneficiary
- ❖ Registration is open until 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2019

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**TRAINING INSTRUCTIONS**  
Venue: GTTI (Julangel Branch)

LIST OF COURSES TO BE OFFERED

1. Welding and Fabrication
2. Small Engines Maintenance and Repairs
3. Electrical Installation
4. Refrigeration and Air Conditioning
5. Carpentry and Joinery
6. Basic Certificate in Plumbing and Gas Fitting
7. Basic Certificate in Building Construction (Blockwork)
8. Basic Certificate in Plastering and Tiling

For more information please call: 5122794

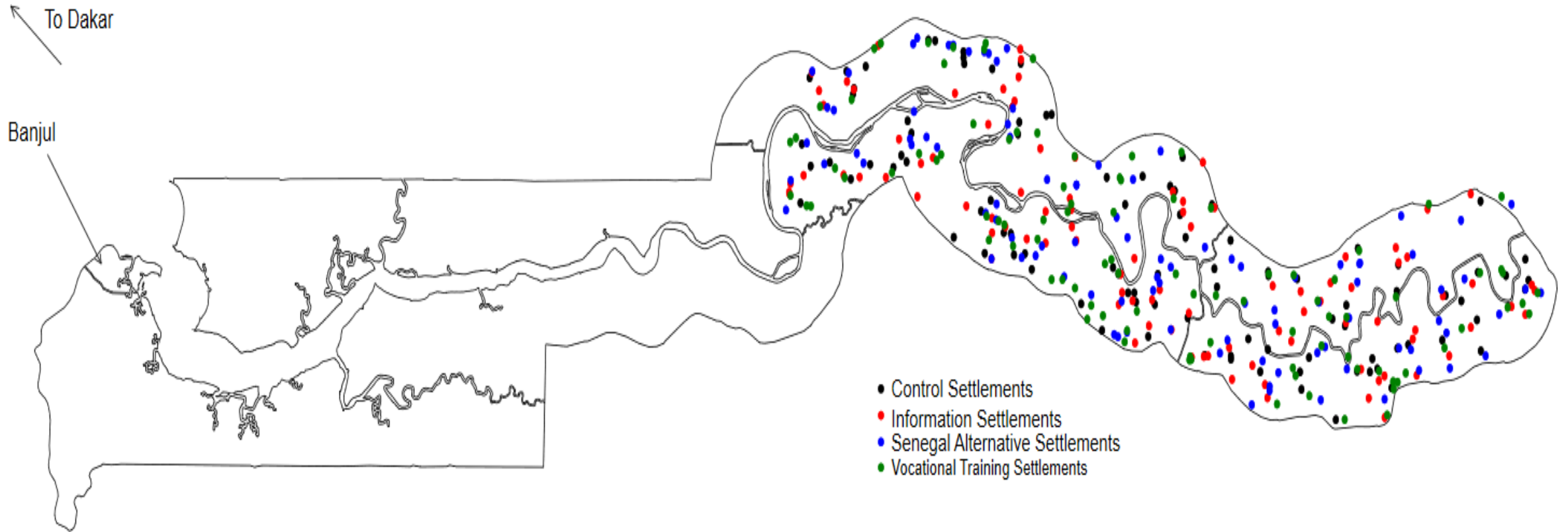
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# Treatment 3: Vocational Training

- **Theory of change:** in addition to information deterring illegal migration to Europe, this intervention provides viable alternative to improving prospective migrant lives – may change the cost-benefit calculation.

# Map of the Gambia, showing selected settlements by treatment status and relation to Banjul and Dakar



# Main outcomes to be measured at Follow-Up

- **Knowledge** individuals have about migrating the backway and about migrating to Senegal.
- **Beliefs** about the riskiness of migrating the backway.
- **Intentions** to migrate the backway.
- Steps towards and actual of **Backway Migration**.
- **Migration to Senegal and Internal Migration**.
- **Well-being**.

# Thank you!

Please email me at [catia.batista@novasbe.pt](mailto:catia.batista@novasbe.pt) with comments or suggestions.

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