

A comic about irregular migration from Senegal to Libya and Europe



Migrants take two routes to reach Europe

1. SEA ROUTE: by boat from Elinkine (Senegal) to Tenerife (Spain).
2. LAND ROUTE: through Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Algeria and Morocco.

Irregular migration from Senegal is facilitated by a network of intermediaries or **Cokseurs** - people that mediate between migrants and other parties along the way, including the passeurs or smugglers who take them across the Sahara.

Most intermediaries started out as migrants themselves.



MY NAME IS DIABA. I TRIED TO MIGRATE, BUT WASN'T SUCCESSFUL. IN LIBYA I WAS TREATED LIKE A SLAVE AND INSULTED FOR BEING "BLACK".

THROUGH A CHILDHOOD FRIEND IN LIBYA, I NOW COORDINATE MIGRANT TRANSPORT BETWEEN TAMBOCOUNDA AND ABADEZ

Diaba, 35, passeur



AT BORDER CROSSINGS, MIGRANTS ARE APPROACHED BY COKSEURS TRYING TO RECRUIT THEM FOR THEIR PARTICULAR GHETTO (A "SAFE HOUSE" AT TRANSIT POINTS) THAT PAYS THEM A COMMISSION. THEY GREET THEM IN THEIR LANGUAGE.



DIARAMA!*

*'Hello' in Fulani

WOMEN WHO CANNOT MOBILISE THE SAME RESOURCES AS MEN ARE OFTEN FORCED TO ENGAGE IN TRANSACTIONAL SEX WITH SMUGGLERS.

MIGRANTS PAY 20,000 - 100,000 CFA FRANCS* IN "TAX" TO ENTER THE GHETTO. ONLY THEN WILL THEY BE PROTECTED AGAINST ROBBERS AND THE POLICE.

*USD 32 - 160



I LIKE WOMEN MIGRANTS, THEY DON'T NEGOTIATE THE COST LIKE MEN. THEY AGREE TO STAY 2-3 MONTHS AS MY WIVES.

Momba, 42

MY AMBITION WAS TO GO TO SPAIN. BUT IN MOROCCO I MET A SMUGGLER WHO SHOWED ME HOW MUCH MONEY I COULD EARN. I DECIDED TO STAY.



I SOMETIMES MADE 500,000 FCFA* IN A MONTH!

*USD 800 (about)

THE SMUGGLING NETWORK IS STRUCTURED; THE CHIEF, THE CHIEF'S ASSISTANT (ME) AND COKSEURS. STRANDED MIGRANTS TELL NEW MIGRANTS ABOUT US. WE DON'T GO TO THEM!

THE GHETTO IS STRUCTURED PER COUNTRY AND REGION; EACH COUNTRY HAS A PRESIDENT, EACH REGION A LEADER. THEY GET A SHARE OF THE MONEY AND MAINTAIN ORDER. AS LONG AS IT IS CALM, POLICE TURN A BLIND EYE.



CUSTOMERS CAME LOOKING FOR US. MY JOB WAS TO PUT THEM INTO CONTACT WITH THE BOATMEN TAKING THEM ONWARDS...



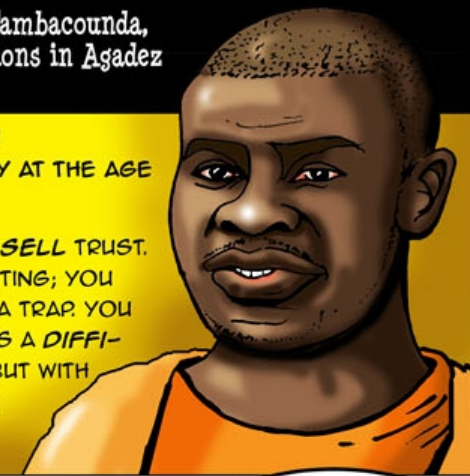
...OUR ONLY JOB WAS TO FIND A BOAT FOR THE MIGRANT. I WAS NOT CONCERNED WITH THE REST OF THE JOURNEY OF THE MIGRANT.



Cokseur, 35, Tambacounda, with connections in Agadez and Tripoli.

I BECAME AN INTERMEDIARY AT THE AGE OF 30.

YOU HAVE TO **SELL** TRUST. IT'S LIKE HUNTING; YOU HAVE TO SET A TRAP. YOU TELL THEM IT'S A **DIFFICULT** ROAD, BUT WITH ME IT WILL BE FINE.



I DON'T CARE WHO I WORK WITH, AS LONG AS THEY HAVE **MONEY**. I LIKE WORKING WITH WOMEN. IF THEY DON'T HAVE MONEY, THEY CAN **PAY** WITH THEIR BODIES.



OF COURSE I CAN HELP YOU, BUT THERE WILL BE **EXPENSES...**

THIS JOB IS NOT WITHOUT RISK. SOME MIGRANTS WILL BLAME YOU IF THEY FAIL. LAST MONTH, MIGRANTS WERE CAPTURED AT SEA BY THE LIBYAN NAVY. AFTER THEIR RELEASE, THEY **HUNTED** DOWN THE SMUGGLER AND **BEAT** HIM TO **DEATH**.



I WORK WITH A **LARGE** NETWORK OF SMUGGLERS IN TRIPOLI AND AGADEZ



WE HAVE OUR WAYS AND KEEP THEM SECRET.

Cokseur, 34, Tambacounda, with connections in Tripoli.

EVERY INTERMEDIARY IS PART OF A NETWORK, BUT NOT EVERYONE KNOWS WHO THE CHIEF IS SO THAT HE CAN ERASE ALL TRACES IN CASE THERE IS A POLICE ATTACK. WE KNOW ONLY THOSE WE NEED TO KNOW, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.



MIGRANTS ARE BROUGHT TO QUIET, ABANDONED COMMUNITIES IN THE FOREST BY MAFIA TAXIS - **ILLEGAL TAXI DRIVERS** IN OLD CARS WHO KNOW HOW TO BYPASS POLICE.

I AM ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MY LEG OF THE JOURNEY. THE COSTS HAVE SHOT UP TO 1,500,000 - EVEN TO 2 MILLION FCFA* BECAUSE MIGRANTS WILL LEAVE AT ANY COST!



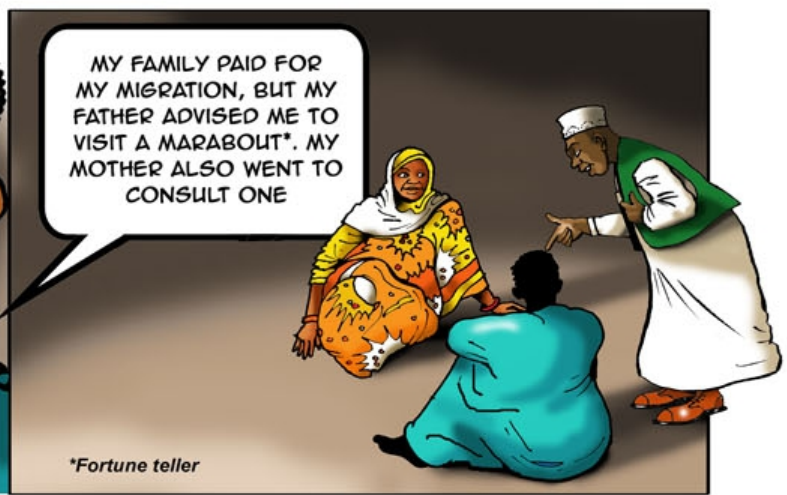
*USD 2,400 - 3,200

PEOPLE LEAVE SENEGAL BECAUSE THEY FEEL THERE ARE NO OPPORTUNITIES THERE. HOWEVER, SOME OF THEM RETURN. HERE ARE TWO STORIES OF TWO MIGRANTS...



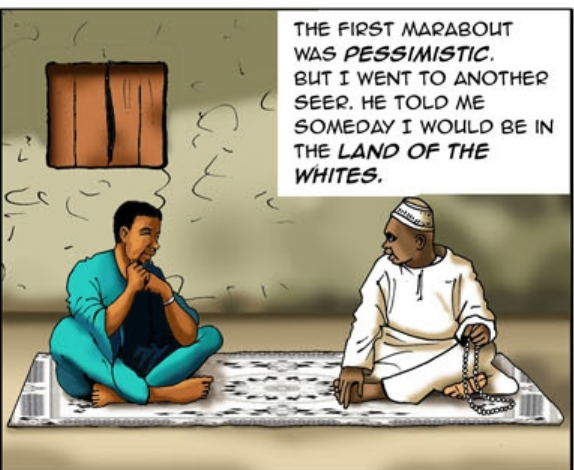
Karfa - returned migrant, subsistence farmer, Kolda.

I HAD HEARD STORIES OF PEOPLE IN LIBYA AND EUROPE - HOW THEY HAVE SUCCESS THERE.



*Fortune teller

WE SOLD COWS AND AN OX TO PAY FOR THE TRIPS TO THE MARABOUT AND TO FINANCE THE MIGRATION. THE SALE OF CATTLE WAS THE ONLY WAY FOR US NOT TO BORROW MONEY. NO ONE WILL LEND LARGE AMOUNTS TO MIGRANTS BECAUSE IT IS KNOWN TO BE SO RISKY WITH MANY PERISHING ALONG THE WAY.

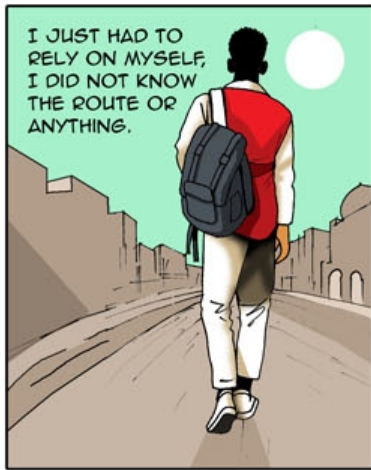


THE FIRST MARABOUT WAS PESSIMISTIC. BUT I WENT TO ANOTHER SEER. HE TOLD ME SOMEDAY I WOULD BE IN THE LAND OF THE WHITES.

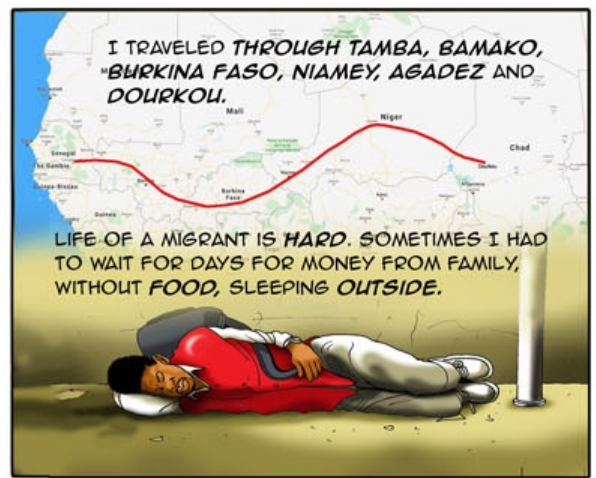


NOWADAYS ANYONE CAN MIGRATE. YOU JUST HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE STORIES OF RETURNED MIGRANTS ON THE RADIO. THEY TELL YOU HOW THEY LEFT AND WHERE THEY WENT AND HOW MUCH IT COST.

*Ironically, returned migrants are interviewed on the radio to discourage migration by explaining the risks.



I JUST HAD TO RELY ON MYSELF. I DID NOT KNOW THE ROUTE OR ANYTHING.

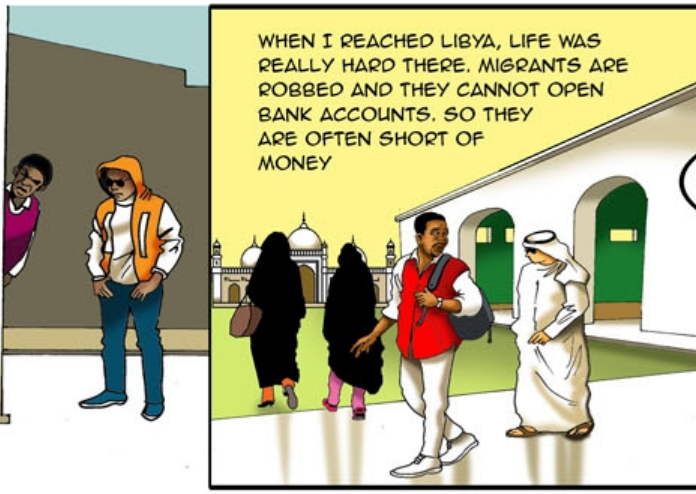


I TRAVELED THROUGH TAMBA, BAMAKO, BURKINA FASO, NIAMEY, AGADEZ AND DOURKOLI.

LIFE OF A MIGRANT IS HARD. SOMETIMES I HAD TO WAIT FOR DAYS FOR MONEY FROM FAMILY, WITHOUT FOOD, SLEEPING OUTSIDE.



GETTING MONEY WAS DANGEROUS. THIEVES WOULD WAIT OUTSIDE THE WESTERN UNION OFFICE TO ROB YOU.



WHEN I REACHED LIBYA, LIFE WAS REALLY HARD THERE. MIGRANTS ARE ROBBED AND THEY CANNOT OPEN BANK ACCOUNTS. SO THEY ARE OFTEN SHORT OF MONEY



FELLOW MIGRANTS ALSO HAD TOLD OF BAD STORIES ABOUT EUROPE...

IN ITALY, YOU HAVE TO WAIT YEARS FOR YOUR PAPERS. YOU CANNOT WORK OR DO ANYTHING

SO I DECIDED TO RETURN



Moudou - returned migrant, shopkeeper, Kolda.



WE DEPARTED FROM THE COASTAL TOWN OF ELINKINE IN SENEGAL AND ARRIVED IN SPAIN NINE DAYS LATER



WE WERE FORTUNATE. ONLY ONE PERSON DIED ON OUR PIROGUE. HE HAD DEPRESSION AND JUMPED INTO THE OCEAN...



...THE CAPTAIN SAVED HIM.



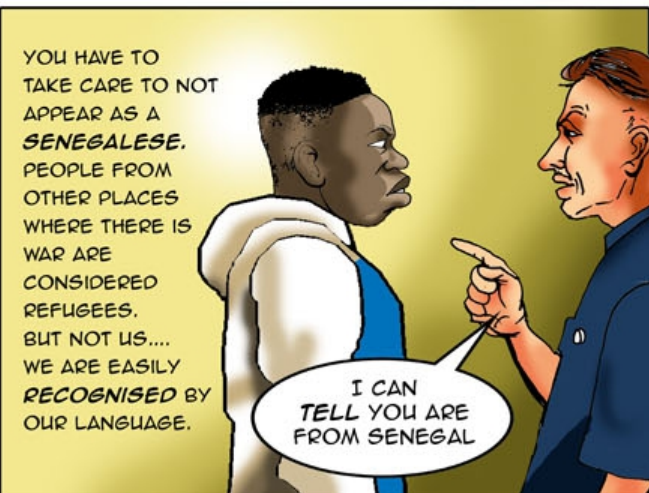
BUT LATER, THE MAN JUMPED OUT OF THE BOAT AGAIN. THIS TIME, WE DID NOT SAVE HIM.



AS I SAID, WE WERE FORTUNATE. I HAVE HEARD STORIES OF BOATS WITH MANY PEOPLE DYING, BECAUSE OF STORMS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF WITCHCRAFT.



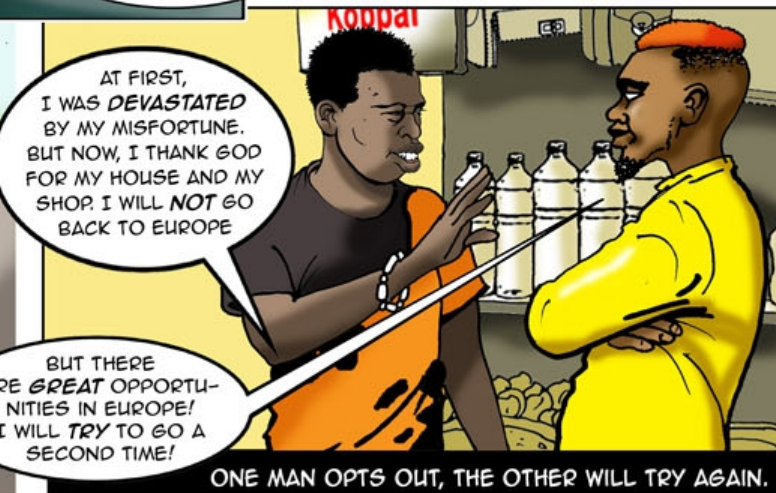
AFTER NINE DAYS AT SEA, WE ARRIVED ON TENERIFE ISLAND. WE WERE BROUGHT TO A CAMP



YOU HAVE TO TAKE CARE TO NOT APPEAR AS A SENEGALESE. PEOPLE FROM OTHER PLACES WHERE THERE IS WAR ARE CONSIDERED REFUGEES. BUT NOT US.... WE ARE EASILY RECOGNISED BY OUR LANGUAGE.

I CAN TELL YOU ARE FROM SENEGAL

THERE WERE FOUR PLANES AT THE CAMP. TWO FLEW TO MAINLAND SPAIN AND TWO BACK TO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. IF YOU WERE HANDCUFFED, YOU KNEW YOU WERE BEING SENT BACK TO SENEGAL.

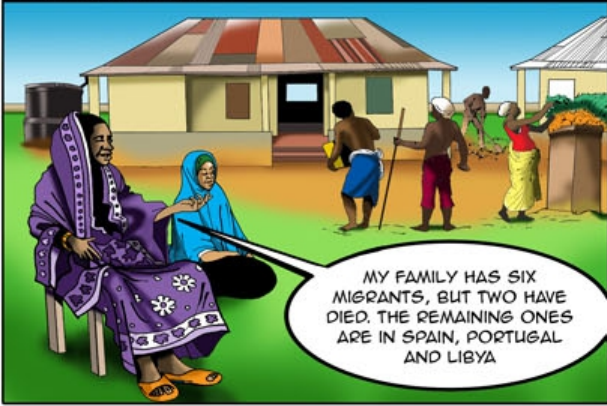


AT FIRST, I WAS DEVASTATED BY MY MISFORTUNE. BUT NOW, I THANK GOD FOR MY HOUSE AND MY SHOP. I WILL NOT GO BACK TO EUROPE

BUT THERE ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES IN EUROPE! I WILL TRY TO GO A SECOND TIME!

ONE MAN OPTS OUT, THE OTHER WILL TRY AGAIN.

A Grandmother's Story...



MY FAMILY HAS SIX MIGRANTS, BUT TWO HAVE DIED. THE REMAINING ONES ARE IN SPAIN, PORTUGAL AND LIBYA



WHEN THEIR FATHER WAS WORKING, WE PROSPERED. BUT AFTER HIS RETIREMENT, WE **SUFFERED** AND NEEDED OTHER SOURCES OF MONEY

MIGRATION WAS DISCUSSED IN THE FAMILY. IT WAS DECIDED THE ELDEST SON SHOULD STAY, AND THE TWO YOUNGER SONS SHOULD GO. WE SOLD COTTON AND CATTLE AND GOT 600,000 CFA* TO FINANCE THE MIGRATION...



*USD 1,000



...BUT THE MONEY WASN'T ENOUGH AND THEY HAD TO SELL THREE MORE OXEN AND SEND ANOTHER 500,000*.

*\$800

I NEED MORE MONEY!

MAMA! YOU NEED TO SEND ME SOME MORE MONEY

I KNEW MIGRATION WAS **DANGEROUS**. BUT WE HAD NO CHOICE. WE HAVE NOTHING LEFT. THERE IS NO RAIN AND OUR CROPS WON'T GROW. SO I DID NOT DISCOURAGE THEM.



MIGRATION CHANGED OUR LIVES. BEFORE WE HAD HUTS MADE OF CLAY AND STRAW. NOW WE HAVE A HOUSE AND ELECTRICITY. WITH THE MONEY MY SONS SEND, WE HAVE BOUGHT MACHINES TO CULTIVATE THE LAND. OUR CHILDREN GO TO SCHOOL BECAUSE MY SONS PAY FOR THEIR TUITION AND BOOKS.



A Sister's Story...

WE HAVE ONLY ONE MIGRANT AND HE IS THE ONLY BOY IN THE FAMILY. OUR FATHER SAYS MIGRATION OF WOMEN IS NO GOOD BECAUSE ONCE THEY GET **MARRIED** THIS DOES NOT **BENEFIT** THE PATERNAL FAMILY.



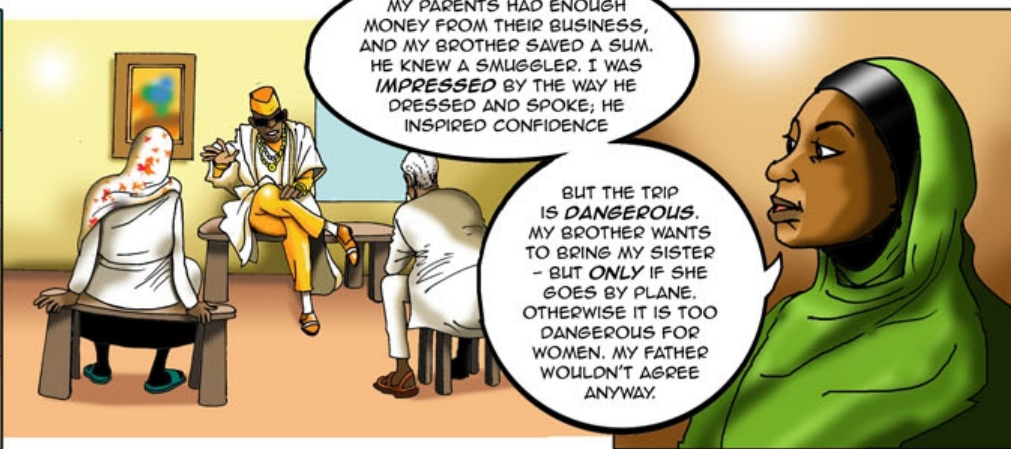
MY BROTHER MADE THE DECISION TO MIGRATE BY HIMSELF. MY PARENTS DID NOT AGREE

HE WANTED TO LEAVE SO BADLY HE LOCKED HIMSELF IN SILENCE. MY PARENTS RELENTED.



MY PARENTS HAD ENOUGH MONEY FROM THEIR BUSINESS, AND MY BROTHER SAVED A SUM. HE KNEW A **SMUGGLER**. I WAS **IMPRESSED** BY THE WAY HE DRESSED AND SPOKE; HE **INSPIRED** CONFIDENCE

BUT THE TRIP IS **DANGEROUS**. MY BROTHER WANTS TO BRING MY SISTER - BUT **ONLY** IF SHE GOES BY PLANE. OTHERWISE IT IS TOO **DANGEROUS** FOR WOMEN. MY FATHER WOULDN'T AGREE ANYWAY.



OUR LIVES HAVE CHANGED. MY BROTHER SENDS US 150,000 OR 200,000 CFA FRANCS* AT THE END OF THE MONTH. WE HAVE A BETTER HOUSE WE EAT BETTER, OUR HEALTH IS BETTER AND WE CAN GO TO SCHOOL.

*USD 250 or 330

About the Project

This comic is based on research done in the Casamance area of Senegal, conducted by Doudou Gueye, of the University of Assane Seck, Ziguinchor, Senegal in collaboration with Priya Deshingkar, of the University of Sussex, UK. Return migrants, the families of migrants and smugglers were interviewed in villages of origin and points of transit along the border.

In the last decade there has been an intensification of border controls through sea patrols as well as measures such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's Regional Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Smuggling of Migrants in West and Central Africa (2015–20). This has resulted in an increase in irregular migration and a diversification of routes over land and sea to evade detection.

The research shows that the criminalisation of migrant smuggling has not succeeded in eliminating the practice. Risk-awareness campaigns do not deter irregular migrants as there are complex sociocultural reasons for migrating.

The migration industry in the Cassamance is characterised by a plurality of actors who work either together or independently and who may have fluid roles depending on the need of the moment and their capacity to find innovative solutions to a particular problem. While some of them have networks extending to origin and major destinations, others are work on their own and simply pass migrants to the next intermediary without any accountability.

In such a mercenary environment it is no surprise that Marabouts or fortune tellers assume such importance. Migrants and their families spend vast amounts of money seeking their blessings.

The research concludes that efforts need to be made to open up more channels for legal migration and labour circulation.

This comic was produced by Cartoon Movement, an international platform for editorial cartoons and comics journalism. The artwork is by Maddo.

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Migrating out of Poverty
Global Studies, University of Sussex
Web: www.migratingoutofpoverty.org
Twitter: @MigrationRPC
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